

## **DIRECTORS' REPORT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 SEPTEMBER 2023**

The directors present their report and the financial statements for the year ended 30 September 2023.

### **Purposes and Aims**

Our charity's purposes as set out in the objects contained in the company's memorandum of association are:

1. To engage young people in Northern Ireland with issues of poverty, inclusion and justice through working in cross-community teams with disadvantaged children, including Newcomer children.
2. To provide quality educational support for marginalised Indian children through working with Non-Governmental Organisations.
3. To equip marginalised Indian adolescent girls with the emotional resilience and menstrual health knowledge to resist abuse and exploitation.
4. To increase awareness within Northern Ireland of local and global justice issues.

The aim of the charity is to inspire and equip young people to create flourishing communities of justice and compassion, locally and globally, empowering them to Be the Change in the world.

### **How our activities deliver public benefit**

#### **Within Northern Ireland**

Be the Change Schools programme for sixth-form students in NI secondary schools is now in its third year and has gained an excellent reputation amongst post-primary schools. Reaching across traditional social and religious boundaries, it brings together pupils from schools on both sides of the community, facilitating their development as future leaders of an inclusive Northern Ireland.

Eleven schools in cross-community teams took part in Be the Change Schools 2022-23, with 113 sixth-form students participating in the year-long programme. The programme has been developed into an Award to ensure that responsibility is taken by the students rather than their teachers. All aspects must be completed including participation in workshops, tasks and fundraising in order to achieve the Award with 86% of the students successfully completed all aspects by the end of the school year.

The climax of the Award was the Newcomer Welcome Days held during Refugee Week when the students hosted 153 children from primary schools in socially deprived areas of Belfast at affirming educational fun days at Stranmillis University College. The majority of these children were from refugee and asylum seeker families.

Another key aspect of the Award was fundraising for our Indian partner schools as well as for the Newcomer events. The young people and their eleven schools raised an amazing £43,403, exceeding their target by an impressive 50%.

Programme impact was assessed using the Saphara Cultures Questionnaire which measure attitudes towards others and response to diversity. A baseline measure was taken at the start of the programme and a final measure at the end. This showed significant attitudinal change such as:

The response to *I tend to wait before forming an impression of people from other cultures* showed a 35% increase in those strongly agreed demonstrating the young people's growing confidence in taking the time to understand others.

This impact was reflected in the students' comments such:

"...being grateful and empathetic are two very key qualities that this Award has helped me grow."

“Be the Change Award gives you the ability to really embrace teamwork and increase your leadership skills.”

“it genuinely was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to do something good for the world around us and it made you feel like you had made a difference.”

Be the Change Colleges was equally successful, with 23 teaching students from St Mary’s and Stranmillis University Colleges hosting Newcomer Welcome Week for 68 children from St Paul’s, Falls Road and Fane Street Primary Schools, of whom 70% were from refugee families. We are grateful to the Colleges and lecturers for their support of the participating students. An excellent report on the programme was filmed by Robbie Meredith of BBC NI and Christine was interviewed by Frank Mitchell.

### **Within India**

In India, Saphara continues to work with grassroots NGOs to support the delivery of high-quality education to marginalised children. These partnerships enable us to give strategic help with maximum impact on local communities.

Sadly, the aftermath of the pandemic continues to have an impact on the poorest families and we have therefore continued the Saphara Back to School programme which, for £100, ensures that a child can attend school for a full year, including provision of books and uniform. We are delighted that the excellent fundraising of the students on Be the Change Schools was used for this worthwhile cause.

In October 2023, Saphara CEO Dr Christine Burnett, accompanied by Board Chair, Mr Dominic Breen, Board member, Dr Angus Beck and Education Director, Ms Paula Stronge, travelled to India to visit each of our main partners NGOs in Uttarakhand and in Jharkhand. A strategy day was held in Ranchi, Jharkhand, and attended by senior leaders from Saphara’s three tribal NGO partners. This was followed by visits to schools run by PSS and Daughters of St Anne’s in rural areas of Jharkhand giving the team insights into the challenges faced by the NGOs as they seek to bring transformation to these impoverished communities. During a visit to Uttarakhand, meetings were held with leaders of long-term partners, SNEHA and MGVS. All these discussions were of great value as together we created strategies for the future.

Subsequent to these visits, the Board took the decision to focus funding primarily on the Girl Champions programme which combines menstrual and sexual health education with personal skills and resilience development. This programme has been shown to be highly effective in equipping girls to challenge gender discrimination and to flourish in education, and in reducing vulnerability to child marriage and trafficking.

A key aspect of the Girl Champions programme is to train and equip teachers from each NGO-run school as Master trainers to deliver the curriculum. Two intensive training 4-day sessions were held in Ranchi for these women in Sep/Oct 2022 and in March 2023. The course leaders were senior trainers from CorStone India together with Dr Christine Burnett. 16 Master trainers took part in the self-reflective and transformative course, bringing their knowledge back to colleagues and girls in their schools. Online mentoring was provided monthly to support effective delivery of the programme.

The health and resilience empowerment programme was delivered to 1069 adolescent girls, and we have received reports that girls are growing in self-esteem, valuing themselves more and gaining the skills and confidence to flourish.

Our ongoing partnership with Eco Femme in Tamil Nadu enables us to provide washable sanitary pads to the adolescent girls. In total, 5456 pads were provided.

We continued to honour our commitment to make a contribution to the teaching and other costs in SNEHA and MGVS, but this funding is being gradually reduced in order to re-direct funds to other priorities.

In all our work, Saphara seeks to be sensitive to the changing priorities of our NGO partners and to direct funding to the most vulnerable.

### **Financial Review**

The total income for the year ended 30 September 2023 was £192,330 compared to £187,723 in the previous year. Fundraising by young people from schools and colleges taking part in the Be the Change programme continued to increase as the number of participating students increased, with the students engaging enthusiastically with the opportunity to support the work of Saphara.

We were delighted to be awarded generous grants from Ardbarron Trust, TBF Thompson Trust, Ulster Garden Villages, Halifax, Stanfield Trust and House of Vicryn totalling £56,337. As a result of this funding and continued and increased generosity of individual donors, Saphara ended the year with a small deficit of £4,231, after providing total direct funding of £82,969 to support the continued education and well-being of young people in India. The direct costs of running the Be the Change Programme in Northern Ireland were £65,298, but the Directors would like to acknowledge the contributions of the NI Teaching colleges in providing accommodation, meals and transport for the Newcomer Welcome weeks.

### **Principle source of funding**

The table below shows the source of funding in 2022/23

Fundraising by schools	22%
Fundraising by colleges	11%
Donations from trusts and legacies	29%
Gift aid received	4%
Voluntary donations	24%
College funding	10%

### **Spend on charitable activities**

Our accounts show how we have spent our resources across our three main activities – Northern Ireland cross-community schools programme, holistic educational support for marginalised Indian children, especially adolescent girls, and local and global justice awareness programmes. Our combined governance costs and marketing spend was approximately 4% of our total spend. We remain thankful to volunteers who ensure that all overhead costs are kept to a minimum and ensure that a high proportion of our resources are spent directly on our charitable activities.

### **Reserves Policy**

The directors have examined the charity's requirements for reserves in light of the main risks to the organisation.

The balance of our general reserves of £130,316 (2022 £133,594) is equivalent to approximately 8 months' running costs.

### **Plans for Future Periods**

Facing the challenges of Covid with a positive and innovative approach, Saphara has created exciting new programmes both in India and N. Ireland. Taking this forward into the future we have plans to

- Expand the Be the Change school programme to more NI schools and sixth form students.
- Expand Newcomer Welcome Week to more primary school children.
- Recruit an additional part-time staff member.
- Engage more student teachers in both Newcomer and India programmes.
- Develop Girl Champions with NGO leaders to make more relevant to tribal communities, with a focus on period dignity approach.
- Continue to support educational access for the most marginalised Indian children.

### **Structure, Governance and Management**

#### **Governing Document**

Saphara is a charitable company limited by guarantee, incorporated on 9 July 2008 and governed by its Memorandum and Articles of Association dated 4 July 2008. The memorandum and articles were updated on 4 October 2022.

In the event of the company being wound up, the liability in respect of the guarantee is limited to £1 per member of the charity.

#### **Recruitment and Appointment of Directors**

New directors of the company are appointed by recommendation of the existing directors by ordinary resolution. The company may also by ordinary resolution determine the rotation in which any additional directors are to retire.

Unless otherwise determined by ordinary resolution the number of directors shall not be subject to any maximum but shall not be less than one.

#### **Director Induction and Training**

New directors are given a briefing of the organisation as a whole. This will include an explanation as to their duties and responsibilities. They are encouraged to understand fully their role as directors.

#### **Risk Management**

The trustees have assessed the major risks to which the charity is exposed and are satisfied that systems are in place to mitigate exposure to the major risks. Saphara's register of risks is updated annually as part of its business plan review and is available for public distribution on request. Our risk assessments and safeguarding and child protection policies have been evaluated and our procedures and policies have been deemed to be of the highest standard.

#### **Organisational Structure**

The Board of Directors administer the charity by way of quarterly meetings and are responsible for the strategic direction and policy of the charity. During the year the Board had eight directors from a variety of professional backgrounds relevant to the work of the charity.

Approved by the Board on 3 June 2024 and signed on its behalf by:

  
Dr Angus Beck, Chair of Saphara Board