

REPORT FROM THE CHAIR 2011/12

It is with great pleasure that I report to you on another successful year – one that has involved a number of exciting developments, including two new films and the implementation of our first PFP distribution programme.

In production, we have widened our scope and moved into making films to address the very pressing problems of food sustainability and the environment.

Our work in Africa had made us very aware of how hard people have to struggle just to grow enough food – and of how seriously natural resources are threatened. At the same time, knowing that the involvement of local people as key speakers has been the secret to the success of our health films, we wondered whether the same approach might be usefully applied to farming. It seemed possible that film could provide a very effective tool by which more successful farmers were enabled to share their experience regarding new and improved methods of agriculture.

Such thinking has led to two films – “Farming our Wealth” produced in Malawi in conjunction with Total LandCare, and “Change with the Climate”, made in Uganda association with the Albertine Rift Conservation Society.

Both productions involve local farmers discussing and demonstrating the techniques they have found particularly successful in combating the ever-increasing droughts and other effects of climate change. Subjects covered include conservation agriculture, bamboo domestication, beekeeping, agro-forestry, organic farming and the construction of fuel saving brick stoves. Both films are to be toured round the rural communities in the countries concerned, and we shall look forward to hearing how they get on.

Meanwhile, it has been good to follow the progress of films we produced in previous years.

By the autumn 2011, reports indicated that community screenings run by our partners and other NGOs had enabled as many as 50,000 Malawian children to watch our HIV and AIDS awareness drama, “Mawa Langa”. Numbers, however, are not the only thing that matter. Most crucial of all is the extent to which the film proves able to achieve its aims in bringing about increased awareness and understanding. On this, too, the feedback has been encouraging. Drop-in Centre Supervisors and others have reported that children are asking to watch the film every day, and facilitators express themselves confident that the message on prevention is really getting through.

In Ghana, our cerebral palsy advocacy film. “The Time is Now”, has had relatively few screenings, but those that have occurred appear to have had a significant impact. The film has been picked up by the Ghana TV, and extracts, together with interviews with participants, were shown on the “Breakfast Show” three weeks running. Shortly afterwards, the Ghana Health Service entered into discussions on employing more physiotherapists, and a number of additional appointments have already been made. There has also been a big demand for copies of the film from the parents of children

with cerebral palsy. Our partner organisation, Cerebral Palsy Africa, report that the mothers concerned have moved from being people who were ostracised and demoralised to become strong and confident campaigners.

Encouraged by the effectiveness of these initial screenings, and by the comments received from a wide variety of people in Ghana, PFP now plans to establish a distribution campaign to bring the film to a much wider audience.

It has, in fact, always been within the PFP mission to distribute films as well as to produce them - but this was a challenge that had to wait until we were sufficiently well established. Up until now, we have left distribution largely to others.

In the meantime, good feedback has left us in no doubt that films really can provide a very effective means of communicating the information they contain. But if our productions have done a good job - they also all have the potential to achieve much more. All our work is appropriate to a wider geographical area than our hard-working partners have the resources to reach. By 2012, it was clear that the time had come to optimize on the use of existing films as well as to produce new ones. It was time for PFP to start running its own distribution programmes.

The first pilot programme was set up in Cambodia in March 2012. By the end of April, our part-time Distribution Manager, had researched and designed a programme for screening the disability awareness film, "Encourage, and I Can" on long distance buses, and he had also taken the preliminary steps in setting up a schools tour. His work will be further developed in 2013.

In the UK, meanwhile, we have been working to enhance the support we can offer our partners in order to increase the success of their own distribution efforts. Particular emphasis has been placed on helping in the design of easy-to-use monitoring and evaluation forms – forms that should enable us to learn from past productions, improve the impact of future films, and increase the feedback that we can offer to donors.

Again this year, several of our films have been selected for screening at international festivals. "Radio Bhai" and "Encourage. and I Can" were both shown at AbilityFest in India. "Encourage. and I Can" was selected for screening at a festival in Poland, and "Mawa Langa" was screened at the Red Ribbon International Festival in Ghana.

Such successes are a great credit to our crews, but we should never forget that our prime purpose is to bring knowledge and information to communities where it is most needed – and to give voice to people marginalised and under-privileged. This means that we have to be constantly looking at how best to improve on both the quality and the appropriateness of our films, working out ways of taking our productions to the most remote communities, and considering how to involve, support and encourage young filmmakers in the countries concerned. With this in mind, much time and thought has been devoted to an assessment of every aspect of PFP operation and to the production of our first Three Year Strategic Plan. We now have a working document specifically designed to address the issues indicated.

The fact that we have been able to achieve so much this year has been due, once again, to the enormous support received from the Team - Trustees, Volunteers and

others – many of whom have been with PFP a long time, and some who have more recently joined us.

On the trustee front we have been sorry to say good-bye to Liz Timms, and Scott Waldie, both of whom have provided much valued support to PFP from the very beginning. However, we have also been delighted to welcome two new Trustees – Caroline Jones and Roland Chant. They bring to PFP considerable management experience from positions held, not only here, but also in Africa. I should like to thank Caroline and Roland, as well as previously existing trustees, Alex Richardson and Jon Lewes, and also Company Secretary, Sue Morley, for their very valuable input.

On overseas projects, the contribution made by Associate Producer Colin Stevens, been considerable, and important work has been done by our volunteer crews and by our Cambodia Distribution Manager, Mark Jones.

In the UK, Fiona Day took the new post of Administrator in September 2011 and has made a great difference to the smooth running of the office. This year, also, we were really delighted that two of our applicants won Vodafone Awards - enabling each to work part-time for PFP for several months. Ingrid Hesling and Sara Loveridge took the roles of Friends of PFP Recruitment Officer and Press Development Officer respectively. Both have carried out their roles extremely well and have now very kindly said that they will continue to give of their time as volunteers.

Meanwhile, the continued and loyal support of our fundraising volunteers, Zeph Ainsworth-Grigg, Penny Jolley and Peter Lansdown, also our Web Manager, Chris Hall, and our Facebook Manager, Olivia Prutz, is something for which we are especially grateful.

Our volunteer fundraisers and generous donors have all contributed to making 2011/12 a record fundraising year, with PFP income in excess of £28,000.

We should like to extend special thanks to the Religious Society of Friends, or Quakers, for their very considerable support and encouragement. In the past year, we have received generous donations from Quaker Peace and Social Witness, West Somerset Area Meeting and numerous local Quaker meetings, situated, not just in this area, but right across the UK.

Our thanks also go to a number of the trusts: The Robin Cullum Trust, The Modiano Charitable Trust, The Sydney E Franklin Deceased's New Second Charity, The Stour Charitable Trust and The Roger and Sarah Bancroft Clark Charitable Trust.

Without finance there is little that we could do, and I should therefore like to end by expressing very sincere and heartfelt thanks to the many individual donors who have supported us with their gifts.

Thank you all very much indeed.

Elspeth C Waldie
24.10.12