

## Report From Our Chairman, Ben Clackson

The Pandemic has been challenging for CRP – especially given the impact on funding support which had seen a significant decline. The COVID restrictions have adversely impacted the ability of patients in Bangladesh to visit and utilise the services and support that they urgently required in many cases from the CRP.

A continuing challenge is the need to retain staff within the CRP centres. The problem has been exacerbated by the rise in cost of living in Bangladesh which, unfortunately, has not been matched with similar staff wage increases. Also the CRP Project in Moulvibazar, where a new centre is being developed, still needs around £0.5m to complete the first phase of construction. Details are on our Moulvibazar CRP JustGiving page. It would be wonderful if you could give, and encourage your friends to give, to this project.

As regards VTT, there are important areas which require further investment. These include firstly the VTT website which is considered not to be fully fit for purpose especially not being fully compatible with the use of mobile phones. Whilst there is a Facebook page, there is currently no Instagram page or Twitter account. There is therefore a need to professionalise the organisation in some key areas which inevitably requires financial investment – and to some extent in hindsight the cost base of 0.9% could have been further increased to make appropriate investments to improve the infrastructure needed for development and growth. VTT trustees are looking to work closely with Mr Farhan Masood Khan, Head of Programmes for Channel S, which is a UK-based Bangladeshi TV channel, in the coming months to pursue further fundraising opportunities within the British Bangladeshi population.

I wish to express my gratitude to all supporters for their continued contributions and interest in the work of the VTT, for Helen Mortimer and Valerie and Rokshana, CRP's publicity officer, in helping to put together the VTT Spring newsletter, and also thank Brian Woodgate for his invaluable administrative support and for editing the VTT Autumn Newsletter.

## From our Treasurer – Sayadul Islam Khaled FMAAT

This is a summary of the Accounts for 2020-2021. Rounding the figures to thousands (k), the Total Income of £178k comprised Donations and Subscriptions of £4000 to Restricted Funds this include £3000 from various donors related to Moulvibazar Centre. £90000 to the Unrestricted Fund. This includes £8000 from John Lanzer legacy, £19000 from Leonard Cheshire (LC) and £10000 from Joyce Halliday. Gift Aid arising from donations added a further £8000. Sales of donated items (mostly sales of Journey 2 Book) raised £1000. The rest of the Income came from three Corporate Donations. Three of them, totalling £76000, were for Restricted Funds: £61000 from Primark, and £13000 from Tesco. The last Corporate Donation of £2000 from Robert Scott Bader company was to the Unrestricted Fund. Expenditure was £1,605 only 0.9% of Income. The "Fundraising" figure of £405 comprised payments to Just Giving, CAF and PayPal. The "Other" figure of £250 was the payment for the Independent Examination of the Accounts.

**PLEASE ADVISE THE ADMINISTRATOR IF YOU CHANGE YOUR NAME, ADDRESS, EMAIL OR TELEPHONE NUMBER SO THAT WE ARE ABLE TO KEEP YOU UP TO DATE WITH INFORMATION, NEWSLETTERS ETC. Thank you.**

### **Can You Help?**

*We are short of Area-Coordination to circulate information and newsletters, by email or post in the following areas.*

*a) West Country, b) Northern Ireland, c) London/Middlesex. Members or supporters, who are interested in helping, should contact the VTT Administrator (details below). It is not necessary for you to live in the area concerned.*

*For further information, or to change any of the data we hold on your behalf, please contact:-*

*VTT Administrator, 4, Wilberforce Road, Coxheath, Maidstone, Kent, ME17 4HA*

*Tel:- 01622 743011; Email:- [admin@valerietaylortrust.org](mailto:admin@valerietaylortrust.org); Website:- [www.valerietaylortrust.org](http://www.valerietaylortrust.org)*

## 2021 Annual Supporters Meeting – Saturday 11<sup>th</sup> September, 2021

### Brian Woodgate, Administrator, reports:-

The meeting was, again, held at St. Paul's Church Centre, Rossmore Road, Marylebone, London.

There were 8 Trustees and 34 members and supporters present, together with Brian Woodgate, (Administrator), Valerie Taylor and Farhan Masood Khan, (Head of Programmes, Channel S). Apologies were received from 23 supporters.

**Helen Mortimer** expressed a very warm welcome to all those present especially in light of the challenges experienced during the recent COVID pandemic which has affected a widespread of people from all communities.

**Chair's Intro** - Ben Clackson reiterated the appreciation of all those who had attended considering the current circumstances including those who had made the effort to attend the meeting from as far as Scotland.

**Intro by Mokhtar Hussain** – Khokon provided an introduction and welcome message in Bengali and emphasised the real desire to ensure greater engagement with and involvement with the British Bangladeshi community. MH shared his own experiences from having visited the CRP in Bangladesh over the many years of his involvement with VTT and very much encouraged those present to visit the CRP centres with their friends and families. This would help provide insight into the truly inspirational work being conducted by CRP in Bangladesh. A strong message of encouragement for all members and supporters to provide whatever contribution they can make and to stay engaged with the work of the CRP and the efforts of VTT in the UK.

**Chair's Report** – This is reproduced above.

**Treasurer's Report.** This is reproduced above.

**Trustees' election / appointments** - The Chair announced the following resignations of Trustees from the Board of VTT.

\* Peter Donnelly recently resigned due to additional pressures arising from his existing employed role with the Leonard Cheshire Charity. The chair thanked Peter for his incredible support over the years.

\* Janet Ivin – has resigned as Trustee but plans to return to CRP and has remarkable 20 years history of volunteering with CRP. Janet has committed to continue her ongoing support for VTT.

The Chair announced the following nominations of Trustees for election to the Board of VTT who each provided a brief background to their resumés and interest in contributing to the work of VTT.

- Jahangir Alam – re-elected as Trustee; Jahangir graduated from CRP and worked in Bangladesh as an Occupational Therapist before he moved to London. Currently he works in the NHS and liaises with academics & students for their placement at CRP.
- Dr Mohammed Sakel – is Head of Neurology at East Kent University NHS Hospital and is also currently teaching at Canterbury University with specialist courses being delivered on mental and physical disabilities. MS has had several years of exposure to the work of the VTT and has been well acquainted with Valerie Taylor.
- Zahirul Haque FCA – is a chartered accountant who currently works as senior audit manager in a financial institution based in London. ZH has attended VTT meetings over the last 12 months and has been educated about the work of VTT from fellow trustees. ZH has been inspired by the work of the charity and felt privileged to have been appointed as a trustee.

In the absence of further nominations, these three were declared to be elected.

**The Chair** then invited the two Guest Speakers, Miss Valerie Taylor and Farhan Masood Khan, to address the meeting. A summary of their speeches is reproduced below.

All those present at the AGM were requested to join at the end of the session for tea, cakes and snacks which were kindly put together by the CRP volunteers. All supporters were also requested to look at the CRP books and hand-made beautiful cards made by Carol Bennett one of the CRP volunteers.

### Invitation to Annual Supporters' Meeting

You are all cordially invited to the

**2022 Annual Supporters' Meeting** at

**St. Paul's Community Centre, 5, Rossmore Road, London, NW1 6NJ**

on **Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> May, 2022 at 2.00pm.**

A light lunch will be available from 1.00pm.

**Please note this date in your diaries NOW, and we look forward to seeing you.**

### Looking to buy someone a present?

Liz Timms, a long-standing supporter of CRP and VTT, has compiled four books about CRP based on the anecdotes, experiences and stories of those who have worked there or been a volunteer. The books give an excellent overview of the work of CRP through the personal profiles and eyes of these individuals. The new book, 'JOURNEYS 3' and the previous books are available for a donation of £10.00, plus £5.00 postage and packing.

Books may be obtained by contacting the Administrator on 01622 743011 or email: [admin@valerietaylortrust.org](mailto:admin@valerietaylortrust.org), sending a cheque made payable to VTT. Alternatively, copies of the book may be ordered via a link on the VTT website – [www.valerietaylortrust.org](http://www.valerietaylortrust.org).

The following article will give you a taster about the books.



*It is Monday morning in a large sunny room. A breeze from the open window gently moves the curtains. There are four beds, each with a mosquito net hooked securely above it. Two adults stand, nervously, by a boy in a wheelchair.*

This is Ovi, with his parents. They are applying on behalf of their son, for a place at the William and Mary Inclusive School, at CRP, Savar. Ovi is not paralysed exactly, but he has cerebral palsy. Movement and even speech are difficult for him and slow. He is able to walk, but only on tiptoe, with the support of a walker.

Their home is in Khulna. Dad owns land and a large pond, full of fish. This is his business. It makes the family a good living – but it doesn't occupy all his time. So he is also the local Union Chairman – voted into the position for the last ten years, and in that decade he has built a school, a college and a mosque for their community.

He is clearly a man of action. Only recently did he hear, from a relative, about CRP and the possibility that they might be able to help his son – and now they are here.

Khulna is an eleven hour journey by bus from CRP, So if nine-year-old Ovi is to attend the school he will also need a place in the children's hostel. He thinks of this as a great adventure. He is not worried. He has already met another boy in a wheelchair, and he is sure they will be good friends.

But his parents are anxious. They have a lot to think about. Although their son is excited and is proud of his new, white trainers, he has never been away from home before, never parted from his parents – not even for one night. Mum and Dad know it will be a wrench to leave him, but they want the best for their boy, the chance for him to become something.

He is a happy boy and alert. He notices things. He attended primary school near his home but his parents feel that, because of his disability, the teachers did not really give him sufficient attention – and he certainly won't study at home with them! But how will he cope without them? He will miss his big brother. Will the house-mother look after him? Will he like the food and will he be able to sleep in this large bed all on his own?

These remain the imponderables.

In the meantime Ovi will attend school for a week. He will live in the hostel, and his parents will lodge outside CRP, but can visit each day. Then, at the end of the week, his parents, the house-mother and the headmaster will sit down together and decide if he should stay.

Of course, there will be rules, and homework. But he will be with other children similar to him. He can race around the grounds in his wheelchair, go to school, join in dramas, play wheelchair basketball and be independent. Today offers the prospect of a brighter future for Ovi.

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**ABDUR RAHMAN** - Story writer: Nabila Samantha Khaled (Age 11)



During 1971 Bangladesh liberation war, Abdur Rahman was only 10 years old when he got hit in a Landmine explosion with his friends, which meant losing his left leg. For almost 50 years he could not afford to have a prosthetic leg.

Husan Murshed (Muktijudo researcher) uploaded the picture of Abdur Rahman To Facebook in 2020. In December 2020, my dad (Sayadul Khaled) viewed the photo of Mr Rahman and assigned him to CRP (The Centre for the Rehabilitation of the Paralysed) in Dhaka, Bangladesh.

With CRPs help, Mr Rahman can stand on both legs after 50 years. He appreciated all the help he had by everyone, specifically by CRP. I think everyone here (VTT Trust) made a brilliant contribution to have a Free prosthetic leg for people like Mr Abdur Rahman. Every Bangladeshi was celebrating 50 years Independence of Bangladesh and Mr Abdur Rahman celebrating his own independence and his country.

## Summary of Speeches

### Valerie Taylor – CRP Update

Coming quite recently from Bangladesh, I would like to convey the heartfelt thanks of our patients, our staff members, our students, our trustees and our volunteers, to all of you who support our work by coming in person to assist us in a variety of ways in Bangladesh; by your most generous financial support and by your prayers. We have a wonderful partnership and we know that without you we could not achieve a fraction of what is possible when we work together.

I was due to return to the UK in April 2020. Suddenly plans had to change as Emirates Airlines cancelled the flight. Working from home seemed to be the best way to follow the Government of Bangladesh's instructions. Having been a signatory of the CRP's bank accounts from the start, this seemed to be the natural area in which to continue. A few years back most staff were paid in cash and few had personal bank accounts. Now the situation has radically changed as everyone has a bank account, so the rather mundane job of cheque countersigning has greatly increased. This certainly helped to keep me busy.

All the different "lockdowns" had a detrimental effect on patients' attendance over these last 16 months. Educational institutions were hit hard and for very long periods. This included CRP's Primary, inclusive school (William & Marie Taylor School) as well as the Nursing College, the Bangladesh Health Professions Institute (BHPI), and the School of Prosthetics and Orthotics. Classes were given online when possible, but so often it was the lack of the necessary equipment in students' homes that curtailed this kind of teaching. The most recent date for Educational Institutes to officially reopen in Bangladesh is Sunday 12 September.

Many of you will be aware that there has been a change of Executive Director at CRP, from 1<sup>st</sup> January 2021. Our previous Executive Director, General Shafiqul Islam, had completed 10 years in the post and did not want to extend his stay at CRP beyond this. We are all very grateful to General Shafiq for his hard work and efficiency during that time.

Dr. Sohrab Hossein has taken over the reins of responsibility for the leadership of CRP from the beginning of this year. Sohrab originally trained as a physiotherapist at CRP's training institute, the BHPI (Bangladesh Health Professions Institute). After working for a number of years as the Head of the Physiotherapy Department, he took on the role of Head of Programs and then Chief of Administration, before taking the opportunity to do his PhD studies at Sydney University. Sohrab was accepted for this study period completely free of cost. Last autumn, 2020, we received the news that Sohrab had achieved his PhD, becoming Dr Sohrab Hossain, and was interested in applying for the post of CRP's Executive Director. What makes this appointment extra special is that previously on many occasions those CRP-trained therapists who completed their further studies abroad have opted to stay and work overseas. Sohrab will now be a great example as someone who opted to return home and work to build up the quality of therapy practitioners and teachers at CRP's training institute.

During these last few months, CRP has been the recipient of 3 remarkable donations, details of which I would like to share with you. These involve 3 new donors and each donor is a Bangladeshi.

1. "In memory of Sami Azmol": None of us at CRP ever met him or his parents. His father wrote to say that Sami Azmol was an Australian citizen, living in Sydney for the last 33 years. He worked in a very responsible position as the Accountant and Finance Manager of the Ministry of Health of New South Wales. Returning from a run, he collapsed and died of a heart attack at the age of only 37. His grief-stricken parents wish to provide an appropriate building in his memory at CRP-Savar. I shared with his parents that the outpatient facilities require demolishing and need to be replaced with a multi-storey building, enabling more space to be provided for physio/ occupational/ and Speech and Language therapy due to the increased number of outpatients requiring treatments. "Something permanent, made at CRP, in the name of our son Sami Azmol. That will give us comfort that our son, Sami, will remain alive among the communities of CRP."
2. Creation of Regional Rehabilitation Centre: this is to be supported by Mr Khairuzzaman, Mayor of Rajshahi City Corporation. The 5 acres plus of land is a level, raised area protected by a boundary wall, located beside the main road to Dhaka – and accessible throughout for wheelchair users, because of a slightly raised concrete path

running between the orchard of fruit trees. These are mostly mango trees, and Rajshahi mangoes are famous throughout Bangladesh. Valerie recalled the mayor sending 8 crates of mangoes to CRP Savar patients and staff.

As I believe everyone knows, CRP commenced its work 40+ years ago, focussing on the treatment and rehabilitation of those with Spinal Cord (SCI) injuries. Although over the years 12 sub-centres have commenced work in different parts of the country, it is only at CRP-Savar that acute cases of Spinal Cord Injury are treated. Some cases are treated conservatively, which includes 2-hourly turning in bed and care of the paralysed bladder and bowel. This is life-saving treatment – prevention of pressure sores and urinary infections, both of which can be killers.

In the UK, SCI units tend to be small in size (up to 30 beds) but there are 12 centres providing acute care across the country. If Bangladesh is divided into 3 regions with the central region having CRP-Savar as its main centre for acute cases, CRP-Chittagong is the obvious place for the regional centre in the South, and CRP-Rajshahi becomes an ideal place for a regional centre in the north of Bangladesh. The gift of such a large plot of land is the most amazing gift coupled with a response from Dr Patanjali of the WHO SEARO which said in his text message that “It is confirmed that we are getting a good amount of money.” A bit later in the message he says “Please let us use this opportunity”. So I am hopeful that if the land transaction and the WHO funding for creating the buildings goes ahead as planned, we will in future be able to report to you on its progress.

3. Offer of land in Netrokona District: out of 8 acres, 17 plots totalling 6 acres are contiguous. Mr Nasir Milki and his elder brother, Sal Milki are with us today. We had the honour and pleasure to meet Mr Nasir Milki when he came to visit Sojol, a paraplegic staff member. Sojol and Nasir’s friendship goes back to school days when they both attended the same school. It was the first time this year that I met anyone who mentioned return to the UK. I cheekily asked Nasir if he might take some calendars to post in the UK for us, when his flight was confirmed. Thus Nasir became a courier for CRP when he set off with 40 calendars to post in the UK at the end of July 2021. We greatly appreciate his help.

The area of land offered to CRP is in a very rural location and as so many of CRP’s SCI patients are from a farming and/or labouring background, it seemed very fitting that we should consider this gift as a perfect place to present choices of farming activities to our SCI patients. The only difference from able-bodied farming trainees is that these people will use a wheelchair for their mobility. What agricultural projects do we have in mind?

-- Pisciculture; Aquaponics; Poultry rearing: chickens/geese/duck/budgies for sale; Beehives, beekeeping; Vegetable growing: mushrooms; Animal husbandry: goat and cow rearing; Making compost; Fruit tree orchard: mangoes/lychees/jackfruit/lotcon - making jams/chutnies; Biodegradable flower pots (using Appropriate Paper Technology introduced by Janet Ivin and John Carter); Help from Shaikh Siraj (cf his farming/gardening projects on TV)

In all cases of SCI, the usual request is: what work can they do to support their families. We believe in increasing employment opportunities in agricultural areas for SCI cases in wheelchairs. These include making a bicycle trailer to transport either an agricultural load to market or a patient to see a doctor.

Each activity on this list has been done by our wheelchair users so we know it is physically possible. But it has only been done spasmodically through the lack of sufficient space. Now the offer of the Milki family of their land in Netrokona will enable these different activities to be permanent and the site can act as a demonstration farm at which others can receive training and share knowledge.

#### **Other news:**

1. After years of waiting, Dr Rafiq, a wheelchair user, has been appointed to the senior position of Director at the Bangladesh Agricultural Research Institute at Joydebpur. You will find his initial story in the book written by Liz Timms called “Journeys”.

I remember the time when Rafiq phoned me saying that he was getting increasingly doubtful about being selected for his PhD studies at the Agricultural University in Mymensingh. He and his wife had planned to do this study at the same time yet his wife had been called for her interview and had a supervisor to guide her while Rafiq continued to wait. I was asked if I could try to convince the Vice Chancellor to give Rafiq the opportunity to study even though he was a wheelchair user. My efforts did not succeed, but another person was more successful and, as a result, Rafiq was admitted as a PhD student. I think he will make an excellent adviser when we share with Dr Rafiq our plans for the agricultural activities to be commenced on the Milki family’s property.

2. You may sometimes wonder about the extent of the Government of Bangladesh’s financial support for the needs of CRP. Thanks to the close follow up each year by Mizan, Head of Finance and Accounts at CRP, in most years the Government agrees to increase their support. This year was no exception: it agreed to an increase of 40 lac. taka resulting in a total of 5 crore taka, roughly £430,000.
3. Many of you who have visited CRP will know Shafi Ullah, the head of the Social Welfare Department. Last month he circulated an email informing us all that he had just completed 29 years working in that Department.
4. In addition to Covid-19, Dengue fever has been claiming the lives of young children.
5. One of the very few Bangladesh staff members to succumb to the covid pandemic was Monira, Canteen assistant at CRP-Manikganj. She had a high fever for 1 week and was taken to hospital but sadly died that day, leaving behind one daughter. CRP’s staff are looking to see if there is any work that appeals to Monira’s daughter at CRP.
6. One never knows what news might be found in any incoming email. Just 3 days ago I received an email from Dr K M Maqsudur Rahman and the subject of the email read: “Donation of 1<sup>st</sup> Instalment Tk 30 lac. for construction of 4<sup>th</sup> floor of CRP-Barisal Centre and signing of MOU. Cheque handed over. Now I would request you to invite tender to schedule as soon as possible to complete processing by next month Oct. 2021 & work can start next Nov.”
7. Kadoorie Charitable Foundation support for 3 years running costs of the Day Centre for those with mental conditions at CRP-Gonokhbari: As 3 years have passed, we plan to apply to the Kadoorie Foundation for creating a replica Day Centre at CRP-Mirpur.

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**Farhan Masood Khan**

Farhan introduced himself as Head of Programmes for Channel S and has been a long advocate of the work of the CRP – having first met Valerie back in 2012-13. He was very much inspired by the work and energy being put in by Valerie and the CRP team. Farhan highlighted the diversity of colour, gender and age within the audience, and acknowledged the commitment and talent to make a success of VTT.

Farhan expressed his desire and excitement about the potential prospect of working with VTT to help raise funding for the organisation by targeting the British Bangladeshi community where his own experience has shown there to be a significant level of compassion and generosity towards contributing to good causes. This has been demonstrated by the £65m which Channel S has itself helped raise since its inception in 2007.

The basic strategy advocated to help promote VTT would be to target all UK cities using the national broadcasting reach and community links which Channel S has developed in recent years. Farhan believes that the specific work of the CRP will be a natural pull factor for donors and he has pledged to provide personal commitment to ensure that there is a platform for success.

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**New Staff at CRP**

**Rahmatul Bari**, Donor Liaison Officer since 9 March, 2021, has a primary background of bachelor and master’s in Geography & Environment from Jahangirnagar University and had completed Post-Graduate Diploma on Disaster Management from the University of Dhaka and Project Management (BIMS & QUALIFY). He has experience of more than 5 years of project management in different NGOs in Bangladesh.

**Shah Md. Aatur Rahman**, Chief of Administration, has 15 years of working experience in a different national and international organization in different places in Bangladesh. He has worked with CARE Bangladesh, Oxfam, IRRI, PROSHIKA and LAMB.

**Fahmida Hossain**, Advocacy and Networking Officer since 18 February, 2021 has completed her B.Ed. (Hons) and M.Ed. from the Institute of Education and Research (IER) of the University of Dhaka. She has worked at different nonprofit organizations and has two years of working experience with different companies like AROS, LINEX electronics, Path finder etc.