



VRI
VOLUNTEERS FOR
RURAL INDIA

Chair's Annual Report

2012-2013

Shobhana Snow
4th August 2013

REGISTERED OFFICE
Volunteers for Rural India,
(formerly known as IVCS – Indian Volunteers for Community Service),
12 Eastleigh Avenue, South Harrow, Middlesex HA2 0UF, UNITED KINGDOM
Telephone: +44 (0)208 864 4740
www.vri-online.org.uk Email: enquiries@vri-online.org.uk

Registered Charity No. 285872

AIMS and OBJECTIVES

- To relieve poverty in India, particularly by undertaking voluntary work and fundraising, to assist village development schemes of a charitable nature
- To educate the public in the United Kingdom about Indian culture and tradition and other aspects of Indian life
- To undertake voluntary work in the United Kingdom in education, social services and similar charitable activities, particularly for the benefit of persons of Indian origin

The governing document is the VRI Constitution last amended in June 2010.

Partner Development Project in India

Society for Agro-Industrial Education in India,
Amarpurkashi Village (APK),
PO Bilari, District Moradabad – 202411,
Uttar Pradesh, India

Patron

Robert Evans, former MEP

Chair's Report

Project Visitors Scheme

Over the last 6 years VRI has seen a significant decline in the number of enquiries and registrations into the Project Volunteer (PV) scheme. A number of ideas have been exchanged as to how numbers could be increased, as well as the possible reasons for decline.

Year	Men	Women	Total
2004/5	9	31	40
2005/6	9	28	37
2006/7	11	26	37
2007/8	8	10	18
2008/9	3	5	8
2009/10	1	11	12
2010/11	2	6	8
2011/12	2	1	3
2012/13	2	7	9*

Project Visitor numbers from 2004-2013

*includes 5 optometrists

This year it finally became evident that the main reason for the drop is due to the website not appearing early enough in Google or Bing searches. Since most enquiries tend to come via search engines, it was recognised that special focus should be applied to developing web building skills within the Executive Committee and updating the website regularly again.

The Committee have developed a new strategy aimed at engaging with final year university students who will be considering their next steps after graduation. This new programme is still in its early stages but the first presentation has now been made.

Four visitors, all from the UK, joined the scheme this year. Feedback was very positive. In addition we were contacted by five young optometrists, all of Indian origin, wanting to visit India and offer free eye tests to village school children.

This was a unique opportunity to assess the eye health of the children and diagnose any potential problems. The optometrists raised money to fund glasses and treatment that would be needed by the children.

Fund-raising

Despite the continuing economic uncertainty, VRI received donations of over £2,000.

Our biggest donation was £1,000 for the eye camp to be held in November 2013.

Sue Rainger (PV from February 2000) continued to raise money for the Gramodaya Primary School.

Toby Whitfield, pv from November 2006, through the organisation he set up on his return from India, (Villages Espoir) raised £230 for a Health Camp and £587 for the Science Fair.

Our Treasurer Hari Danoo generously sponsored the Eye Camp held on 19th November 2012.

Further details of funds received are given in the Treasurer's Report.

Use of Funds

This year, funds were used as follows:

- A free health camp was held 31st October 2012 and was the biggest we have ever had with over 700 patients. Teerthankar Mahaveer College, Moradabad sent a large team of over thirty medical staff, including fourteen dentists, five GPs, a bone specialist, a paediatrician, two eye specialists and two gynaecologists.
- A free eye camp was held on 19th November 2012, treating 410 patients and performing lens replacements for 35 people.
- Vitamins for the primary school.
- Another classroom was built for Jafarpur High School.
- Annual Staff training was held again this year from the Primary school, secondary school and college. They went to Lucknow, staying in an education centre where training sessions were held. They also had the opportunity to be shown around Lucknow which is the capital of UP, most of them having never seen it before.
- A Science Fair was held on 7th November 2012, a highly popular festival of science, music, innovation and creativity. This year a new addition was an HIV/AIDS awareness stall.
- Publication of the International Journal for Rural Studies, a twice-yearly journal focusing on corruption, sustainability and other rural issues.

At the end of June 2013 bank reserves totalled £20,705.

Objectives

The objectives set at the AGM of 2012 were:

- Complete a final version of the University presentation on the Project Visitor Scheme
- Give one presentation to a university on the Project Visitor Scheme
- Increase the number of VRI and Project Visitors
- Complete detailed plans for Hindi, yoga and cooking classes
- Organise one fund-raising event

A lot of work was put into developing an interesting, engaging and fun presentation aimed at final year university students, with feedback from the Executive Committee incorporated, and a number of revisions and practice runs held until reaching the final version.

A 'pipeline' of university leads where EC members or old PVs have contacts in universities, was drawn up and some leads have been followed up. This yielded VRI's first confirmed booking at University College London on 5th February 2013. The presentation went well and the audience were interested and engaged.

The intention of the university presentations was to generate new interest in the PV scheme, thereby increasing PV numbers. Although it is too early to see the benefits of the new university presentation approach, nevertheless since September 2012 there have been four new PVs plus five optometrists. This is an increase over the previous year when there were just two new PVs.

It is also worth noting that VRI was invited to set up a stall in a Development Conference run by under-graduate students at the University of East London on 10th November 2012. This too was a great opportunity to speak to students about volunteering opportunities in developing countries. VRI was well received and has been invited to attend again next year.

The first three objectives have therefore been successfully completed. However they are considered ongoing projects for the next few years that will take some time to come to fruition.

Considerable progress has been made with the Hindi course material, with the intention of completing this by the end of the year. We now have permission to use a suitable, clean, modern kitchen for cooking classes, with agreement to hold them at lunch times. Other details will be worked out once there is indicative interest in the course. The yoga course is also in a position to go ahead once we have interest.

There has not been a fund-raising event this year. However we did get sponsors for our eye and health camps, and for the science fair. Therefore it was not felt we really needed a special fund-raising event this time.

We have therefore made good progress with our objectives.

Trustees

VRI is governed by an Executive Committee (as listed below), who are also the Trustees and are elected by its members for a term of three years. The governing document is the VRI Constitution last amended in June 2010.

The Executive Committee met three times this year. All Trustees receive a small welcome pack including the Charity Commissions' booklet "CC3a – The Essential Trustee: An Introduction" and some advice on where to obtain further information.

	Name	Office	Elected
1.	Shobhana Snow	Chair	2011
2.	Samta Patel	Vice-chair	2011
3.	Jyoti Singh	General Secretary	2011
4.	Janet Wilson	Website Manager	2011
5.	Hari Dhanoo	Treasurer	2012
6.	Mukat Singh	Field Director	2011
7.	Lizzie Monks	Fund Raising Co-ordinator	2012
8.	Anita Duggal	Media Officer	2012
9.	Pushpa Devi	Executive Committee	2012
10.	Sunil Gupta	Executive Committee	2012
11.	Monica Morawietz	Executive Committee	2010
12.	Stephen Ostrowski	Executive Committee	2011
13.	Karen Padley	Executive Committee	2012
14.	Fatema Paretha	Executive Committee	2010
15.	Pawan Rawal	Executive Committee	2011
16.	Aditi Shah	Executive Committee	2012
17.	Nayan Shukla	Executive Committee	2011

Lizzie Monks stepped up to take over the position of Fund Raising Co-ordinator this year and a new position was created in order to maintain focus on social media publicity, the Media Officer, Anita Duggal, who has experience in this area.

The Chair would like to extend her thanks to the Executive Committee for volunteering their time, energy, creativity and input to achieving the charity's objectives and getting the PV scheme back on track.