

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

Chairman's Annual Report 2017-2018

The Trustees are pleased to present their report for the year ended 30th June 2018

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. The cash funds, without charge, remaining at the end of the year, of £21,363 reflect another busy financial year incorporating the annual servicing costs of the new generator, the final commissioning of the medical store and some essential refurbishment work. This planned capital investment has been facilitated by the sustainability programme by which the Health Centre is now able to give more support to staff salaries using income from the Pathology lab and Dental surgery, allowing us to better plan and fund renewal and development. This year's operation has been against a backdrop of the new Gambian government reforming its administration procedures, the ramifications of which are uncertain. The 'six month running cost buffer', in line with good financial governance, has been improved and helps fulfil our commitment to support the monthly salaries of our 45 staff, but is also expected next year to help absorb continued increased fuel costs and some more essential refurbishment.

Sponsorship

The sponsorship scheme continues to be our main source of regular income with our sponsor pool constant at about 130 supporters, giving a monthly income of around £2000, which underpins the running costs of the Health Centre including salaries, overheads and development.

Inevitably we lose some of our more elderly long standing supporters but their places are always filled by new sponsors who are often impressed by the directness of our funding chain to The Gambia, which allows little scope for loss or wastage.

The thoughtful loyalty of our individual sponsors, who periodically increase their level of subscription, has enabled us to establish a more regular doctor's presence, with a paediatric clinic in the morning and a pilot G.P surgery in the afternoon. In addition, income from increased clinic activity continues to enable the Health Centre's management committee to fund its own staffing demands and decisions. Separate fund raising in the UK continues to support new initiatives and essential refurbishment. This has included representation at local events, BBQs, concerts, talks to community groups and individual family initiatives. The association also now benefits 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. Peters Church Ardingly, St. Nicholas Church Brighton, Worth School, Bidborough Primary School and Redcoat Express Gatwick. OJHC has also attracted support from 'AGA International' with some donations of equipment. Our new website, aoja.org continues to develop making it easier to give more regular news updates.

Clinic Activities

The activities of the Health Centre continue to grow, 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 health centre. During one of our recent visits to the health centre a mother who had just given birth at OJHC for the first time, was heard to thank Isatou our senior midwife for the 'compassionate care' she had received and the 'cleanliness' of her surroundings.

The general out-patient attendance, an increasingly significant part of the clinic's work, continues to grow as we maintain our high standards of care and friendly atmosphere. Apart from a doctor's paediatric clinic in the morning focussing on the 'under-fives', for one year we have been able to fund a pilot G.P. surgery in the afternoon. This has been very successful with the current doctor proving particularly popular with his patients. We will now look to see how we might permanently fund this position. Retaining this level of a doctor's presence is likely to be a challenge for the future as doctors in The Gambia remain in short supply but we expect to have a clearer picture of the funding issues involved early next year.

Our unpaid volunteers work as nursing/bedside assistants, before going on to nurse training courses, after which they return to OJHC for a salaried position. For those who do not reach a suitable level of nursing competency a paid position as a clerical auxiliary is now being considered to free up some precious time of our midwives.

The refurbished Bantaba meeting place continues to be the busy hub where much of our community health work is delivered, including Immunisation, Blood donation, Disease surveillance and 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. This area where mothers regularly meet up on Mondays and Tuesdays always has a buzz.

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.

Our dental surgery is now well established with the work of our dentist and his technician continuing to be very popular! The team now also have an in-house trained assistant. Last

year's appeal for a proper dentist's chair found support with two modern couches currently being shipped out. They will replace the very tatty wheelchairs!

The ambulance, now with a replaced air compressor, continues to provide key transport for patients from home to Health Centre and emergency transport to hospital. With its distinctive Old Jeshwang Health Centre logo it makes an excellent advert for our services.

We continue to work closely with the Area Public Health Officer based on our site providing her with a new room for vaccinations in the Bantaba although her original office is now in need of some attention.

Pathology Lab

The lab, offering over 25 different tests continues to thrive. The enthusiastic team of 9 staff are well led and continue to run their own training course for path lab assistants. This year we were pleased to be able to update some of their essential equipment by replacing an aging centrifuge with a much more modern and versatile version.

Given their significant contribution to the success of the Health Centre, with over 15,000 tests carried out annually, it has been good to give this well- motivated team some extra support.

Pharmacy

Following a planned audit, our supply of drugs is now supplemented by the Gambian Health Authority who is also able to better monitor our drug usage. Additional deliveries from the UK and other sources have helped to maintain stocks of essential items but with provision in the Gambia continuing to be uncertain our Health Centre can often be the only source, for the general public, of some key drugs.

Education

The Association continues to facilitate educational needs as they arise within the health centre with grants for staff training in specialist areas such as midwifery and accountancy. 2017/18 saw an expansion of our in-house staff training programme 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.

Brighton and Sussex Medical School (BSMS)

With the 'tailing off' of visits by M.Sc. Global Health students, AOJA will be looking for opportunities to re-establish its BSMS elective programme connection but still using the structure provided by the Medical Research Council (MRC). Students stay at the MRC in Fajara for 6 weeks, spending one day a week at our Health Centre, usually a Monday or Tuesday the busiest days, and the remainder of the week at the MRC. Generally two students from BSMS go out at a time, when they are able to visit other local medical facilities apart from helping with our own Ante-natal and Infant Welfare Clinics.

Staffing and structural changes at the MRC in recent years also gives OJHC an opportunity to re-establish links with their pathology dept. which has been a good source of expertise and support in the past.

Buildings and Plant

The new generator has been in constant use during the year, cutting in throughout the day due to more regular national power outages. This coupled with the sharp increase in fuel prices, necessitated some extra support for overheads in the short term. An on-site meeting with our generator servicing contractor also revealed the need to adjust the 'phasing', which will not save fuel but is considered important to protect the generator, given its greatly increased use.

The refurbished Bantaba building continues to be well used and proves to be a popular venue where the new mums can meet and chat.

For the Gambian Health Authority it is also their favoured facility to extend their 'Health in the Community' programmes.

A focal point of development this year was the dedication of a new medical store to the memory of Mary Stafford, our chairman Emmanuel's late wife. He saw this as quite an honour and it was reassuring to see him and Abdoulie working closely together on development issues. With the new store operational the Library is now decluttered and smartly set out for the additional use of meetings and in particular path lab training lectures.

The buildings generally remain in good condition but the cycle of redecoration and renewal continues. With more refurbishment and development being completed 'in house' the need arises for a small secure storage area for building materials and equipment. The external toilets reordering project could well include this.

Future development.

Throughout the year individuals and groups have continued to visit our clinic to give specialist support in midwifery, primary health care and building maintenance. The retention of high standards in all these areas remains a priority and continues to be commented upon by both visitors and new patients to the centre.

Income from the Dentist and Path Lab continues to grow consolidating the centre's financial independence. Although this is not part of the AOJA accounts Sihou, OJHC's new accountant, has been reassuring in showing a high level of transparency and sound budgeting. With the new national government in place, an early meeting with the new Minister for Health is anticipated to ensure, at the highest level, acceptance of our unique support for the Gambian health service.

The retention of a doctor's presence is still likely to be a critical issue in the near future as salaries in the whole Gambian health sector begin to rise under the new national administration.

Old Jeshwang (OJ) Management Committee

The O.J. management committee remains chaired by Emmanuel Stafford, although the untimely death of his wife last year has continued some unsettlement. However, Abdoulie Sowe our administrator, is now ably assisted by his new deputy Cherno Yaddi who retains a good team spirit and continues to strengthen our staff structure to meet the demands of the Health Centre's increased use.

The system of monthly reporting continues, enabling us to respond more accurately to changing circumstances at the centre where our staff still work in an uncertain economic climate but seemingly in a 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 is expected to be confirmed with representatives of the new government and the Gambian Health Authority in the near future.

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 2018