2020 brings many changes to our charity. Andrew and Sarah Hodges (founders of the charity in 2001) have moved from Kampala, Uganda to work and teach in The Philippines. We will let you know how they are getting on out there once they are settled in and have time to give us an update.

Also, Karen Devaraj (administrator for the charity for the past 19 years) is handing over her role to Martin Pittard. So the admin part of the charity will move from Exeter to Oxford.

With all these changes, I thought I should write a short history of the huge achievements that Andrew, Sarah and Karen have made to the charity over the years.

Andrew and Sarah Hodges founded Interface Uganda as a charity in 2001. Prior to this, Andrew worked as general surgeon and Sarah as an anaesthetist in the West of Uganda from 1992-1998 in a Church of Uganda hospital for the Church Missionary Society. Patients needing plastic surgery (as well as other specialist procedures) were often left untreated, as there was no national reconstructive service. Therefore they started to treat these patients at Kagando hospital.

Once a few had been treated, they became aware of the huge need nationwide for reconstructive surgery. Andrew was taught by visiting plastic surgeon, Tim Goodacre, before returning to England to undertake a 6 year training programme in plastic surgery at the Royal Devon and Exeter Hospital.

When Andrew and Sarah left Uganda in 1998, many hospitals out there requested further assistance which led to the charity being born in Exeter in 2001. Whilst at Exeter, they inspired many people to help with, and fundraise for, their new charity. These included Vikram Devaraj (consultant plastics and reconstructive surgeon); Karen Devaraj (his wife, who became the charity administrator); Helen Anderson (Emergency Department nurse, who became a trustee); Maggie Knights (theatre nurse); Bernard Pugh and Jackie Fowler (plastics physiotherapist). They became the 'team' in Exeter, holding regular monthly meetings for the charity.
A visiting surgeon and two nurses from Uganda came to the Royal Devon and Exeter plastics ward during this time, including George Galliwango (now head of the plastics team at CoRSU hospital). George also subsequently spent a short period as an observer in Oxford.

Andrew and Sarah returned to Uganda in 2004, initially working at two sites. They worked in the national government teaching and referral centre, Mulago Hospital, in Kampala, as well as at the CBM supported Church of Uganda Hospital at Mengo – also in Kampala. (This hospital also happens to be the oldest hospital in the whole of east Africa, having been founded by the pioneer missionaries Sir Albert & Lady Cook in 1897). Many surgeons and anaesthetists from the UK accepted Andrew & Sarah’s invitations to visit Uganda in this decade, and helped treat patients as well as teaching.

Sarah developed a visionary and highly respected training programme for anaesthetic management in low resource settings, and Andrew took the initial steps towards a properly managed and accredited training in plastic surgery for young surgeons. At Mulago hospital, Andrew and Sarah also set up a High Dependency Unit.

Whilst working at Mengo with colleagues from CBM (especially Marieke and Michael Steenbeck), the need for a more dedicated facility for modern reconstructive orthopaedic and plastic surgery became acutely evident. They worked alongside their colleagues to design and build this facility, with generous aid from CBM the German charity that Andrew & Sarah were then being supported by. In 2009, that superb new building – the ‘Comprehensive Rehabilitation and Surgery Unit’ – ‘CoRSU’ - hospital opened.
Much new equipment was needed to equip the empty building, and 4 large containers full of beds, mattresses, operating tables, Xray processors, theatre trolleys, operating lights, anaesthetic equipment, surgical instruments, etc, etc were sent out – mostly salvaged from the old Heavitree maternity hospital in Exeter. This huge task was undertaken by a group of dedicated volunteers – Karen Devaraj, Helen Anderson and Bernard Pugh.

Andrew and Sarah continued working at CoRSU hospital until the end of 2019. In that time, they achieved a staggering amount:

- They set up a training programme in plastic surgery.
  In 2010, Andrew started to try to set up a University recognised training programme in plastic surgery. No other training programme existed before in Central / Eastern Africa, except for one in Ethiopia. The first trainees started in January 2012 – the MMed is a 3 year programme in collaboration with Mbarara University. Interface Uganda has helped with funding for providing equipment for the trainees, paying for fellowships to targeted centres, and helping to fund visiting lecturers to teach and examine. To date, there have been 12 trainees on this course: Darius, Martin, Linda, Naomi, Francis, Cornelius, Richard, Joseph, Obady, Irene, William and Dorothy. Interface have funded various training visits for all of the above trainees, and all of them go to a Microsurgery course at Ganga Hospital in Coimbatore, India, and Burns fellowship in Indore, India.

- They set up a way of supporting the poorest patients.
  At CoRSU, children are treated for free, but adults have to pay for their treatment, investigations and stay in Kampala. Some patients would need to stay for months if they need extensive rehabilitation post op. Interface helps to pay for the treatment, investigations and the stay for these patients, as well as sometimes paying for their transport to get to Kampala.
In rural areas, people often cannot afford medical treatment, or even know that they can get treatment for various conditions. Interface funded a person to go out to rural communities and find people who needed surgery, then would help them to get to CoRSU hospital in Kampala.

- **Dressings.**
  The development of the wound care / dressing clinic by Andrew, with the researched idea of using cost effective honey dressings.

- **Equipment.**
  Quite a large proportion of money raised for Interface goes on both paying for new equipment, and transporting used equipment out to CoRSU. Andrew and the surgeons in Uganda would decide and source what was needed, then Karen would need to sort out the best way to purchase the equipment and get it to Uganda – involving many emails!

  Over the years, Interface has provided new equipment such as: Laptops; loupes; a monitor for theatres; a Dermatome (a machine to take skin grafts); a Stryker drill (for cutting bone); thermoplastic splinting material (sent out every 3 months or so); baby feeding bottles and teats; breast pumps; physio equipment for therapist at Kagando hospital (TENS machines, exercise balls, heatpads, therabands, massagers); etc etc.

Much of the equipment sent has been used and saved by medical teams in Exeter, which can be expensive to send, but the cost of sending is around a tenth of the cost of buying these items new, so deemed as worthwhile. Much of the second hand equipment was sent out in the containers, but also, used splints and physio equipment is sent out around every 3 months to the therapy team at CoRSU.
• Visits to Uganda and visitors from Uganda.
Much effort is needed to organise trips to and from Uganda. Karen has organised many of these trips - having to obtain visas, and making sure the money for the flights, accommodation, etc gets to the right people. As well as treating patients in Uganda, the main focus for visiting medical staff is to teach. But many things are learnt from the variety of experiences from hospitals in Uganda. Visitors have spent time at Mulago hospital, Katalemwa Cheshire Unit, Kagando Hospital and CoRSU hospital, as well as going on trips to more rural areas in Uganda and The Congo.

**Visitors to Uganda:**
Plastic and Reconstructive surgeons: Vikram Devaraj, Tim Goodacre (chairman and trustee of Interface), Paul Townsend, Henk Giele, Brian Sommerlad, Peter Saxby, Marc Swan, Woon-Yi Chan
Paediatric urologist: Patrick Duffy
Maxfax / head and neck specialists: Tony Giles, Hubert Vermeesch
Anaesthetist: Jo James (trustee)
Medical student: Alex Devaraj
Nurses: Helen Anderson (ex trustee), Maggie Knights, Kevin Williams, Jane Sibley.
Physiotherapists: Jackie Fowler, Dom Hazell
Occupational therapists: Jamie Currie, David Burdon
Dietician: Charlotte Hazell
Orthopaedic Practitioner: Neil Tarn
Journalist: Bex Devaraj
Interface Administrator: Karen Devaraj

**Visits to the Royal Devon and Exeter Hospital:**
George Galliwango (plastic and reconstructive surgeon)
Christine Tusiime (Physio)
Gordon (OT)
Florence and Christine (nurses)
Bertha (nurse - visited The Spires, Oxford to spend time with Jane Sibley – cleft specialist nurse)
Promotion of Interface

Karen has been very involved in promoting the charity in South West England. She started a yearly information evening for supporters of the charity at the Royal Devon and Exeter hospital, which served to update everyone in the local area about what was happening in the charity, often with speakers who had spent time in Uganda, or from fundraisers. She did talks with Jackie and Helen to various groups, including the Sidmouth Inner Wheel, Tiverton Rotary Club, and The Devon Development Education World at Lunch Event. She helped develop the website and facebook pages with Jackie Fowler, and found out about various companies who would help us with it. She has sorted out all the promotional material – leaflets, postcards, and her daughter (Bex) made 2 documentary DVD’s about the charity.

All this promotion has inspired people to raise funds with some amazing events, including:

- Running marathons and half marathons;
- Music concerts;
- Garden fetes;
- Pub quizzes, car boot sales;
- Raffles;
- A slim-a-thon;
- Coast path walks;
- Long cycle rides;
- Kids cycle rides;
- Dartmoor walks;
- Netball tournaments;
- Dragon boat races;
- Bread baking and sales;
- Garden apple sales;
- Sea swims;
- Triathlons;
- 3 separate cycle rides from Land’s End to John O’Groats;
- 3 peaks challenge;
- Tea parties;
- Long distance kayaking;
- Barn dances;
- Donating money instead of Wedding presents and birthday money;
- Triathlons. I’m sure I’ve missed a few! Many churches have also had events, and regularly raise money – Karen has also given talks to the congregations.

From all this fundraising, and regular donations, Karen has sorted out all the banking to do with the charity, keeping tabs on every penny raised and making sure it is spent wisely.
Karen has made links with other charities who help people in Uganda, including Amigos Worldwide (Kira Farm), and Friends of Kagando. Discussions with other charities are invaluable for problem solving and sharing ideas. When Karen and Jackie visited Kagando hospital in 2013, they met Ken – the only physio there. Karen had the brilliant idea of funding a newly qualified Ugandan physio to work there. To date, Interface has funded 7 physiotherapists to help Ken, and now Gloria in their therapy department. Friends of Kagando help to make this possible.

So 2020 will be a new and exciting phase for the charity. A team of volunteers in Oxford will be having regular meetings and making decisions for the future of the work of Interface Uganda. This team will be:
Tim Goodacre (Consultant in plastics and reconstructive surgery, and chairman for the charity),
Marc Swan (Consultant in plastics and reconstructive surgery, and trustee),
Jane Sibley (Cleft nurse specialist, and trustee),
Martin Pittard (administrator).
(Jackie Fowler will still be in Exeter to do the website and Facebook pages and co-ordinate sending out the physio equipment).

As Andrew and Sarah set out in their new challenge in The Philippines, and Karen hands over her admin responsibility, we would like to acknowledge and thank them for all their tireless hard work and dedication to improve the lives of people with severe disabilities and disfigurement in Uganda. We are sure that all the trainee surgeons and patients who have had life-transforming surgery would say a huge thank you for everything you have done for them all.