

## **MINUTES OF VTT ANNUAL MEETING SATURDAY 12th September, 2020**

Because of the pandemic, this virtual meeting was held online, using Zoom, at 2pm.

Trustees Present:

Ben Clackson (Chairman), Sayadul Khaled (Treasurer), Pete Donnelly (Secretary), Margaret Hakim, Mohammed Rashid, Janet Ivin and Glen McGhee

Apologies: Mokhtar Hossain (Khokon) and Bryan Whitty

Brian Woodgate (Administrator), Valerie Taylor, and Shafiq ul-Islam (Executive Director of CRP), and 20 members and supporters were also present.

### **Welcome**

Ben Clackson welcomed supporters to the meeting, and particularly welcomed Valerie Taylor and Shafiq ul-Islam who had joined the meeting from Bangladesh. He thanked them for pre-recording video messages which would be played later in the meeting.

Sayadul Khaled then welcomed British Bangladeshi supporters and guests in their mother tongue, with particular welcomes to Valerie Taylor, General Shafiq ul-Islam and Syed Abdul Ghafar, who provided the building for the first Moulvibazar Centre and is now living in London.

### **Chairman's Report**

The Chairman drew attention to three highlights of the year ending in April 2020.

Firstly, in November and December Glen McGhee had been able to visit CRP both to represent VTT in CRP's 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebrations, and to use his experience as an orthotist in the Prosthetics and Orthotics Department. The Chairman noted that the Prosthetics and Orthotics service at CRP has developed tremendously in recent years, and recommended supporters to read Liz Timms's inspiring new book about people who have benefitted from CRP's prosthetic limbs and devices, which can be obtained from the administrator, Brian Woodgate, in return for a donation.

The second highlight was the visit of Jan and Roger Varney to celebrate the official opening of the newly equipped operating theatre at CRP Savar in February. Jan and Roger had played a big part in collaboration with CRP in getting the container with the equipment to Bangladesh. That celebration was of course only just in time: covid-19 spread both in the UK and Bangladesh the following month.

The final highlight was that VTT's income of over £350,000 was nearly as high as the previous year, thanks both to generous bequests and to the donations of supporters. Because expenditure was less than 1% of income, VTT had been able to transfer the remaining 99% of it to CRP. He thanked all supporters for the part they had played in this excellent result.

He particularly thanked Helen Mortimer for again editing the excellent Spring Newsletter, in the course of moving house from New York back to the UK, and Brian Woodgate for all he had done especially to streamline VTT's email communications during the pandemic. Finally he thanked the Treasurer Sayadul Khaled and Secretary Pete Donnelly for all they had done during year behind the scenes. They had been great to work with and VTT was very fortunate to have them.

## **Election of Trustees**

As provided in the Constitution, three of the Trustees had to resign: Bryan Whitty, Margaret Hakim, and Ben Clackson. Bryan Whitty had sadly decided for family reasons not to stand for re-election. Valerie Taylor of course had known him for decades, ever since he was a young doctor in the hospital at Chandragona, but the Chairman thanked him on this occasion for his outstanding contribution to VTT particularly in building up the supporter network in Scotland.

Returning to the election, Margaret Hakim and Ben Clackson were standing for re-election and Helen Mortimer had also been nominated for election. In the absence of other nominations those three were elected.

## **Treasurer's Report**

The Treasurer began by thanking Helen Mortimer and Pete Donnelly for the way they had arranged the Zoom Annual Meeting.

He then talked us through the Draft Accounts for 2019-2020. Rounding the figures to thousands (K), the Total Income of £356K comprised Donations and Subscription of £2K to Restricted Funds and £218K to the Unrestricted Fund. Of this, £168K was from legacies: £100K from John Lanzer, £5K from Jacqueline Cameron and £63K from David Newell. Gift Aid arising from donations added a further £7K. Sales of donated items (mostly cards) and fundraising events raised £1K.

The rest of the Income came from four Corporate Donations. Three of them, totalling £123K, were for Restricted Funds: £79K from Primark, £42K from Walter Stock, Consul-General of Germany, and £2K from Tesco. The last Corporate Donation of £4K from Robert Bion & Co Ltd was to the Unrestricted Fund.

Expenditure was £2,800, only 0.7% of Income. The "Fundraising" figure of £377 comprised payments to Just Giving, CAF and PayPal. The "Other" figure of £250 was the payment for the Independent Examination of the Accounts.

Sayadul thanked individual trustees for their support, and spoke of being inspired on visits to CRP when he saw how patients who would otherwise have been burdens on their families had been transformed in the course of treatment at CRP and were once again able to support their families.

Finally, for help answering requests for information, he thanked the Executive Director, Mr Shafiq, the CRP Accounts Department (Mizan), the Fundraising Department (Mahedul Islam) and the Sylhet Centre Chief (Kamrul Hasan Choudhury Subho).

## **Questions and Comments**

Questions and Comments were invited on the Chairman's Report and the Treasurer's Report. Liz Timms asked how CRP had fared during the pandemic, and it was explained that this topic was about to be addressed by the speakers.

## **Speakers**

### **Shafiq ul-Islam: CRP during the pandemic**

The original video message, with better video resolution than we were able to show on Zoom, is now available at <https://youtu.be/a-G-czEEUo>.

He thanked VTT for the opportunity to address the meeting, and for its support for marginalised communities in Bangladesh.

Turning to the effects of the pandemic, he noted that the impact of covid-19 was already evident in the fall in the number of outpatients in the year to the end of June 2020: having risen steadily in the preceding decade from 48,000 per year to 77,000, the number fell to 58,000 in 2019-2020. This fall was reflected in a (smaller) fall in CRP's overall annual income from £5.8m to £5.4m.

Like all other healthcare and rehabilitation institutions in Bangladesh, CRP has faced great challenges as a result of covid-19, including motivation of staff and beneficiaries and arrangements for their safety and protection. In particular for staff there was the challenge of providing PPE and continuing to pay their salaries despite the decline in income. While services to paralysed patients in CRP's hospital continued throughout, the Centre was closed to outpatients for 2 months while the covid-19 arrangements were put in place, and when the service to outpatients was gradually resumed in June, CRP was the first centre to re-open therapeutic intervention for marginalised disabled people which followed all the Bangladesh Government guidelines. Gradually outpatient numbers are now rising.

The effect on CRP's educational institutions has been even more serious, because all educational institutions, from children's play schools to universities and vocational training centres, have been closed since mid-March by Government order. Thus BHPI, the Nursing College, and the William and Marie Taylor inclusive Primary School are all physically closed. Despite the resulting collapse in income from fees, TRP, the Trust Governing CRP, decided to continue to pay staff from Reserves. From July, lecturers and teachers started providing online teaching, but some students do not have access to the internet, whether through laptop or mobile phone. This means that when physical teaching/learning restarts, there will be a disparity between students who haven't been able to connect online and those who have.

He noted other challenges faced by the educational institutions:

1. The need to maintain rent payments for the WMTS hostel accommodation.
2. The difficulty of enrolling new students because Government has not held the school-leaving (12<sup>th</sup> grade) exams which are the normal source of new BHPI and Nursing College enrolment.
3. Newly qualified PT's, OT's and SLT's who have finished their courses at BHPI face difficulties finding jobs. Normally CRP itself has employed many of these, but it cannot do so now because of the fall in outpatient numbers.

## **Pete Donnelly: fund-raising for the new Moulvibazar Centre**

### **How the Moulvibazar centre started**

CRP commenced outpatient rehabilitation services at Moulvibazar district in April, 2011, where it operates in a building donated by Eng. Sayed Abdul Goffer. This was the first divisional centre of CRP outside of Dhaka. In 2014, engineer Sayed Abdul Goffar offered free use of his building till the construction of permanent centre was completed.

Recently, Mr Md. Afsarul Haque and Akhtarul Haque donated a 53 decimal land (2150 sqm) to establish a permanent centre at Mokam Bazar. The aim is to develop a centre that can offer full provision to the local community within two years

### **Future plans for the centre**

From the inception of the first Moulvibazar CRP centre, the full range of services offered by CRP could not be rolled out to disabled people in the local community due to space limitations.

This Moulvibazar Centre will be built in the North of Bangladesh and will support paralysed, disabled, children with cerebral palsy, amputees, stroke patients and mental health patients of the Greater Moulvibazar area. Support offered will include services like therapy, medical consultation, mobility aids and assistive devices such as wheelchairs, artificial limbs, motorised wheelchairs, support seating, braces.

The centre will be built in two phases. In the first phase the building will be constructed up to the second floor. The total cost of the first phase will be £705,000.

### **How much have we raised?**

Donations so far made by GGHSP Fund, Japan Government (£92,000), Engr. Sayed Abdul Goffar (£42,000), Abul Mueyed Chowdhury (£4,700), Rashid Khan (£4,700), Other donations (£4,700), total £148,100.

### **How much do we need to raise?**

Total cost of the first phase	£705,000
Money raised so far	£148,100
Total amount to be raised	£556,900

If you would like to donate or to help spread the message of what we're doing then visit <https://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/moulvibazarcrp>

## **Valerie Taylor**

The original video message, with better video resolution than we were able to show on Zoom, is now available at [https://youtu.be/KUe2\\_wCamN8](https://youtu.be/KUe2_wCamN8).

Valerie began by thanking us for our support through donations, prayers and volunteers.

She showed video clips of the 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebrations last December, including speeches from Dr Luis Garcia, a spinal surgeon from Spain who happened to be visiting with a team of colleagues, and from Dr Dipu Moni, the Minister of Education. The motto for the celebrations was "I am CRP" and staff members were given a booklet reminding them of the 6 core values: sensitivity, compassion, collaboration, respect, cleanliness and commitment to excellence.

Following the onset of covid-19, one very encouraging piece of news was that in June the Bangladesh Prime Minister's Office gave CRP £880,000 to be put into a fixed deposit account. The interest from this sum will be used to pay for or subsidise the treatment of patients who cannot afford the full costs. This had been a wonderful encouragement to CRP at a challenging time.

Valerie also told us that the centre being built at Manikganj, on land given by Mrs Rehana Mahmud, with construction costs paid for by the Social Welfare Ministry of the Government of Bangladesh, had in the last few weeks reached the point at which the Madhab Memorial Vocational Training Institute could be transferred to the new centre, relieving the congestion at CRP Savar.

Her video message ended with a dance by patients from the Mental Health day centre at Gonokhbari. This centre is being run by 3 OT's so as to give people suffering with mental health conditions the confidence and the skills needed for them to return home and resume their previous way of living.

## Questions and Comments and Answers

Margaret Hakim said the messages from Shafiq and Valerie had been really inspiring. She felt it would be really good to have the messages written up to that they could be passed on to other supporters so as to raise awareness of the wonderful work being done. She had found the dance at the end really heart-warming.

Pete Donnelly thanked her for her remarks and said that if Shafiq and Valerie permitted it, the videos would be put on Youtube.

Shafiq offered to explain the direct impact of covid-19 on staff in answer to Liz Timms's question. He felt CRP had been fortunate that more people had not been affected: out of about 1200 staff members, only 12 tested positive, including 4 at Mirpur, 5 at Savar and 1 at Sylhet. And of these only one member of staff (at Savar) had to be hospitalised. Of the 80 or so in-patients at Savar, only 4 tested positive. These 4 were isolated and subsequently treated in a specialised hospital.

He explained that BRAC had enabled testing to be done in a booth at the Savar campus, and the Bangladesh Government had enabled the test samples to be analysed in a Government Lab.

Sayedul asked if there were any plans to enable final year students (at BHPI and the Nursing College) to sit their final exams, and what arrangements there were for enrolling the new intake of students for the coming year. Shafiq replied that on both matters CRP could not take action unless the Government allowed it. The Government was considering the possibilities and making plans but had not yet made public announcements. However as regards enrolment there was good news that within the last week Dhaka University had authorised BHPI to take 30 more students (10 PT's, 10 OT's and 10 SLT's) for the new year beginning in January.

Sarwar Hasan, calling from Glasgow, mentioned that he was in contact with a member of a forum of Bangladeshi senior doctors and specialists in the United States which was offering remote support and online advice to various hospitals in Bangladesh during the pandemic. He wondered if such support might be of use to CRP. Pete said VTT could help with putting doctors in contact with each other.

## Breakout rooms

For the last 20 minutes, the meeting was divided up into Zoom "breakout rooms" of 4 people each to enable conversations between supporters.