

Interface Uganda Annual Report for 2011

Interface Uganda was established to provide essential reconstructive surgery in Uganda and neighbouring countries and also to train the necessary staff to accomplish this. Challenges in the working environment led to a slowdown of Interface work and a reduction in activities during 2011. This proved to be a temporary situation and many of the challenges have now been overcome so that we hope 2012 will be a more active and positive year.

Assistance of Patients

In Uganda and the surrounding countries the cost of living escalated dramatically (the cost of a kilo of maize flour, the cheapest staple food, has risen by over 50%). Many poor patients struggled, and are still struggling to feed their families let alone find the resources to pay for medical treatment. The cost of fuel rose and transport is expensive. Due to rising living costs CoRSU needed to increase fees. For many, just traveling to the hospital was prohibitive, and paying bills has been difficult. In this environment the offer of assistance from Interface made a huge difference for a number of patients. All patients who are helped are assessed to find out how much they can contribute. Interface then steps in and covers the difference to enable patients to receive treatment. This has been particularly useful for adult patients with disfiguring, advanced cancer.

Mobilisation of Patients

Many patients do not even know they can be treated. The Plastic Surgery department travels to a mission hospital in the West of Uganda 4 times a year. Interface has supported some mobilisation of patients – the most successful being a former grateful patient from Congo who traveled into Congo with Interface assistance and found patients who needed cleft lip repairs.

Fellowship in Plastic Surgery

Over the last few years we have been working hard to develop a training programme in Plastic Surgery. We had hoped that this would start in August 2011 but it was delayed and has finally commenced in January 2012. One successful candidate who had given up a job to join the training programme and asked that he be allowed to start earlier at CoRSU, Interface agreed to give him a monthly living allowance to enable him to commence his studies for a 3 month period prior to taking up his fellowship. You can read more about what this support enabled him to do and learn prior to his fellowship by reading his report on our website. See <http://www.interfaceuganda.org/other-reports>, and look for Darius Balumuka letter: Jan 2012.

Anaesthesia

Safe surgery needs safe anaesthesia and Interface has been able to assist with training of anaesthetists from Uganda, Kenya and Malawi by helping to fund the first "Difficult Airway Course" run in Uganda in June 2011. This was very successful utilising a team of facilitators from the UK. Interface also acts as a conduit to channel funding for the annual "Anaesthesia in Developing Countries" course which has been running in Kampala since 2007. It is always well attended and benefits from visiting local hospital practitioners.

Information Evening and Re- Launch of our Website

The guest speaker at our Annual Information Evening in 2011 was Marc Swan – a Plastic and Reconstructive Surgeon based in Oxford who had spent 3 months in Uganda in 2010. He gave a very thought provoking presentation about the challenges and highlights of his visit.

At the Information Evening we also re-launched our Website which had been updated and revamped brilliantly by Jackie Fowler with the support and guidance of Nat Parnell from Three Things Website Design, for which we are most grateful.

Fund raising

We are very fortunate with the range and commitment of individuals and groups who fund raise on our behalf.

We greatly appreciate the fund raising efforts of: Monkton Prep School (Combe Down, Bath), Ebrington Presbyterian Church (Londonderry), Primley Church, (Sidmouth, Devon) and Sidmouth Methodist Church (Sidmouth, Devon) have all had fund raising events on our behalf. The Sidmouth Methodist Church held a very successful 'Moonlight and Roses' concert in July. Primley Church held various events, including a further fund raising concert by the Sidmouth Gospel Choir which was well attended and greatly enjoyed by all.

Fundraising activities by individuals have included – baking and selling bread and giving Interface the proceeds (thank you Alice Munsey), playing the church organ at various occasions (thank you Mr Adams) and continuing to impress groups with stories of their South West Coastal Path walk (thank you Jenny and Diana and thank you the Lutra Valley Probus Club who gave us a donation as a result of one of Jenny and Diana's talks).

The most impressive fund raising event of 2011 was by two of our regular and most committed fund raisers – Jackie and Tim Fowler – who took place in the world's largest cycling event - the Vatternrundan - along with 22,448 other riders! This is a 300 km (186 mile) cycle ride around Lake Vattern in Sweden. They started at 9.40 pm on 17th June, cycled through the night (which consisted of only a few hours of darkness), and finished at 10.45am on 18th (13 hours later)! For more details about this amazing feat and photos of the event, have a look at our website at www.interfaceuganda.org.uk. Thank You Jackie and Tim for such a fantastic effort!

In 2011 we also registered with Easy Funding. It is a very straightforward and easy way to raise funds. You need to register but then after that, there are a wide range of stores/shops also registered. You just go ahead and shop online with your favourite stores and you raise money for us at the same time. It's that easy. Again see our website for more details.

The future 2012

There remains a great need to assist in paying the fees of patients who cannot afford to access the services. We have worked on improving the collection of data on the patients we have assisted, which we hope will be useful, and will help give our supporters more information about the work being done. Have a look at our website under patient stories for more information.

We hope to continue to give assistance with training courses both in Plastic surgery and anaesthesia run locally.

Assisting with the development of the Surgical Training programme: The most exciting development at the end of 2011 was the go ahead to proceed with the training programme which started in January 2012. Two trainees have begun a 3 year university course in Plastic Surgery. Interface will be able to assist these trainees by:

- Providing some equipment to help them learn – e.g digital cameras
- Funding fellowships to targeted centres, particularly to gain exposure to conditions not commonly treated in CoRSU
- Funding visiting lecturers who will help to teach and examine our students.