

## From the Chair



Planning for the coming year is never easy no matter what business one is in. We must consider increasingly complex international situations, changes to federal and state budgets and purchasing requirements. For those of us involved in the management of Operation Cleft, the coming year entails even more complexity than usual.

One of the first considerations is the level of demand for our service. For Operation Cleft that is easy; we know there are approximately 3.25 million babies born in Bangladesh each year and that between 6,000 - 7,000 of them will have a cleft palate and/or a cleft lip. So, no problem with demand - Our problem is supply.

There are two major contributing factors that determine continuity of supply. Firstly we are reliant on the generosity of our contributors and the continued expansion of our donor base to allow for inflation and natural attrition. We currently undertake 1,000 - 1,100 operations a year, depending on availability of funds.



Secondly, the success of the project depends largely on availability of local plastic surgeons to implement supply. There are currently only 17 qualified plastic surgeons in Bangladesh, 9 of whom are on the Operation Cleft team. In a country of 160 million people, these skilled surgeons are in very high demand.

This coming year we plan to increase the number of operations to 1,250 (or more if our surgeons can cope). We are also hoping to increase the number of facilities at which we operate outside of Dhaka in order to reach more people in rural areas and to provide training opportunities at regional medical facilities.

Whilst we are not alone in the provision of free cleft repair surgery in Bangladesh, we are one of the major providers and are well known and well respected by the medical profession.

We can never hope to meet all the extreme demands of this poor and densely populated country.

We can however continue to make a huge impact on the lives of at least 1,000 children and their families each year.



Later this year we will commence negotiations for a further three-year agreement with the Bangladesh NGO Affairs Bureau based on projected levels of service from 2014 to 2017. This entails the development of a detailed three year budget identifying expected number of operations to be funded each year, number of surgeons to be contracted, logistics and administrative costs and projected contributions from Bangladeshi businesses and individuals (local support is generated by Faiyaz Khan, our Ambassador in Bangladesh). It is a complex process made even more so by the need to present in the three currencies with which we work being Bangladeshi Taka, Australian dollars and US dollars.

The point of all this is that we are committed for the long haul. The free cleft repair surgery and professional training we provide now will contribute to the long term future of the children and the development of plastic surgery as a sustainable service to the people of Bangladesh.

The continuation of Operation Cleft services and expansion of our outreach and training programs, depends on your continued support.

Please help us sustain this vital work in Bangladesh by contributing generously.

Your fully tax deductible donation will give the children a "Smile for Life".



Michael Kirk OAM  
Chairman, Operation Cleft



Operation Cleft Australia Inc. is the corporate trustee for the Operation Cleft Australia Foundation Trust which is a public ancillary fund with DGR status. All donations of \$2.00 or more are fully tax deductible in Australia. ABN # 36 063 471 446



## Future planning



To ensure we provide a sustainable service, we believe it is essential to regularly seek input from our surgical team. It is important that our priorities are also theirs.

We have two main focus areas. Firstly to improve the lives and future prospects of children born with a cleft lip and/or cleft palate. Life can be tough in a country like Bangladesh but if these children do not have the surgery they need, it is almost without hope.

Our second and very important focus is to contribute to the training of new plastic surgeons. With so few plastic surgeons in this developing nation, providing training opportunities through our outreach program encourages long term sustainability of the project and makes plastic surgery accessible at many more medical facilities across Bangladesh. Ultimately we are hopeful that cleft repair surgery will be included in the country's public healthcare system making it affordable for all.

To assist in long term planning, we consult regularly with our in-country team asking for their feed back and suggestions. We feel that Dr. Ali's comments provide further confirmation that we are on track and his suggestions complement the strategic plan we have developed for the coming years. Here's what Assoc. Prof. of Plastic Surgery, Dr. Ayub Ali, long term member of the Operation Cleft surgical team had to say;

## A surgeon's view

"It's worthwhile mentioning that in this country, OCAF is the first Cleft Charity Foundation, who took the hercules step to introduce cleft services for the distressed people even up to the remotest villages in this region. We think that now is the time to advance it's existing infrastructure & service.

In this regard, I like to point out some important issues to incorporate in OCAF for its unique acceptability and for future growth. The following suggestions enumerated for your kind perusal:

- \* Recognition of some new centers, (Well facilitated & well equipped hospitals) by the OCAF authority in different parts of the country, where specified surgeons would operate on due dates.

- \* To undertake some academic activities - Short term training on cleft surgery specially for younger surgeons. Arrangements of seminars/ workshop on cleft surgery with resource personnel from home & abroad specially from Australia.

- \* Research activity in collaboration with CDD & OCAF surgical team e.g. Epidemiology and evaluation of results for future publication.

Before ending, I must express my heartfelt gratitude for your appreciation for many of us and especially for encouraging young plastic surgeons from this region.

I always remember your heartiest initiative to publish an excellent booklet of "**Cleft Care**" in Bangla, which is very helpful specially during camp programs, to make the parents understand about the cleft problems and management . sic



## Ambassadors



Maureen Hall, Ambassador for district 9600 pictured above with her display at a recent Interact Conference in Caboolture, Queensland

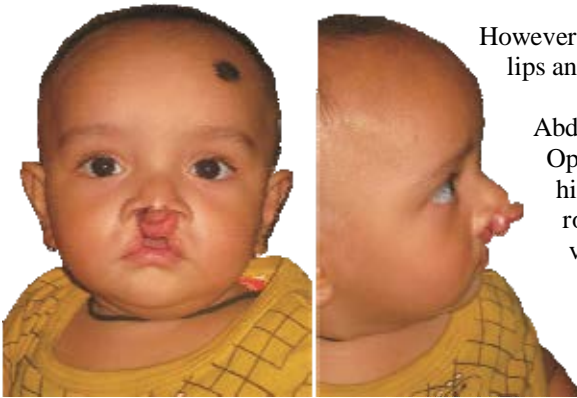
What are Operation Cleft Ambassadors? They are people from many different parts of Australia (and overseas) who share our passion for this unique project. They come from all walks of life; some are young, some not so young; some working, some retired; some Rotarians some not; but the one thing they all have in common, is a shared belief that underprivileged children born with a cleft lip or palate in Bangladesh deserve a chance at a happy and healthy future.

If you would like to know more about how you can help give the children a "Smile for Life", please contact your local Ambassador - details available on our website in the "Who's Who" section or email [info@operationcleft.org.au](mailto:info@operationcleft.org.au).

We are looking for Ambassadors in New Zealand, Tasmania, Western Australia and Victoria. Do you share our belief that the children are the future? Email [info@operationcleft.org.au](mailto:info@operationcleft.org.au) to find out more.

## A stitch in time

Some of the children our surgeons see have a simple unilateral cleft lip requiring a relatively quick and easy repair.



However more than 60% of our patients present with complex bi-lateral cleft lips and cleft palates. These children often require multiple procedures.

Abdullah was sixteen months old when his mother first contacted Operation Cleft. The family were very distressed by his condition and his older sister Rumi, openly wept as he sat on her knee in the waiting room. She could not understand why he was born this way and was very upset and embarrassed when the other children in the village teased her about her *ugly* brother.

Fixing Abdullah's mouth required two surgical procedures; first a lip adhesion to correct a very severe prolabial protrusion, followed 6 months later by the definitive repair.

Having the surgery before his speech patterns formed will enable Abdullah's speech to develop normally. This coupled with improvements in his appearance, health and social interaction, means his potential for living, loving and learning is also greatly improved. What will he be when he grows up? Who knows? Perhaps a plastic surgeon, perhaps a lawyer.

All we know for sure is that his family now have hope for his future and he has a much better chance at a happy and successful life.

Taking Abdullah by the hand, Rumi, told an outreach worker during a recent visit to their village, how happy she is that he is no longer *ugly* and how proud she now is of her cute little brother.

Abdullah is just one of many thousands of children born each year in Bangladesh with a cleft lip or palate. It is only with your support that we can continue to help these children.



## One for the kids

The Rotary Club of Bendigo, have for a number of years run an annual golf day to raise funds to provide cleft repair surgery for underprivileged children in Bangladesh. Club President, Brian Figg is pictured (left) presenting Glenn Reilly with a certificate of appreciation from Operation Cleft for his dedication to helping the kids. .



Glenn, the driving force behind the Golf Day, attributes its continued success to the strong support he gets from his club and its members and of course from the golfers and local sponsors who make the day.

Special thanks to Bendigo Rotary Club and to those who by participating in this fantastic event helped to raise enough to change the lives of more than 30 children.

**The kids and their families thank you.**



## How you can help

If you would like to support Operation Cleft, there are many ways in which you can help:

- ◆ **Give a donation**, using the form on the back page or via PayPal from our website - All donations of \$2 or more are fully tax deductible.
- ◆ **Schools** - Run a Spellathon or fundraising event.
- ◆ **Rotary Clubs** - Make a club contribution and encourage your members to support this Rotary project.
- ◆ **Businesses** - Give a donation and/or encourage your staff to give a donation and match their contribution.
- ◆ **District Governors** - Suggest your spouse nominate Operation Cleft as their project of choice in your year.
- ◆ **Community Clubs** - Invite a guest speaker to tell your members about this amazing project.
- ◆ **Accountants /Lawyers** - Suggest Operation Cleft to your clients as a worthy and reputable charity.



**A Smile**

What sunshine is to flowers, smiles are to humanity.

These are but trifles, to be sure; but, scattered along life's pathway, the good they do is inconceivable.

*Joseph Addison  
circa 1695*

**The cost**

With the support of our plastic surgeons, Operation Cleft keeps the cost of surgery to a minimum.

**\$250** will give an underprivileged child in Bangladesh a

**"a smile for life"**

*(All figures quoted in Australian dollars).*

**To make a donation, complete the form below**

**For more details go to [www.operationcleft.org.au](http://www.operationcleft.org.au)**

I/we would like to make a donation  \*monthly  \*quarterly  \*Please tick your preferred donation method

*\* If ticked, the amount indicated below will be charged to your credit card each month or quarter until you terminate the request.*

Credit card donations may also be made via PayPal, (our secure online payment facility) - visit [www.operationcleft.org.au](http://www.operationcleft.org.au)

\$250 for cleft repair surgery for one child *or*  \$..... for ..... operations

I would like to make a donation of \$ .....

My cheque is enclosed *(Cheques should be made payable to Operation Cleft)*

Please charge my credit card - MasterCard  Visa  .....  
Please print name above (as it appears on your credit card)

Number on card \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ Expiry date \_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_ .....

Signature of cardholder

Name .....  
First name Last name Please print the name of your club, business, school or group if applicable

Address ..... State ..... P/code .....

Telephone H: .../..... B: .../..... Mob: ..... Email:.....

\* For donations in lieu of - I would like a certificate in the name of .....

as this donation has been given in lieu of: birthday gift  other gift  in memory of  please tick where applicable

Please send this completed coupon with your donation to: **Operation Cleft, PO Box 631, Box Hill Vic. 3128**  
For further information - Tel: 0414 246851 Email: [info@operationcleft.org.au](mailto:info@operationcleft.org.au) Web: [www.operationcleft.org.au](http://www.operationcleft.org.au)

Operation Cleft Australia is a Public Ancillary Fund with DGR status. ABN - 36 063 471 446

News

Donations of \$2.00 or more are tax deductible in Australia