



T.M.T.

Chairman's Report 2008

The third year started with getting Adrian out to the Gambia for two weeks to tie things up with working with GPDSA, RSOD and the VSO. The remainder of the Computers were collected from the office and given to the church and GPDSA. All together we gave 100 computers with screens and 40 printers, most staying with GPDSA in the Combo region while 20 went to RSOD in Basse, which is where the charity is now focusing its efforts.

Another year has passed quite quickly since Adrian went in to hospital in the new year, we then started to look at where the funding needed to be raised and looking at how to build team around the current situation. The Charity then started to look at Rehabilitation and set out the idea of setting up a Rehab centre/skill centre somewhere up country in the Gambia. Working with GPDSA had become difficult over the time spent dealing with Sulayman Colley and the final straw came when he asked for money to help him and his family move house, I personally helped him out with £200 pounds but feel that this relationship has come to the end for the time being at least. The charity then heard from Mr Gabriel from Banjul who is running the Foundation for Disabled People in the Gambia. Its new focus quickly changed the look of things by giving us all a focus on rehabilitation as well as collecting the wheelchairs. Adrian had also made some helpful contacts in Ghana and a shipment of 12 wheelchairs was arranged with the new shippers SVD Bernard. At the same time 12 chairs were also sent out to Banjul to Gabriel to help set up a link with sending the chairs to Bansang and helping with Anita Smiths Hospital Appeal. This was done so that the wheelchairs would start to find their way down to Farafini, Basse and Bansang. These areas were identified as areas for growth and the most likely places for people to go if they need equipment. This was looked at during Adrian's stay in the Gambia and was the action looked at for national development with the VSO and with the Big Lottery fund that they had won to get a sports program started. The immediate problems of providing wheelchairs to those areas were transport and how to get more people involved. This was successful with the help of Gabriel in Banjul, the chairs were picked up and are now waiting to be collected by the Rotary rep in the Gambia to take them to Bansang. The idea of working with RSOD has become more realistic over the last few months as a small amount of money £250 was forwarded to them to help with the maintenance and improvements for the school in Basse.

Obviously with the Olympics and Para-lympics happening this year there has been a major focus on sports and it was interesting how it made so many things clear as to what needs to be done toward being a contribution for the teams in Africa in the 2012 games in London. The Charities future in working with companies like The Geo Group could be much enhanced to provide the equipment given to the African teams to help them take part and compete in the Olympics. However the focus again should be on building the skill centre and providing wheelchairs for rehabilitation. The committee was clear that these are two completely different objectives and if the Charity was going to work with any Disabled Persons Groups developing sports it would have to be through the National Para-lympic Committees.

This however is always depending on funding and the availability of the wheelchairs and equipment, as a young charity we still face many challenges and the main focus that will bring us together is building the TEAM. As any organisation will tell you, you have nothing without team work and the association with wheels for the world and the Geo Group, has proven to be the team we were looking for. During a recent visit to the wheelchair workshop at Parkhurst prison on the Isle of Wight, we were happy to discuss the development of further wheelchair workshops and the injection of funding to start a workshop in Oxford and possibly Heathrow's new terminal. The association with Paul Ferry and his colleges has become a new exciting addition this year and looks to be an interesting venture. The association with Glenda and wheels for the world has always been good with the occasional donation of sports chairs but it looks like as the Inside Out Trust has closed down that we are the only ones sending chairs now as large organisations. The basis for this work has come from the churches and it is planned to go back to through the roof and to local churches to try and see if they can assist us further with locating funding and individuals for staffing. Also Workology has recently contacted us with an opportunity to put up an advert for new volunteers.

This year has more been about how to raise money for the Charity and after Adrian's problems with the local council and benefits agency, it became clear that everything that was being done in the name of the charity had to be stated and put through the books and any donations that were made for work that was done would all be made as donation to the Charity and appear on the accounts. With this in mind an advert was placed in yellow pages to try to attract funding for the charity by offering therapies. Any money that was given to Adrian for his time or expenses would have to be put through as donations to the Charity.

I would like to thank all of our sponsors and trustees for their efforts and especially Wes Smith who raised £150 from his efforts in the local fun run, it is good to work together and feel a part of a larger family. But again if we are ever going to make a collection and delivery service for wheelchairs to Africa, we need to look for more funding and more individuals /Volunteers to work with us towards running a National Recycle Centre for Wheelchairs and Medical equipment. This includes any drumming workshops or treatments that raise any monies that can be donated to the Charity.

My position as chairman is very challenging at present having just been given the OK again to go back to work after 8 months sick leave and resting up after the operation in January. There are so many responsibilities when running an organisation such as this and am always aware of the responsibilities we have to the people in Africa receiving this equipment the other end. But I am always grateful for the opportunity to be involved in such work and am very happy with the progress that the charity is making and the moves it is making recently to expand its projects into Ghana and working with the Geo Group to develop a new workshop these are all positive steps toward achieving bigger and greater things in the future.

Although Adrian would very much like to hand some of his responsibilities over to someone who is working with him for the charity, The Wheels for Africa Appeal is still young and has lots to achieve working with new partners and delivering equipment to Africa. To be honest there is a lot to get done and with the charity growing the jobs will have to be shared but if this year is anything to go on the right person turns up for the job when we need them.

The wheelchairs and equipment still need to find a place to be held before they are sent out by container and it would be good if someone was able to work on the repairs before they went out too. The workshop in Oxford should be able to help with this and the links being made with Mr petal in Portsmouth might prove to be successful in the providing a warehouse in London and the possible links he has with Uganda, possible funding and or accommodation in Uganda for development. I also think that a workshop of sorts would be an advantage to work on the things before we are sending them out. This means a fundraising committee looking at getting funding for the project to help Geo group and help with locating Chairs through the NHS. Much more effort needs to now be made as to the development of a plan to contact all the companies dealing with this problem and letters to the government and local councillors to address the problem of wheelchairs being destroyed.

Again a collection service needs to be organised so to get the wheelchairs picked up and delivered to the depot or store where they are being held. It may be that a container is hosted there until it is time for the shipment to take place. This could be the link with the Geo Group, and with AJ mobility providing us with chairs from the surrounding area. It's also possible that we could take advantage of using the name Wheels for Africa to generate interest in inviting able bodied bicycle builders/riders to get involved in fund raising possibly repairing and sending out old bicycles as well.

There are many options or paths we could take, but it is obvious to me that the Charity or indeed the appeal will not grow unless it encourages more people to get involved.

With the help of Gabriel in Banjul it is now possible to building up the stocks of wheelchairs to send out to RSOD and provide the VSO program with the chairs and equipment it needs. However it is also apparent that they will also need spare parts to maintain the workshop there and if they have wheelchairs to give out they may also need to look at repairs. This would be helped by the Rotary project that has been talked about with possible schools helping to set up a workshop that would look at designs of wheelchairs and look at a visit to support the workshop in Banjul. The Gambians will always need new wheelchairs and in most cases, though the disabled people in the Gambia are now being provided for by the Rehab centre in Banjul, this dose not solve the problems of the disabled people in The Gambia, nor that of the disabled people in other areas of West Africa. The problem is how to get the equipment to those that need it and how to look for funding to get it to them, if we are going to provide wheelchairs for people in Africa we need to be seen as an advocate for getting them the equipment they need and see a vision of a new Africa with every disabled person having the Equipment they need.

The Wheels-4-africa.org.uk website has been a great asset to have though there are still funds coming in through the site this is something that really needs to addressed in 2009 and we need to look at how we are getting information out to people to help them see the need and give them a reason to donate. By creating a cause we are inviting people to invest in us so we should look to give something back by means of letter of thanks or some further invitation to be involved. Getting people to undertake sponsored runs and put on sponsorship events are also key to the charities awareness building and publicity. Managing the website is a big thing that should be given out as a responsibility, also dealing with gift aid donations and other donations like the work that Sue Young and her friends have been doing this year. This work has to be acknowledged and thanks should be given for all their efforts!