

Chairman's report for Interface Uganda 2007

Summary

2007 was a year of gradual development and consolidation for the charity. The UK team of volunteers led by Karen Devaraj (charity administrator) have worked hard to raise the profile of the charity. There has been a gradual increase in supporters helping with the charity as well as those donating funds to Interface.

Funds have been used to develop the work of reconstructive surgery and other related activities such as anaesthetic training. Interface has continued to support teams of volunteers visiting Africa and still supports visitors to UK for training though there were none in 2007. There has been an increase in support for patients who otherwise are unable to come for treatment. A huge contribution of Interface has been in the administration of funds donated by other charities or organizations such as Smile Train, and in the purchase of equipment with these funds.

Activities for 2007

I have divided up activities into different sections. There is inevitably overlap between these sections.

UK based activities

The team of volunteers have worked very hard to enable the charity to function and to grow. Most of the work is behind the scenes, such as liaising with the various organizations sending funds and with Uganda, writing to supporters, keeping the accounts and sending them to the charities commission.

A number of other activities have taken place.

- **Container** – A 40 foot container has been purchased and a huge amount of equipment has been collected from a variety of sources. This is very time consuming work and has been coordinated by Karen Devaraj, Helen Andersen and Bernard Pugh along with many other helpers. The collection of equipment has raised the profile of the charity, particularly within the Devon area and there has been a huge amount of good will to enable valuable equipment to be donated. This container is due to leave Exeter in Spring 2008 and will be sent to the site of the new disability hospital due to be built in Kampala. The container contains valuable and expensive equipment such as operating tables and XR processors as well as many boxes of valuable medical equipment.
- **Fund raising events** – a number of events have been organized by volunteers such as a concert in Chagford, marathons and half marathons run in aid of Interface. Following the Chagford concert, Interface was nominated by a local

- celebrity, Adrian Edmundson for the Christmas BBC Celebrity Mastermind programme.
- **Purchase of equipment** – Much essential equipment has been purchased through Interface – surgical instruments, operating lights, scalpel blades, anaesthetic equipment, monitors etc have been bought through Interface though principally with funds donated by other charities.
 - **Conference** – Interface funded a flight by Andrew Hodges to the British Plastic Surgery Conference where he was able to present 3 papers on the reconstructive work in East Africa, one of which one a microsurgery prize for the best presentation.

Uganda based activities

- **Surgical teams** - Interface has continued to support surgical teams and in 2007, 3 surgical visits took place:
 - Patrick Duffy, paediatric urologist joined us in Kampala for one week to help us with difficult problems such as intersex
 - Vik Deveraj and team came for 2 weeks and operated in Kampala before traveling to operate in Rwanda and Congo.
 - Paul Townsend – also came for 2 weeks and operated in Kampala and in two hospitals in the East of Uganda.
- **Patient support** – CBM continues to pay the operation costs for poor patients but patients do not receive support to travel to Kampala and also to stay in Kampala. This precludes the majority of patients from benefiting from the free surgery. Interface has increased support for such patients, often paying the whole bill for their stay in Kampala as well as giving them money for the bus journey home. This has enabled patients with difficult problems to travel even from Congo and Tanzania and stay for several months while they recover from their operations and undergo physiotherapy.
- **HDU** – Interface has funded the establishment of a high dependency unit (HDU) in Mulago Government Hospital, Kampala. Andrew Hodges resigned from working there this year, but Interface continues to support the work in Mulago Hospital and Sarah Hodges remains active in supporting the anaesthetic department and in particular the training of anaesthetists.
- **Car** – Interface continues to run a car. This has been used on a daily basis by the Cleft coordinator, Angela English. It has also been used for patient transport and for upcountry visits.

Interface with other charities

Interface has been very effective at “interfacing” with other charities and therefore the work and funds of these charities have very much also become the activity of Interface. The team in UK administering the funds have enabled us to make use of funds from many different sources

- **Smile Train** – continues to provide significant funds for cleft lip and palate work. All these funds presently pass through the Interface accounts. There have been a number of payments for different projects
 - **Patient care** – every patient receives their treatment, accommodation and transport free of charge
 - **Awareness campaigns** – to enable the printing of posters and radio announcements
 - **Ancillary treatment** – to enable other expensive investigations and treatments to be funded on a patient by patient basis
 - **Equipment** – we applied for and were granted funding to enable us to buy a minibus and equip it with anaesthetic and surgical equipment for upcountry visits so that we are not so reliant on hospital equipment which is often not functioning.
 - **Conferences** – Visits to two conferences were funded in 2007 – a cleft conference in Nigeria and a Plastic surgery conference in USA.
- **Anaesthetic activities** – a number of successful conferences were organized by Sarah Hodges and funded through Interface. Funds were received from
 - **Anaesthesia in Developing Countries conference** – this was hosted in Uganda and participants flew in from as far away as Australia. It was a great success and there has already been a request made to host it here again.
 - **Technicians course** – to improve skills at maintaining and repairing anaesthetic equipment
 - **CME course** – another very successful course was run for anaesthetic officers to improve their skills.
 - **Support for anaesthetic trainees** – two anaesthetic trainees are being supported through Interface, there is an acute shortage of anaesthetists in Uganda so this support will significantly increase the numbers trained.
 - **Anaesthetic book** – Sarah Hodges compiled many articles into an anaesthetic book which was printed and distributed to anaesthetic officers.

Activities for 2008

The charity continues to provide essential services enabling reconstructive surgery to grow. A number of possibilities for involvement in the coming year include

- **New disability hospital** – funded under a new NGO called CoRSU (Comprehensive Rehabilitation Services of Uganda). Interface is already having a significant contribution with the container of equipment being shipped out soon. There are possibilities for more containers to be sent in 2008.
- **Patient support** – there is a need to increase patient support, particularly for the patients with burns who otherwise have no assistance and who frequently spend many months in Kampala.
- **Surgical teams** – several team visits are already planned – to help in training and supporting the huge amount of surgery that is needed.
- **Training visits to UK** – this has been beneficial when staff are well selected and it is hoped that more staff will benefit from training opportunities.

