

ARDINGLY OLD JESHWANG ASSOCIATION: A.O.J.A

Chairman's Annual Report 2019-2020

The Trustees are pleased to present their report for the year ended 30th June 2020

AOJA was formed in 1993. Its aim is to provide affordable healthcare to the community of Old Jeshwang, an urban village in The Gambia, of some 20,000 people. To this end, in 2000, we completed and equipped a modern health centre, which we now staff. Although unable to fully support it financially the Gambian government accepts our facility as an integral part of its health care system and is the permanent home of the Area Public Health Officer, monitoring its daily operation, including immunisation and blood donation programmes.

The Charity registration number is 1024627 and is governed by its Constitution dated 6th August 1993.

Registered Office: Avins Bridge Cottage, College Rd, Ardingly, West Sussex, RH17 6SH

The officers are:

Mr Stephen Doerr: Chairman

Mr Lynn Wilson: Vice Chairman/Secretary

Mrs Peggy Guggenheim: Treasurer

Mrs Barbara Monk: Assist. Treasurer.

The trustees are: Stephen Doerr, Lynn Wilson, Barbara Monk and Mr David Ogilvie.

The charity's bankers are Barclays where three of the four officers are signatories.

Finance

The detailed results of the year are set out in the annexed Receipts and Payments Account. Cash funds, without charge, remain healthy at £20,806, despite the unpredictable ramifications of the Covid pandemic. This sound financial position should enable us to continue our support to an increasingly needy community. The year's expenditure included the planned refurbishment of the external toilets which overran its budget with the discovery that moles had undermined the foundations! The social distancing rules also meant that our annual summer BBQ had to be cancelled with the resulting loss of income from this our major fund raising event. The Health Centre continues to take more financial responsibility for its running costs as increased income from the Pathology Lab and Dental Surgery comes on stream. This ensures that more of our UK funding can be directed towards renewal and development apart from OJHC moving further towards its goal of total financial independence. Our reserves include the 'six month running cost buffer' in line with good financial governance.

Sponsorship

The sponsorship scheme continues to be our main source of regular income with our sponsor pool of about 120 supporters, raising around £2000 per month. This underpins the running costs of the Health Centre including salaries, refurbishment and development.

Although the cancelling of social events during the summer cut off a source of income, the lack of physical contact between sponsors and the reality of working groups being unable to

meet, was probably a greater loss. However, over the year we continued to attract new interest from various local groups and individuals who are always reassured by the directness of our funding chain to The Gambia, which allows little scope for loss or wastage.

The continued loyalty of our individual sponsors, who periodically increase their level of subscription, has enabled us to retain the doctor's presence, with a paediatric clinic in the morning and a G.P. surgery in the afternoon.

The Association continues to benefit from the donation of 'unwanted items', including 'house clearance', the value for which is realised with the support of a local auction house. We are particularly indebted to our group of corporate sponsors; St. Peter's Church Ardingly, St. Nicholas Church Brighton, Worth School, Bidborough Primary School, Redcoat Express Gatwick, and Dolphin Optometrist. Our website, aoja.org, continues to develop, making it easier to give more regular news updates.

Clinic Activities

The Health Centre serves the community well, with the infant welfare clinics thriving. Deliveries at the clinic continue to average at around 25 per month, close to the expected level for our catchment area. Approximately two-thirds of the women attending our anti-natal clinics deliver their babies at the Centre. Our compassionate care within clean surroundings continues to be noted by both new patients and visitors.

The lack of air traffic to The Gambia made it impossible for our main annual spring visit to happen this year which means that some key areas for review, including the consolidation of our partnership with the new government, will need to be picked up next year. Through the quarterly updates we have been reassured by Abdoulie, the clinic's administrator, that all is well with our routine health programmes and that the Gambian Health Authority (GHA) continues to include our clinic in all National Health initiatives and monitoring systems. Our Centre continues to be regularly inspected and health programmes supervised by the GHA, in line with the other community health centres.

With the rise in salaries of all health workers in The Gambia, pressure is still on our own staff recruitment. Dr. Gaye, the GP who runs a morning surgery, is still with us and remains very popular with his patients.

Sohna Bah, one of our long serving volunteers, has flourished in her new salaried position of 'clerical auxiliary'. Kabba continues to look after our site including the vegetable garden and ambulance. It is reported that Momodu also appears to be to be more active in his caretaking duties!

The refurbished Bantaba meeting place continues to be the busy hub where much of our community health work is delivered, including Immunisation, Blood donation and Disease Surveillance apart from the Community Health clinics.

The central area, with chairs, tables and benches, is still well used as a teaching space for community health talks and Path Lab training sessions.

The 'feeding' programme, initiated to meet any acute nutritional needs, continues as does the Global Health Fund initiative using our Health Centre for the counselling and testing for HIV/AIDS.

The increased income from our dentist and expanded Pathology Lab continues to enable the clinic's management committee to fund its own initiatives.

We continue to work closely with the Area Public Health Officer based on our site. Her new vaccinations room in the Bantaba has worked well, but her original office is still requiring some renewal.

Pathology Lab

The lab, offering nearly 30 different tests, goes from strength to strength. The enthusiastic team of 9 staff are well managed and continue to run their own training course for path lab assistants.

The lab continues to make a significant contribution to the success of the Health Centre, with over 15,000 tests carried out annually, introducing new patients to all of the services on site, as well as helping to underpin the costs of our basic health care programmes.

With Cherno taking over more general management responsibilities over the past two years he had prepared his deputy Amadou to head up the Path Lab and she appears to be well supported by her team.

Education

The Association continues to facilitate educational needs as they arise within the clinic, supporting staff training in specialist areas such as midwifery and bedside care. Our in-house staff training programme continues in response to the increased difficulty of finding staff with the required basic skills.

Individual children continue to be supported at primary and secondary level through our network of sponsors and it is always gratifying when one returns suitably qualified as an employee. The relationship which inevitably builds between sponsor and a child's family, keeps all involved close to the reality of how so many families struggle with the basics of life.

Seemingly one of the greatest impacts of Covid in the Gambia has been economic. The lack of any tourist income has affected many families including Musa our taxi driver. His four children benefit from our sponsored education programme but in addition, a group of sponsors was able to support him with some furlough payments. Although these can only be for a limited period, Musa sends his heartfelt thanks to all. Without this extra help his children would have found it difficult to access the school's Covid timetable.

'Brighton and Sussex Medical School / Medical Research Council

Staff changes and Covid have interrupted some of our links but the Medical Research Council (MRC) facility, based in the Gambia, continues to be a good source of expertise and support to our path lab team.

With fortuitous timing Dr Sue Laing was able to visit the clinic in March, just before 'lockdown', to further her Epidemiological research and give a timely update on the Health Centre's activities.'

Buildings and Plant

Our generator continues to cover for the increasing number of National Grid power outages. Last year the generator's phasing was adjusted to meet these new demands resulting in more efficient running with less strain.

The greater use of the refurbished Bantaba building, the venue for many of our health programmes and where the new mums meet and chat, necessitated the complete

refurbishment of the external toilets. The original structure was some 25 years old, built by volunteers and inspection revealed that moles had completely undermined the foundations! A complete rebuild was demanded and despite the extra work and cost it is now finished and includes a staff shower block. The opportunity was also taken to replace a main water tank and provide a much needed secure storage area for building materials and equipment as much of our maintenance work is still completed 'in house'.

The buildings generally remain in good condition but the cycle of redecoration and renewal remains relentless.

Future development.

Throughout the year our 'on-site' maintenance team keep up with some redecoration but the repainting of the outside of the main building and the complete refurbishment of the Area Public Health Office is overdue.

Connection to a new water main is also envisaged to avoid the regular and costly replacement of a water pump. Although our ambulance is still on the road, it is likely to need a successor soon.

We look forward to our next visit soon (and being able to return to the UK!) to initiate the next phase of renewal.

Old Jeshwang (OJ) Management Committee

The committee continues to respond to the need to reform itself and firm up the staff management structure as it has moved from a largely volunteer workforce to paid professionals.

During the year the position of Chernoyaddi as deputy administrator was formalised with the GHA and he is now the 'first point of contact for all matters', effectively taking over the day to day management of the centre. The positions of Saihiou Njie as Financial Advisor, Fatou Cessay as matron and Amadou Keita as Head of the Pathology Laboratory were also confirmed to clarify the management structure.

The system now of quarterly reporting, enables us to respond more accurately to changing circumstances at the Centre where staff still work in an uncertain economic climate but seemingly more stable political atmosphere.

Risk Assessment

Although OJHC has operated independently since 2009 the trustees of AOJA have continued their supporting role within the original TESITO project structure. This position was re-affirmed with representatives of the new government and the Gambian Health Authority last year but a follow up meeting with the new Minister for health planned for this year was another casualty of the Covid travel restrictions. .

The trustees have identified and are aware of potential risks to which the Charity is exposed and will keep this under constant review to establish procedures to mitigate those risks.

Signed on behalf of the Trustees

Stephen Doerr

Chairman. 31st July 2020