

MINUTES FOR VTT ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
SATURDAY 17th May, 2014

The meeting was held at St. Paul's Church Centre, Rossmore Road, London, NW1 6NJ

Trustees Present:

Bertie Woolnough (Chairman), Michael Woodley (Treasurer), Wendy Best, Margaret Hakim, Philomena Commons, Mokhtar Hossain, David Newell, Helen Mortimer, Ben Clackson, Mr M.A. Rashid, Nick Lack (Secretary).

Valerie Taylor, Cat Newton-Groove, Brian Woodgate (Administrator) and 58 members and supporters were also present.

Apologies:

Bryan Whitty and 12 others

<u>ITEM</u>	<u>DETAIL/DISCUSSION</u>
1	<p>Welcome</p> <p>The Chairman welcomed all present and thanked Kokhon (Mokhtar Hossein) and all who had helped him to prepare and serve the "light" lunch that had been enjoyed before the start of the meeting.</p>
2	<p>Chairman's Report</p> <p>The Chairman reported a remarkable year for the VTT, with special efforts being made in fund-raising as a result of the Rana Plaza tragedy. In particular, he thanked the area coordinators for their work in responding to the tragedy, and the notable fundraising events, including Akram Khan of Desh, a Troubadors event in Crewkerne, and the innovative Essential Gift Scheme in Scotland.</p> <p>In terms of volunteer personnel, several people were standing down this year: David Newell was an original member of the VTT, and has been a Trustee throughout its existence. As well, when Oxfam rep. in Bangladesh in the early 80s, he was an important supporter of Valerie and the CRP during some of its most difficult early years. Now, he felt the time was right to continue his involvement with the VTT in a membership capacity. Theresa Keefe has been editing the VTT website for a number of years but would now be standing down, her work to be taken over by Ben Clackson. Daphne Woolnough has edited the Spring Newsletter for 6 years, making it an attractive and interesting production. She, too, feels the time is right to hand it over to another, and volunteers will be welcome.</p> <p>The Chairman thanked all three for their great efforts on behalf of the VTT.</p> <p>Finally, he noted the sad death of Khandakar Mabubuddin Ahmed at the age of 89. As an outstanding Dhaka advocate, he provided the essential legal advice and representation when the CRP was under threat in its early days. When many in the medical profession and Ministry of Health regarded money spent on rehabilitation of the physically disabled as wasted, the Government froze funds to CRP provided by foreign donors. Khandakar sued the Government successfully and ensured the survival of the organization.</p>

<p>3</p>	<p>Treasurer's Report</p> <p>Over the first six years of financial reporting VTT income has gradually risen from £100,000 to £133,000. Because of the Rana Plaza tragedy, this year has seen an extraordinary return of £284,503 which includes £83,320 from some of the companies who had factories in the Rana Plaza.</p> <p>£141,300 of the balance was donated by regular supporters and new contacts in response to the Rana Plaza appeal, coming through Pay Pal, Just Giving and our bank. These donations came from many countries where the CRP is known: expatriate Bangladeshis and past Volunteers in Canada, USA, Finland, Jordan, Australia, Netherlands and France as well as the UK. We thank all our donors warmly for their generosity.</p> <p>Our bank remains a vital and secure channel through which to direct funds straight into the foreign exchange account in Dhaka.</p> <p>Aside from these donations, we also sent the first half of the \$100,000 Rotary Award to Valerie, given in Hong Kong for her selfless dedication. It will be used to provide a permanent hostel for the disabled schoolchildren at the Centre.</p> <p>Looking at our costs, these are still at the low level to be expected of a volunteer and charitable organization. As always, details of the accounts will be posted on the VTT website once they have been formally processed by the Charity Commission.</p>
<p>4</p>	<p>Election of Trustees</p> <p>Two Trustees stood down: Bertie Woolnough (Chairman), and David Newell. Bertie Woolnough was re-elected and Margaret Hakim elected.</p> <p>At the subsequent meeting of the Management Committee Bertie Woolnough was re-elected as Chairman, Michael Woodley as Treasurer; Wendy Best and Mr M.A.Rashid were appointed co-opted members.</p>
<p>5</p>	<p>Presentation by Cat Newton-Groove</p> <p>Cat gave an account of her time last year at the CRP, the welcome she received, the friendliness and dedication of staff, and their assistance in making her visit to the Centre and indeed Bangladesh fascinating and interesting.</p> <p>She undertook conversational English with staff and students, to assist them to improve their existing grasp of the language. With student groups of 5-6, she sought to help them to change their perception of a somewhat formal language, lighten their touch in use of English, and to gain a feel for a more demotic use of form; she used dialect and even the poems of Robbie Burns to demonstrate the flexibility and variety of English in common use.</p> <p>One of her most inspiring tasks was to work with some of the Rana Plaza victims and to give them basic English skills. She made good friends with many patients and hopes to be able to return to the CRP soon.</p>

6

Presentation by Valerie Taylor

Valerie reminded VTT members that the CRP was celebrating 35 years of existence, a journey characterized by a continuous drive for development and improvement, which had transformed the CRP from a single small building in Dhaka to multiple centres serving the disabled throughout Bangladesh. She thanked VTT trustees, members and the many volunteers for their support on this journey, and mentioned the specialist courses which would have been impossible without their input, among them Bobath, OT, special paper-based technology, IT skills, and solar energy development.

Turning to Rana Plaza, she showed a moving set of pictures of the immediate aftermath of the tragedy, the treatment of amputees, and the impact on the Savar centre, with the need to improvise non-medical areas such as the dining room for treatment and wards. An inspiring example of a patient was Rozina, who, to escape the rubble, had to cut off her own arm. After months of treatment, she was once more able to smile, and would soon be opening a small shop. Unsurprisingly, no patients had any wish to return to the garment factories, though many wished to set up their own tailoring business, and assistance with these ambitions was ongoing.

She moved on to the divisional centres: free land had been given for a centre in Maulvi Bazaar, and work would start on a building soon; Rajshahi had opened in the summer of 2013, and Chittagong was developing rapidly. The centre in Barisal had recently opened.

The aims of the CRP had been reviewed in a new 5-year strategy. Of great importance is to maintain the quality of training, especially BAs in Physio, OT and Speech therapy. Soon, Prosthetics and Orthotics diploma training will begin, partly as a result of Primark's assistance, who have been generous in their support of the Centre.

During questions, Valerie was asked who could take over from her. She emphasized the value of the team approach they have long adopted, a good group of Trustees and managers, and also the initiation of the new Association for patients in Bangladesh, who she hopes will be able to act as a watchdog and adviser over standards and practice.

A second question raised publicity on behalf of the CRP in Bangladesh, where many nationals assumed it was a Christian association. Valerie agreed that it was difficult to find channels to get across the message that the CRP is a truly Bangladeshi charity, without religious basis, though seeking to act with the highest moral values. She hoped that a new Bangla TV programme about agriculture which focused on patients working in the fields would broaden knowledge of CRP's work.

Asked if there were other companies apart from Primark who had been helping, Valerie said she could only speak from her own experience, though she did know that the Marks & Spencers project for training in garment factory management and development was regarded highly. A point worth noting was that many employers have made the discovery that disabled workers are habitually more punctual, disciplined and motivated than able-bodied workers.

The afternoon ended with further refreshments for members and supporters. The next Annual meeting will be on Saturday, 16th May, 2015, at St Paul's Church Centre, Rossmore Road.