

# **FRIENDS OF RESEARCHERS IN THE INDIAN SUBCONTINENT**

## **(FRIS Charity UK)**

### **The Trustees Annual Report: 2023-2024**

This is the first report covering the period from 19 September 2023, when the CIO was first registered, to 30 October 2024.

**Purpose of FRIS Charity UK:** The purpose of FRIS Charity UK as approved by the Charity Commission is as follows:

The advancement of the education of the public in the subject of biomedicine in the UK, EU countries, and the Indian subcontinent by:

- a. providing a platform for lectures, seminars, webinars, conferences and training
- b. funding research in the UK/EU carried out by students from the Indian subcontinent (at PhD and above) that cannot be completed in their home country due to unavailability of equipment/resources
- c. funding research positions in UK/EU institutions that will promote biomedical education in the Indian subcontinent
- d. publicly disseminating the useful knowledge resulting from research that is funded
- e. developing and supporting collaborations between researchers based in the Indian subcontinent and those based in the UK/EU
- f. supporting the exchange of researchers, research materials and technologies between laboratories and institutions in the Indian subcontinent and the UK/EU

**Name of Charity:** The full name of the charity as approved by the Charity Commission is 'FRIENDS OF RESEARCHERS IN THE INDIAN SUBCONTINENT', however the board of trustees wanted a shorter name with UK in it to show that the charity is UK based. They proposed FRIS Charity UK as the working name at the Board of Trustees meeting held on Sunday 4<sup>th</sup> August 2024 which was entered using "My Charity Commission Account" and approved.

**Management of FRIS Charity UK: Number of Trustees and their tenure:** The Charity is managed by a Board of Trustees. The number of trustees can vary between 3 and 12 and at the time of registration FRIS Charity UK had 6 trustees. All trustees were appointed on a fixed-term basis. Professor Ahmad Waseem and Naushin Waseem were appointed for 5 years each, Prof Kenneth White, Dr Muhammad Ali, Prof Shomi Bhattacharya were appointed for 3 years each and Dr Saima Usman was for only 2 years in the first instance. Professor Bhattacharya submitted his resignation on 15 June 2024 citing personal reasons leaving 5 trustees on the board. Mr Graham McQuillam was unanimously voted as a new trustee for 2 years at the Board meeting held on 21 December 2023. Mr Graham McQuillam's appointment was to ensure the presence of a trustee with non-medical and non-research background on the Board.

When the tenure of a trustee ends, they will have a choice of either to leave or if they wish to continue serving the FRIS Charity UK, they will have to reapply, and the Board will vote to decide the outcome of their application. In a contesting situation where votes are a tie, the Chair will cast his extra vote to

decide the outcome. In July 2024, Dr Saima Usman relocated to Pakistan, but she continued to attend Board's meetings, and the board continued to recognise her as a member of the Board of Trustees.

**Advisors:** The Board of Trustees also created a Board of Advisors with a total number of members ranging between 5-20. At the time of registration, the Board of Advisors had 7 members, 3 from the USA (Professor Theodore L. Steck, Professor Yvonne Lange, Professor William Andrew Yeudall), 3 from India (Professor Afrozul Haq, Professor Abbas Ali Mahdi and Lt Gen Zameeruddin Shah) and 1 from Pakistan (Professor Javed Akram). Dr Sohail Talib from California (USA) later (05 March 2024) joined the Board of Advisors making the total number to 8. Some months later Professor Javed Akram and Lt Gen Zameeruddin Shah were removed from the board as we did not receive their consent for including their details on our website.

**Non-executive directors:** The trustees also created a Board of Non-executive Directors whose numbers can vary between 1-20. At the time of registration, Mr Mohammad Usman Baig, was the only non-executive director, and he was appointed to manage our domain name and the website **www.frischarity.org.uk** at the Board of Trustees meeting held on 21 December 2023. Mr Mohammad Usman Baig also relocated to Pakistan with his wife Dr Saima Usman. The board at its meeting on 21 December 2023 approved that Mr Baig will continue to manage the website as non-executive director for the Charity even when he relocates to Pakistan. It was also agreed that Mr Baig will be allowed to use this title in his CV for job seeking purposes.

**Honorary members:** The trustees have also created fee paying unlimited honorary members. They pay a minimum of £25/year and they get a certificate from the Charity to prove their membership. Trustees, advisors and non-executive directors are all fee-paying members of the charity.

**Roles assigned to trustees:** Following trustees have been assigned specific roles within the organisation.

**Professor Ahmad Waseem:** He is the Chair of the Board of Trustees and looks after all financial issues for FRIS Charity UK. He is the point of contact with the Charity Commission.

**Mr Graham McQuillam:** He is the only trustees with non-medical and non-research background. His role is to provide an independent view on various issues. Mr McQuillam was also voted unanimously as the director of communication for FRIS Charity UK at the board meeting on 23 May 2024. It was also agreed that he will be the signatory on all communications to the public and also sign all membership certificates as well as e-festive cards for Holi, Diwali, Eid and Christmas.

**Dr Saima Usman:** She was the youngest member on the Board of Trustees and therefore the board took the decision of giving her the most responsible job of **Research Manager** at its meeting on 21 December 2023. It was also decided that she will be able to use this title in her CV for job application and other purposes. Her title was later changed to **Director of Research** on a subsequent board meeting on 05 March 2024. The Board of Trustees unanimous approved at its meeting on 23 May 2023 that Dr Saima Usman will continue working as a Trustee and Director of Research even though she will soon relocate to Islamabad (Pakistan).

**Professor Kenneth N White:** The Board of Trustees at its meeting on 21 December 2023 decided that Professor Kenneth White will lead all corporate affairs and will sign all letters of appreciation issued to our corporate donors and sponsors.

**Rest of trustees:** The rest of trustees, Dr Naushin Waseem and Dr Muhammad Ali, currently do not have specific roles, but they support the board by their advice and suggestions.

**Frequency of the Board of Trustees meetings:** At the FIRST meeting of the Board of Trustees on 26 October 2023 which was in person following important decisions were taken:

1. For the board meeting to convene, the quorum must be present. For all FRIS Charity UK trustee meetings, the quorum was decided to be 4 out of 6 members.
2. All FRIS Charity UK Board of Trustees meetings will be held virtually on MS Teams on a weekend so Dr Saima Usman could attend from Pakistan.
3. The frequency of these meetings was every 2-3months. However, if there are urgent issues to be consulted, the chair will circulate the agenda and get trustees views via emails.
4. For every meeting, the agenda is circulated at least a week in advance. The minutes are taken by Dr Saima Usman which are then approved by the Chair before circulating to the trustees as a highly confidential document.

**Bank account:** Soon after receiving registration from the Charity Commission, we applied to Virgin Money to open a current account. It took us several weeks before the account was opened. We also applied for debit card and our application was successful. To increase our income, we also applied to Virgin Money to open a Saving Notice account for FRIS Charity UK. After a very long deliberation our application was rejected but no reason was given for rejection. We are going to apply for a saving notice account with United Trust Bank early in the New Year.

**Policy on donations:** Donations to FRIS Charity UK either can be the membership fee (£25 or more/year) or small donations which are all paid either through inter-bank transfer or through PayPal or Stripe transfer to our Virgin Money current account. We do not accept cash or cheque donations. The small donations are pooled to create a corpus fund which will eventually become part of a financial endowment. All our donors are asked to sign a form that they are aware of this mechanism of investment to support FRIS Charity UK activities, and they consent to it. In an unforeseen circumstance if a donor refuses to accept this, we will either not accept their gift or return their donations.

If an unusually large donation of more than £10K were offered to us we will use our due diligence in accessing the situation before accepting the donation. These due diligences are as follows:

1. Ask the person his/her motives for offering such as large donation.
2. Find out the details about the actual donor.
3. Try to find out the source of the money.
4. Ensure that any transfer is electronic from the donor's account.
5. Inform the trustees and seek their advice.
6. If it looks suspicious, we will contact the Charity Commission for advice.
7. Donations can always be refused and if accepted they can be returned.

**FRIS Charity UK policy on reserve:** Since being approved as a CIO by the Charity Commission on 19 Sep 2023, we have been collecting donations from friends and colleagues in the UK, USA, Middle East and the Indian Subcontinent. These donations have been deposited in a current account, which

is unrestricted, so they can be made available in an emergency. This strategy will be in place until we have raised enough funds to start our charitable activities.

As the main activity of FRIS Charity UK is to provide funds for research collaboration, the long-term plan is to establish an unrestricted corpus fund for financial endowment of at least £100,000. This fund will be invested in the stock market as well as in fixed deposit and only 50% of the return on investment will be used for charitable purposes and the rest will be ploughed back into the corpus to increase its size. This strategy will ensure that the funds available for charitable purposes will continue to grow year after year. We will ensure that the available funds for charitable purposes are unrestricted so they could also be used to pay for the administrative cost.

As the entire corpus (including investment and fixed deposit) will be unrestricted, we will be able to borrow from the endowment by liquidating a part and made it available in an emergency to pay for unforeseen expenses. The corpus can then be replenished from donations and future income.

**Publicity for FRIS Charity UK:** In the first year, the trustees decided to have a research meeting in India. We selected Aligarh (in Uttar Pradesh) as the place for the meeting primarily because I am familiar having received my higher education from Aligarh Muslim University (AMU). We had planned a two-day International FRIS symposium on biomedical Sciences which we were planning to invite researchers from the Indian subcontinent and from U/EU. We had to abandon the plan when we received an estimated cost of IRN16,00,000 (£16,000).

We also explored the possibility of advertising in national newspaper but that was also exorbitantly expensive.

We then had to develop an alternative strategy which will require negligible expenses. The new strategy to make people aware of FRIS Charity UK was as follows:

- a. **Designing and hosting a website:** In February 2024 the domain name (frischarity.org.uk) for our website was purchased from Hostinger Webmail and the website content were written and approved by all trustees. The website was designed by Mr Mohammad Usman Baig and it went live in Feb/March 2024.
- b. **Professor Waseem** gave a talk about the establishment of FRIS Charity UK at the Sir Syed Day celebrations in London on 29 October 2023 attended by about 150 AMU Alumni. This was first time the community came to know that this organisation has received official approval as a charity.
- c. **Publicity material:** To increase visibility we custom made 100 Tote bags and 100 premium ceramic mugs with our logo printed in multi colour at a cost of £513.60. These mugs/bags were given free to anybody making a donation of £30 or more.
- d. **Professor Waseem** gave a talk to Professor Ziaur Rehman, Professor Sumbul H Khan and Dr Fahim H Khan, at the Blizzard Institute on 04 July 2024. These individual professors publicised the FRIS Charity UK in India thereby giving free publicity to the charity.
- e. **Professor Ziaur Rehman** wrote an article "My take on FRIS" about FRIS Charity UK which was posted on AMU Network with about 35,000 members.
- f. **Professor Ziaur Rehman** also published his views on FRIS Charity UK in the Newsletter of Ibn Sina Academy (Aligarh, India) on vol 24, no 4, page 8. This magazine is widely read in India.
- g. **Professor Waseem** talked about FRIS Charity UK to Professor Yasmin Saikia (Arizona State University) and her husband Mr Chad Haines on 14 August 2024. On her return to the USA, she

talked about FRIS Charity UK to the academic and non-academic communities in Arizona (USA) thereby spreading the words about our charity.

- h. **Professor Waseem** gave a presentation about FRIS Charity UK to Professor Ahmadullah Siddiqui (USA), Mufti Burkatullah (UK Government recognised Mufti) and Dr Naushin H Waseem in Blizard on 10 September 2024. This was very well received by all those attending the talk.
- i. **Dr Naushin H Waseem** (a FRIS charity UK trustees) talked about the role of women in Science at the Sir Syed Day celebrations held at the Royal Mahal (Tooting) on 20 October 2024. At this meeting the creation of FRIS Charity UK was mentioned by her, and the meeting was attended by more 100 participants.
- j. **Professor Waseem** gave a presentation about FRIS Charity UK to Professor Maqsood Siddiqui (retired director of Bose Institute, India) and Professor Kenneth White (a FRIS Charity UK Trustee) on 30 October 2024.

These activities gave much needed publicity to FRIS Charity UK without spending any funds.

### **Immediate Future plans:**

- k. **Professor Waseem** will be presenting the establishment of FRIS Charity UK at the India Islamic Cultural Centre, Lodhi Road, New Delhi, in December 2024. This meeting has been very widely advertised and local press has also been invited. We anticipate that this will create a nationwide publicity at absolutely no cost to FRIS Charity UK.
- l. **Professor Waseem** will be presenting the establishment of FRIS Charity UK at the ERA University, Lucknow, India, around Christmas time. This meeting has been very widely advertised and local press has been invited. Biomedical researchers from all the major Institutes such as CRDI, ITRC, SGPGI and Lucknow University are expected to attend.
- m. **Professor Waseem** will be presenting the establishment of FRIS Charity UK at the Aligarh Muslim University, India in the month of December 2024.

	FRIS Charity UK			
	Balance Sheet from 19 September 2023 to 31 March 2024			
	Unrestricted funds, £	Restricted funds, £	Endowment funds, £	Total funds, £
<b>Incoming resources</b>	1682.35	0	0	1682.35
<b>Transfer to Endowment fund</b>	0		1682.35	-1682.35
Resources expended	0	0		
Cost of generating funds	0	0		
Investment management costs	0	0		
			<b>Total funds</b>	0
<b>Charitable activities</b>				
Research	0	0		0
Education	0	0		0

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**This year-1 annual report and accounts has been approved by all FRIS Charity UK trustees.**