

CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT 2008/9

It has been an exciting year – marked by the setting up of a new film group in Rwanda, the making of a film in Bangladesh, and success for previous films in getting on to television and into festivals.

In Rwanda, we worked once again with the charity rYico, with whom we made one of our earliest films, “Facing Forward”. It is PFP policy, where the use of film has proven to be useful, not just to make the requested film and then leave, but also, whenever possible, to help disadvantaged people make more films for themselves. It is hoped that by this transfer of skills we can provide marginalised groups with a voice, and thus assist them in bringing about the long-term social change that can really improve their lives.

With this objective, we provided three Rwandan volunteers with several weeks of intense training to equip them to become filmmaking trainers at Centre Marembo Youth Centre in Kigali. The new trainers were then supported in lesson planning, teaching activities and assessment strategies for their work with an initial group of six unemployed young people. By the end of nine weeks, the Rwandan trainers and trainees had, between them, made five short films and acquired all the necessary skills to continue the project without further outside support. PFP subsequently provided the finance for one of the trainers to join the staff at Centre Marembo, and in the next six months a further ten students were trained. The resultant Young People's Film Group are now working on their own educational films – providing material for the media resource library at Centre Marembo where it will of benefit to others. At present, PFP continues to provide financial support, but by the end of August, the young filmmakers plan to be generating enough income to make their group self-sustaining,

In Bangladesh, the Wheelchair User's Film Group, which PFP initiated in 2005, now also has a member on the staff of our partner organisation, The Centre for the Rehabilitation of the Paralysed (CRP). The Group, here, have not been able to meet so regularly, but the staff member /leader of the Group, has been involved in making one or two short films which should be of benefit to the disabled and to health services in Bangladesh generally.

The entire Wheelchair Users' Film Group have also been involved, this year, in the production of the latest PFP film - “Steps, No! Ramps, Yes!”, a project which was designed to help develop the Group at the same time as conveying an important message to the general public. This film was made specifically for screening on BTV, and it addresses the enormous problems confronting disabled people due to lack of access. At present, in Bangladesh, there are very few ramps - and steps, ledges and broken surfaces are to be found everywhere. Consequently the wheelchair-user is virtually imprisoned in their own home. Their opportunities to get out, to enter fully into society - for educational, work, or social reasons - are extremely limited. He or she is effectively denied the right to live life to the full, to make their own contribution to the community, or to reach their true potential. We hope that our film, being made by a crew who are themselves wheelchair-users, will carry a particularly strong message, and really will

succeed in encouraging the audience to think anew about the accessibility of their buildings.

We are very pleased to hear that, as well, as being shown in Bangladesh, “Steps, No! Ramps, Yes!” has been selected for “Emotion Pictures” the international disability film festival in Athens

It has been a good year for PFP in terms of festivals and television screenings. In February, our film “Radio Bhai” won the Dodie Spittal Award at the “Picture this....film festival” in Calgary. “Radio Bhai” competed with eighty other films from across the world to win this award which is presented to the film considered to make a major contribution to the disability community – the film which best demonstrates community and moving forward in a positive way.

Back in Bangladesh, “Radio Bhai” also continued to do the work for which it was intended - giving rise to discussion about disability issues. In August, the Bangla TV programme “Bioscope” chose to focus on the film, and thus to raise some important points on behalf of disabled people.

Our Malawi HIV and AIDS awareness documentary, “People Like Us”, made in association with Temwa, was shown on the BBC Community Channel last December on the occasion of International AIDS Day and has more recently been screened on the main Malawi television channel, MTV. However, of greatest importance to us is the impact it is having as a result of distribution by Temwa in rural communities throughout Usisya. In the isolated areas, they are taking the film around, with a generator and VCR player, by boat and are showing it wherever a crowd will gather - on beaches, under mango trees or in churches. Following each screening, the Temwa facilitators hold a discussion, and in view of the stigma which surrounds HIV, they have been amazed to find that, after seeing the film, people are actually asking for the mobile testing unit to come to their village – even before the idea has been suggested to them. Temwa went back to one community with 100 test kits, and found that this was not enough! They tell us that literally hundreds of people have now gone for testing as a direct result of seeing our film, and it is wonderful to think that those who are HIV positive will now have the chance to live much longer, healthier lives - and that many more children will have the opportunity to enjoy their childhood without being orphaned.

None of the work I have outlined would have been possible without the enormous help and support which we have received from our many donors and volunteers. PFP still manages to operate without any paid staff, and to all who help us we are extremely grateful. To all of you – The Pat Ripley Charitable Trust, The Stour Charitable Trust, The Friends of PFP, individual donors, volunteer crews, trainers, fundraisers, advisors and administrators - we extend our heartfelt thanks. We trust you like the films that are produced as a result of your help and generosity, and we hope very much that you will continue to support us as we try to increase our work to help more of the world’s most disadvantaged people.