

## ***A Word From Our Founder***

Acid violence is the deliberate throwing of acid onto faces and bodies, burning and melting flesh, often blinding survivors and always devastating their lives and prospects.



I first became aware of this most shocking form of violence when I was in Bangladesh during 1999. Whilst working in Dhaka I met a young woman who had taken the full force of a horrific acid attack in the face. It left her blind, disfigured, scarred and traumatised. She was only 17 years old and was seven months pregnant.

I was so horrified and moved by my first encounter with a survivor of acid violence that, along with Bangladeshi activists campaigning for women's rights and safety, and with the support of the Bangladesh Government and the British High Commission in Dhaka – we launched the Bangladesh Acid Survivors Foundation or B-ASF in 1999.

The Bangladesh experience now shows what can be achieved. The B-ASF has been well supported and has helped change the law, re-build survivors lives and is bringing the incident rate down, dramatically, in Bangladesh.

I rapidly learned that acid attacks (most often on women and girls) are a world-wide phenomenon, not characterised by race, religion or location. Attacks occur in significant rates in African, South Asian and South-East Asian countries and there are reports of attacks in Turkey, Jamaica, and Hong Kong. Indeed, using acid for violent attacks is not new. In Europe it used to be common in previous centuries (in the form of vitriol attacks) and even today there are sporadic incidents in developed countries.

Utilising what we have learned in Bangladesh, I have since helped to establish an Acid Survivor Foundation in Uganda, and, more recently, similar organisations in Cambodia and Pakistan. These organisations are always indigenous, staffed and supported by nationals and aim to involve survivors in designing their respective responses.

Meanwhile, the UK-based Trust which I first founded in 1999 to raise vital funding is now known as the **Acid Survivors Trust International (ASTI)**. We continue to fight against this horrendous crime, by rallying support for survivors and recruiting volunteers who can offer medical, surgical and other forms of professional assistance where it is needed. Our aim is to help establish indigenous organisations in every country where the incidence rates of acid attacks are significant, using the successful Bangladesh model where appropriate.

Therefore, can I urge you to consider the pressing needs of the victims of this premeditated form of violence and ask you to support our work in establishing an international network of Acid Survivors Foundations.

Thank you.

Dr. John Morrison OBE.