

Spring
2025

Valerie Taylor Trust

Empowering people with disabilities in Bangladesh

From the Chairman

Spring is in the air, and so I hope you are all looking forward to some warmer and sunnier weather.

I cannot believe how quickly the year has passed by already.

Most of you will be aware of the political situation in Bangladesh. Some articles in this newsletter refer to extra patients CRP admitted because of injuries during the student and citizen uprising last year. But I am happy to report that our sister Valerie and all at the CRP centres are doing as well as can be expected under the current circumstances.

With your continued dedicated support VTT has managed to send £230,000 to CRP in the 2024-2025 financial year.

I would like to say a very big "THANK YOU" to all our members, trustees, supporters and well-wishers here in the UK and around the world. You are all making it possible for CRP to continue to treat the disabled and underprivileged in Bangladesh.

We are delighted that Valerie will join us at the AGM on the 10th of May 2025.

I look forward to seeing you all there.

**Mokhtar Hussain (Khokon),
Chairman, Valerie Taylor Trust**

Annual Supporters Meeting 2025 **Saturday 10 May 2025**

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

Doors open at 12.30pm – Curry lunch from 1pm – Annual Meeting starts 2pm

We are pleased to inform you that Valerie Taylor will be attending

RSVP: admin@valerietaylortrust.org or Tel: 01622 743011

Jyoti

Glen McGhee writes:

Jyoti (Akhinur Khanom) has become a well-known face at CRP Savar where she works in the main admin corridor. Jyoti is the eldest adopted daughter of Valerie Taylor and has been since 1981 at the age of 5.

Jyoti has Cerebral Palsy, although this has never stopped her either at work, home or in her social life. She says that her mum always told her “If you really want to do it, you can do it”. After leaving school and completing a computer course she started work at CRP Savar in 2001. In 2004 she earned her HSC from college, as well as working at the same time.

Her work includes secretarial duties and she types and writes letters and documents in both Bangla and English. In her free time she helps the poor patients receive the treatment they need and liaises with the social works department about the patient’s needs.

You can see Jyoti moving at some speed in her electric wheelchair between her office and her home, which is in the CRP grounds, next to Valerie and her younger sister Poppy, who Valerie also adopted in the late 1980s.



Jyoti is very independent and nothing stops her, whether shopping or at the cultural events in the Reddaway hall. Her beautiful smile is just wonderful and a joy to see whenever you visit CRP.

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If you change your name, address, email or telephone number, please advise the Administrator (contact details below) so that we can keep you up to date with newsletters and maintain accurate records.

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Tel: 01622 743011, Email: admin@valerietaylortrust.org

From the Founder of CRP

Valerie writes of Iftar meals at CRP:

It may be very well known that all Muslim believers are expected to fast from sunrise to sunset each year during the month of Ramadan. This means no food and no water can be taken between these hours. At exactly the time for the setting of the sun the breaking of the fast begins. This is usually called by the local Muslim leader who prays over a loudspeaker and by doing so the fast is broken.

At CRP practically every department plans ahead for how many people they will invite. Usually that means at least 300-400 people, so the Reddaway Hall has become a regular place for everyone to gather together.

The guests are of various religions, and they wear their best clothes and enjoy special food such as imported dates, and fruit. The

fruit in season at the moment are guavas, water melon, bananas, imported apples and oranges.

Although I have never joined such a fast, guests are made welcome to join the breaking of the fast at the Iftar meal. Regularly a small box of rice with curried chicken is given to each person to take home. Prayers follow the breaking of the fast.

As we made our way home from the Reddaway Hall with twilight having descended, I was thrilled to see the annual visit of flying foxes swooping backwards and forwards.

They are attracted by a small berry on a particular tree and their visit lasts for only a very few days and when the berries are ripe next year, we can be sure to see more flying foxes returning to enjoy these berries.

Volunteer at CRP?

CRP has benefitted hugely over the years from International Volunteers.

Have you ever thought of Volunteering there yourself? Or do you think someone you know might be interested? People have often said that Volunteering at CRP has changed their lives.

To find out more, go to valerietaylortrust.org, click on “Volunteering at CRP” and explore the links there.

Or, in Bangla:

CRP দীর্ঘদিন ধরে আন্তর্জাতিক স্বেচ্ছাসেবকদের সহায়তা পেয়ে আসছে। আপনি কি কখনো সেখানে স্বেচ্ছাসেবক হিসেবে কাজ করার কথা ভেবেছেন? অথবা আপনার পরিচিত কেউ আগ্রহী হতে পারে? অনেকেই বলে থাকেন যে CRP-তে স্বেচ্ছাসেবক হিসেবে কাজ করার অভিজ্ঞতা তাদের জীবন পরিবর্তন করেছে।

আরও জানতে, ভিজিট করুন valerietaylortrust.org, “Volunteering at CRP” এ ক্লিক করুন এবং সেখানকার লিঙ্কগুলো অন্বেষণ করুন।

Tanya's Revisit

Tanya Islam, elder daughter of VTT Secretary, Mohammed Islam, writes of a heartwarming return to CRP-Savar

In January, I had the incredible opportunity to revisit CRP Bangladesh after 10 years, and what a remarkable journey it has been! It was truly inspiring to see how much CRP has progressed and evolved since my last visit in 2014.

During my time here a decade ago, I spent a week supporting students and patients, witnessing firsthand the dedication and impact CRP has on the lives of individuals with disabilities. I was particularly amazed by the rehabilitation facilities, where patients preparing to return to their villages can practice living in a simulated environment. CRP has created a replica village home, complete with animals, to help patients rehearse daily activities and gain the skills necessary to reintegrate into their communities. This thoughtful and innovative approach to rehabilitation made a lasting impression on me, as it truly empowers individuals to regain their independence and confidence before returning to their homes. I was just as amazed this time, as this facility has grown, and CRP now offers even more to support patients on their journey to recovery and reintegration.

Returning this time, I was amazed by the growth, new initiatives, and the continued commitment to transforming lives. The spirit of CRP is alive and stronger than ever. One of the most beautiful things I noticed during my visit was the vibrant energy on campus. Rehearsals for Sports Day were taking place, and it was such a joy to see the students so engaged and full of enthusiasm. The sense of community and excitement was palpable, adding to the warmth of the campus atmosphere.

The prosthetics workshop also caught my eye. It was incredible to see the advanced work being done there, helping to restore



Toys made from recycled paper

independence and dignity to patients through the creation of custom prosthetics. The skill and care that went into each piece was truly inspiring, and it was a reminder of the profound difference CRP is making in people's lives.

Additionally, I was delighted to see the beautiful toys made for young children from recycled materials. Not only are they a creative way to promote sustainability, but they also provide much-needed joy and education for the children. It was a heartwarming example of how CRP is constantly innovating to support the community in meaningful ways.

I am deeply grateful for the chance to witness these ongoing transformations and look forward to seeing the continued success and impact of CRP in the years to come. The work being done there is nothing short of extraordinary, and it is a privilege to witness the journey!

Lamia's First Visit

Lamia, Tanya's younger sister, describes a heartfelt visit to CRP-Savar

January marked a very special moment for me—my return to Bangladesh after 20 years. Over the years, I had followed CRP's incredible journey from afar, especially in the UK, where I had seen the tireless efforts to keep it thriving. Visiting CRP in person was something I had always dreamed of, and this was my first chance to see it all unfold. CRP had been at the top of my list for this trip, and I couldn't wait to experience it firsthand.

What I found when I arrived at CRP was nothing short of remarkable. Meeting the wonderful Valerie, who so generously took time out of her busy schedule to talk to us about the work CRP does, made the visit even more special. Her deep passion and commitment to CRP's mission were evident, and it was a privilege to hear about the strides the organisation has made.

One new initiative that particularly caught my eye was their sustainability efforts. CRP is actively working to make their facilities greener.



Rainwater harvesting system at CRP

The work from the WaterAid project to improve groundwater replenishment for more efficient water use stood out as an example of CRP's commitment to sustainable practices. It was uplifting to witness how CRP is taking these vital steps to create a better future while caring for their patients today.

As I walked through the compound, I was struck by just how much CRP offers its patients. There wasn't a single dull face in sight, and the sense of warmth and care was felt throughout. It was clear that CRP doesn't just provide medical services — it offers a true "home away from home". The atmosphere was filled with genuine kindness, and you could feel the commitment to healing and support.

We were also fortunate to witness the preparations for Sports Day, which was both inspiring and heartwarming. Watching the patients—both young and old—prepare for their performances reminded me that the opportunity to live a normal, joyful life should never be taken for granted. Seeing the effort, enthusiasm, and camaraderie involved in the event was truly touching. It was a beautiful reminder that CRP empowers its patients to live to their fullest potential.

Thank you to everyone at CRP for welcoming me so warmly. I'm truly grateful for this experience and hope to be back again soon. It was humbling to witness the positive impact CRP has on the lives of so many people. I'm excited to see how the organisation continues to grow and evolve in the coming years, and I'm confident that its future will be just as impactful as its past. CRP's unwavering dedication to improving the lives of its patients will undoubtedly continue to make a difference for many more years to come.

Visit to CRP by Dr. Mel Adams

In January 2014, Mel Adams, who helped to set up the Speech and Language Therapy degree course at the Bangladesh Health Professions Institute (BHPI) in 2004, visited the CRP to provide some Continued Professional Development for the SLTs working in the BHPI and CRP clinical services.

Several topics were covered in meetings and in a one-day workshop, and plans were made for continued remote support involving workshops and mentoring from overseas therapists with a range of clinical specialisms. This will help to keep the programme moving forwards and, in particular, provide support to those who have been doing such an incredible job thus far, with very little intervention from outside.

The focus of this visit was on sharing a range of frameworks used in the UK, and some internationally, that can be used to enhance clinical practice and evaluation, with a particular emphasis on goal setting, outcome measurement, assessing clinical practice (for student evaluation and clinical supervision) and on working with clients with eating & drinking difficulties. Mel also spent some time discussing approaches to the management of feeding difficulties in children with cerebral palsy in a low-resource environment and shared the caregiver training programme she developed in Bangladesh for her PhD fieldwork, back in 2004-6.

Discussions also took place regarding research ideas for the Bangladeshi SLTs and the potential for introducing a Masters programme for SLT.

On her last day at CRP Savar, Mel met with Fahmida Banu (Consultant PT in charge of the Supportive Seating Unit & APT Department) to discuss plans for the further roll-out of the Community Health Worker training programme developed by Mel whilst working for the UK charity, MAITS.

The focus of the meeting was the future sustainability of the programme. Fahmida has designed a very exciting plan, involving the training of staff from other high-profile organisations including CDD, BRAC and possibly Save the Children. This will help to ensure the dissemination of these much-needed skills for working with children with neurodevelopmental disabilities and their families, across the country.

As usual, Mel was incredibly well-looked after by her colleagues and Shamoly at the guesthouse. It was indeed a very worthwhile visit, albeit short. Mel is looking forward to continued regular contact with her colleagues at CRP, and hoping to be of further assistance to these dynamic individuals who are leading the way in Bangladesh.



Mel with CRP Colleagues

Caught in the Crossfire

Volunteer Orthotist and Trustee Glen McGee returned to CRP in January 2025. He writes:

This is the story of an ordinary Bangladeshi person and his normal daily work, who got caught up in the upheaval situation last summer on 5th August 2024.

His name is Dilder Tayeb, he is 25 years old, lives in Chittagong and works as an electrician.

On the day in question, he was leaving his work and had just stepped onto the pavement when he felt an almighty pain in his right leg and fell to the ground. He had a severe bullet wound above the knee. His workmates pulled him back into the workplace, but they did not manage to get him to a local hospital until 9.30pm, due to the ongoing fighting on the roads.

This local hospital provided basic treatment, so bandaged his wound and told him to go to Chittagong Medical College, where he was then told to go to the Dhaka NITOR hospital, (the principal orthopaedic hospital of the country). This was a six-hour car ride away, and when he reached NITOR, the hospital was full and overrun with people who had been caught up in the troubles. They returned to Chittagong, but as the pain was so severe he went back to Dhaka and was admitted at 5.00am on the 7th of August. His right leg required amputation above the knee and that was carried out at 3.00pm that day. He had to stay in the hospital for 3 days. Dilder returned to Chittagong and stayed in a hospital there for a month.

When he left the hospital, he was given a second-hand prosthesis by someone and whilst this helped him it was not an ideal solution. In December he was in contact with WHO (World Health Organisation), who are trying to help anyone injured in the political troubles in August. CRP are also working with WHO in a similar vein trying to rehabilitate some of very same people.



Dilder Tayeb

Dilder came to CRP Savar in January this year for treatment at the Prosthetic and Orthotic department. The stump was examined and Dilder given physiotherapy treatment to build up his muscles in his stump and also to improve his balance. His stump was then cast and a new prosthetic limb made with a jointed knee. His treatment lasted for about 6 weeks. The new limb fitted well and he left the department happy and able to walk in a more natural manner.

Dilder has now returned to Chittagong, he is not married but has good family support. He is hoping to rejoin the company he worked for but is not sure if this will happen. If he has any problems with his prosthesis, he can visit Chittagong CRP who can offer additional support and help.

This is only example one of the many similarly affected persons treated and supported by CRP since last August.

Poems from CRP

Elizabeth Timms, author of our 'Journeys' books, writes of her latest project:

I had three wonderful but very exhausting weeks at CRP. It's such an extraordinary place. It felt good. The students bring a lot of life and activity. There are always 'cultural' and sporting events going on. I spent time with patients and staff collecting poems and helping them to write about their experiences and feelings. Poetry is a very Bengali art.

This was very hard with patients. I had a few small breakthroughs and a few tears. It would have taken much longer to do anything really useful, but staff were enthusiastic, and I had a good co-worker, Al-Amin, Assistant to Sohrab. A lot of the contributions were very sad, which is not surprising. The young men wrote a lot about broken hearts and lost loves - which is heartbreaking given that many are paralysed. But Al-Amin and I did a couple of workshops which succeeded somewhat in bringing out brighter ideas.

Here is a poem by Rubel, a staff member in a wheelchair (victim of polio) reflecting on childhood. He is married, is a great singer and runs a fabulous weekly music group in the OT Department.

The Rainy Season

It is a rainy day in the rainy season.
Boats with many coloured sails
race across the water. The wind
blows waves in all directions

We sit in our boat singing
with all our might.
We have caught some small fish
which we will have fried for dinner

The sky darkens
we are afraid of flood
once in 1998 the water reached our house
but today we can't tell

When I was very young I planted guava
and mango and the handkerchief tree with my father
soon after I needed help to get to school.
Then I had to be carried.

I have scars on my knees from crawling
but these scars have made my life,
brought me music and singing
my children and my life.

And here's another by a young woman whose husband has just broken his back.

Gifts

Tears are the greatest gifts.
They open your heart.
Sometimes you may find them in happy times
but always when tragedy comes



Image of rickshaw puller taking a man shot in the Aug 4th uprising to hospital

Editor's Note: A summary Report by CRP on February 28, 2025 shows that of the 161 admissions to CRP Savar as a result of the student and citizen uprising in Bangladesh prior to August 5 2024, 75 were students.

The 58 most seriously injured (e.g. with amputations or spinal cord injuries) had to be treated as inpatients, which must have been a big challenge for the 100-bed hospital.

The treatment of 53 of the 161 is now completed, but further funding is urgently needed to support the rehabilitation and reintegration of some of the victims into their communities.

And finally here is part of a poem by Dr. Sayeed, a dear and wonderful senior doctor at CRP written after the revolution and the escape of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on August 4th last year.

Bangladesh

Land of mystery, land of song
where men are brave and women strong
where one falls to the bullet; all feel the pain
but others stand. Resolve remains.

Morning brings roses but evening thorns
Morning brings sunshine but evening storms

A nation forgetful of hard times past
embraces new passions breaks free at last
Laughter and tears and endless wrong
'Enough' they say but the pain goes on

The ruled become rulers but soon forget
the chains that once bound them, the struggles they met -
Beasts now in masks they instil dread.
Hope turns to fear on the path they tread ...

Another film script from Elspeth Waldie

In February 2024 CRP published a book "See The Person" to raise awareness of Cerebral Palsy in the context of Bangladesh in order to dispel prejudice about it. The book was written in by the British writer, producer, director, and human rights activist Elspeth Waldie, and translated into Bengali by Humayun Rashid.

This year shooting is in progress for a CRP film with the same title, based on the book. Elspeth is the executive producer, Humayun Farid the producer, and Gazi Rakat the director of the film. We eagerly await the film's completion.

Some or you will have seen another film with script written by Elspeth called "Bihongo", made in 2000. It was the story of a village girl, Moni, who becomes tetraplegic because of a spinal cord injury following an accident. She needs to support her family. Along with the struggle of her new life, she faces superstitions regarding disability. But Moni manages to express her creativity in mouth painting. Based on true events, this film showed that if everyone in society extends their helping hands then anything is attainable.

WAYS YOU CAN HELP

The disabled poor in Bangladesh continue to need help. The Valerie Taylor Trust supports the Centre for the Rehabilitation of the Paralysed. This is the only place in the country where the paralysed are given specialist treatment – free of charge for the very poorest.

Support our work by:

- Regular donations by completing the back page of this newsletter – our preferred method.
- Donate on-line to our bank, details overleaf, or via www.valerietaylortrust.org, www.paypal.co.uk or www.justgiving.com.
- Please register your donations for Gift Aid if this is applicable.
- Use a VTT Collection Box in the home and outdoors – obtained from the Administrator.
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Empowering people with disabilities in Bangladesh

Administration Address: 4 Wilberforce Road, Coxheath, Maidstone, Kent ME17 4HA
Tel: 01622 743011 **Email:** admin@valerietaylortrust.org **Web:** www.valerietaylortrust.org
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I would like to join the **Valerie Taylor Trust** (please tick as applicable)

In order to become a member, at least £25 per year, or £2 per month, must be given as a donation. You do not need to be a member to donate to the Valerie Taylor Trust, but being a member entitles you to regular updates on news and information, voting rights at the Annual General Meeting and ensures VTT continuity.

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Name (Mr/Mrs/Miss/Ms)

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I wish all future donations to VTT to be under the Gift Aid Scheme until I notify you otherwise.

Signature Date

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT

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