

### Books in this series......



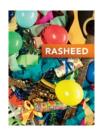




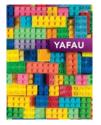














Written by Ifham Niyaz for Handicap International Concept, Design, Photography & Layout by mooinc. [www.mooinc.com]

#### Introduction

Welcome to this series of inspiring stories of Maldivian children and adults. With each story you can see part of a new world, and meet a person with a different experience of life. Through the stories you are privileged to gain an insight into what each person values, and what they aspire to. You will realise that each character has another aspect to his or her life as well - either a hearing, visual, intellectual, mental or physical impairment. But as you read, you will understand that all people, whether with or without an impairment, have skills, talents and dreams, as well as challenges in life.

These are true stories, using real names, and were written during 2008 / 2009. Each person is trying to help you understand more about his or her life, so that you can realise that we are all equal, and deserve equality. Through your understanding you can help to make a more welcoming environment for all on your island.

Handicap International would like to say a big 'Thank you' to the stars of the stories, for taking the time to share them with us.

Abdulla sits in the Heeds Learning Centre drawing a catamaran. He has been coming here for 3 years and likes to come because he thinks that the people are very friendly and helpful. The picture of the catamaran shows the long way he has come. Because when he first started coming to the centre, he was not able to draw a straight line.

Abdulla has an intellectual impairment. He has difficultly remembering words and explaining things. He says he knows he is different from other people.

Abdulla wanted to talk about football, a keen follower of the Maldivian national team – he says that he has always been interested in football, especially now as his brother is the captain of the team Bankeyala which has just won the 2009 Huvadhoo Cup. Abdulla was especially proud of this moment as for the past 2 years he has been acting as the manager of this team within the Thinadhoo Sports club and also received a medal as manager of the winning team. Abdulla is part of the team that assesses the players when a new team is put together for competitions – he sits on the bench during practices and matches discussing play strategies with others, he organizes water and collects balls – an all rounder! He especially likes participating in the team social events. The position of manager was given to Abdulla by

the owner of the football team after seeing the commitment shown by him on attending all the practices and matches and helping out whenever he could.

Abdulla was very happy to have managed the winning team and thinks he helped them to win the cup. But when asked whether he sees himself in the future as a manager, Abdulla says that he wants to play football. He was always watching others as a child playing football but could not play himself because he did not have proper football boots. He still wants some boots and his brother told him he will buy some, "then I can play with the neighbours near my house" he says.

Abdulla thinks his family is supportive and happy that he leads quite a busy life. Apart from the football and attending Heeds Learning Centre, he also helps out in the family shop, wiping down shelves and getting items for customers. Abdulla never went to school - although he studied at Qur'an classes - so his limitations in reading and writing affect the opportunities in regards to work. Nevertheless, with a supportive family, part time job, opportunities to learn new skills at the centre and his recent roles as football team manager, Abdulla demonstrates that anything is possible if you put your mind to what you want to achieve.



## Glossary of terms used in this series;

Brain Injury – this could be due to a mechanical or infectious cause, and could result in one or more of the following; Attention impairment, cognition (understanding) impairment, language impairment, memory impairment, conduct disorder (different behaviour), motor (physical movement) disorder, any other neurological dysfunction.

Cerebral Palsy (CP) – Caused in the womb or at birth by lack of oxygen, meningitis encephalitis, German measles (rubella) or other unknown causes. The child's muscles may be weak, with tremors and uncoordinated speech, hearing and sight. The child's body may not grow the same as other children. Some children with CP have an intellectual impairment, while others may be extremely intelligent. Spasms may cause particular problems, and speech and facial expression are often affected.

Early intervention – applies to children of school age or younger who are discovered to have or be at risk of developing a disabling condition or other special need that may affect their development. Early intervention consists of the provision of services such children and their families need, for the purpose of lessening the effects of the condition.

Impairments – all the impairments defined can range from mild to severe;

Hearing impairment - Four categories are generally used to

describe hearing loss: mild, moderate, severe and profound. Some people with a significant loss, communicate through sign instead of, or as well as, speech. People with a hearing impairment may require hearing aids, adaptations to their environment and/or particular strategies in order to access concepts and language. Hearing loss may be because of conductive or sensori-neural problems and can be measured on a decibel scale.

Visual impairment – this refers to a range of difficulties from partial sight through to blindness. People with a visual impairment may be able to use spectacles or low vision aids (such as magnifiers) as well as training in mobility skills to be able to move independently. Adaptations to the environment may be necessary depending on the individual. Some people who cannot see to read large print may learn Braille, a tactile language read with the fingers.

Intellectual impairment – this means an impartment in paying attention, in thinking, understanding, or in memory. People may require support, both for their learning needs and also for personal care. They could need tasks broken down into very small steps. Some people with an intellectual impairment which makes speech difficult may communicate by gesture, eye pointing or symbols.

Mental impairment – this can include people with depression, schizophrenia, paranoia and can result in behavioural, emotional or social difficulties, from mild to severe. A person may be withdrawn or isolated, disruptive and disturbing, hyperactive and lack concentration, lack social skills or present challenging behaviours.

*Physical impairment* – This could mean a different shaped arm or leg, hand or foot. It could impact on mobility. Or, people with a

physical impairment may be mobile but may have significant fine motor difficulties, like holding a pen and writing, which require support.

**People with a disability** – includes those who have long-term impairments as described, and who experience discrimination or barriers in society, such as steps, language and laws, which prevent people with disabilities from being included equally.

**Polio** (poliomyelitis) – causes muscle paralysis. The virus may affect the nerves governing the muscles in the limbs and the muscles necessary for breathing, causing respiratory difficulty and paralysis of the arms and legs.

Sign Language – a language of communication through hand and arm movements and facial expressions which is completely visual. Sign languages commonly develop in deaf communities, which can include interpreters and friends and families of deaf people as well as people who are deaf or hard of hearing themselves.

Special classes – classes in schools for children with needs which are not met in the mainstream classes.

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