



RECONSTRUCTING  
LIVES.  
REBUILDING  
FUTURES.

## WELCOME TO OUR FIRST BULLETIN!



**BFIRST is a new charity, founded in late 2013 and launched in 2014.**

Through reconstructive plastic surgery, we can release some of the world's most vulnerable and marginalised children and adults from a state of poverty caused by deformity or disability.

We use our international networks to send expert surgeons to developing countries, delivering specialist training to enable local surgeons to perform reconstructive plastic surgery when resources are scarce.

Having long been involved in similar work, I was delighted to become BFIRST's first Chair, helping to bring together the work of lots of individuals into a coherent whole.

Through BFIRST, we can build something that truly changes lives around the world. I hope that you will support the work we are doing.

In this bulletin you will find out more about:

- **what we were set up to do**
- **what we have done in our first year**
- **how you can support us**

*Barbara*

Barbara Jemec, *Founding Chair*  
November 2014



## WHAT WAS BFIRST SET UP TO DO?

BFIRST provides training in all aspects of reconstructive surgery in developing countries, empowering local reconstructive plastic surgeons, hospital and nursing staff to provide this vital support service themselves.

Through this work, we can ensure that some of the world's most vulnerable adults and children are released from the marginalisation, poverty and often destitution caused by disability and disfigurement.

Over the next five years, we plan to develop programmes of activity in at least three developing countries, ensuring that we deliver work of consistently high quality.

- We provide supplies and time needed to train surgeons and hospital staff in some of the poorest countries in the world.
- We provide specialist training that enables local surgeons to perform reconstructive plastic surgery when resources are scarce
- By empowering surgeons with knowledge that can be shared with other clinics in the region the benefits of our work are multiplied



## WHY IS BFIRST UNIQUE?

- We work across a full range of plastic reconstructive surgical techniques, performing life-changing procedures on people of all ages, and working on all parts of the human body.
- We focus on training surgeons in poor countries in reconstructive plastic surgical techniques.

## Our work is based on these values:

### We transform lives for the better

In many developing countries, even the most basic injuries can result in loss of function, loss of income, and inability to look after oneself and one's family. Many disabilities can be corrected by reconstructive plastic surgical techniques – transforming people's lives.

### We provide sustainable benefits

The help we provide with reconstructive surgery is life-changing – but our aim is for the benefits to continue after we have gone. Our surgical programmes train local surgeons in their own communities, and help them develop the infrastructure to continue providing sustainable, life-changing procedures in the future.

### We work coherently and strategically

We bring the excellent individual efforts of many surgeons together into a coherent whole. This unified approach enables us to attract diverse funding for new initiatives to meet the enormous unmet needs of this often forgotten group of patients.



BFIRST is led by a group of highly trained plastic surgeons, who have many years' experience in working overseas. We were established with the kind support of the British Association of Plastic, Reconstructive and Aesthetic Surgeons (BAPRAS).

## What have we done in our first full year?

- In Cambodia, we have been focusing our hand surgery training on three surgeons. Following two successful workshops, a tendon workshop and a microneural workshop, they are now able to independently repair severed nerves to restore vital function and sensation, and also perform a few useful flaps for the soft tissue coverage of hands.
- In Myanmar, we are collaborating with Australian and New Zealand plastic surgeons about providing a joint educational approach to reconstructive surgery.
- In Bangladesh, we have been invited to provide reconstructive surgery training and to collaborate with local surgeons on burns, hand surgery and vascular malformations
- We have secured a training post in cleft lip and palate for an overseas trainee at the Guwahati Comprehensive Cleft Care Center in India, with over 5000 surgeries a year
- We are writing a curriculum in reconstructive surgery, especially adaptable to resource poor countries



**Wee Lam, who was supported by BFIRST to work in Cambodia, writes:**

When I first visited the Children Surgical Centre (CSC) in Phnom Penh, I was struck by the enormity of the needs and the hunger of the local surgeons for training. We had an immediate rapport with the CEO whose philosophy is that the training of the local surgeons and staff is the key to a long-term sustainable service. All of our operations included a local surgeon, who would not only learn from the visiting surgeon but could look after the patient afterwards.

The governmental healthcare system has been ravaged over the past half a century. The reality of life in Phnom Penh is that the majority of the local population have no chance of affording expensive treatment. And yet it is the poor who often suffer the

most severe injuries and illness requiring the most sophisticated medical and surgical care. What is more, many well trained doctors choose to work in private hospitals or leave the country to make ends meet.

We developed a good idea from our previous visits of their training needs and designed a curriculum focusing on hand surgery. Despite a hectic operating schedule, we also conducted workshops for local staff, focusing on nerve and tendon repairs. Participants could view the lectures online beforehand, and we then discussed their queries during the workshop. This saves time, makes the training more effective, and ensures that participants have resources when we are no longer there.

## HOW CAN YOU SUPPORT US?

We are very grateful to all those who have supported our activity so far. Will you help us rebuild the futures of more vulnerable children and adults around the world?



**DONATE**

If you would like to support us, or for more information, please visit our website or contact us:

[www.bfirst.org.uk](http://www.bfirst.org.uk)

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