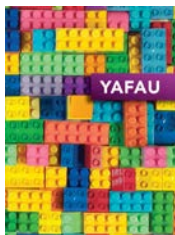
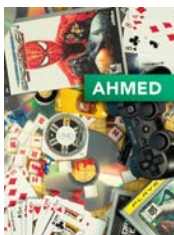
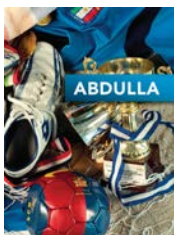


A vibrant collage of children's toys. In the foreground, there are several colorful alphabet blocks with letters like 'A', 'S', 'E', 'F', and 'X'. A pink stuffed animal is visible in the upper left. A purple watch with a yellow face is on the right. A red and black toy figure is at the bottom. A Rubik's cube is partially visible in the bottom left corner. The background is filled with more toys, including a yellow block with 'A', a red block with 'X', and a blue block with 'V'.

ASHFAAG

Books in this series.....



ASHFAAG

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

THIS BOOK IS NOT FOR SALE

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.

Ashfaaq was born in Malé, on 30 November 1987. Aged just seven months, his mother recalls him getting a very high fever that left him with profound hearing impairment. So, like all things natural, Ashfaaq and his mother learned their own natural signs to address their basic need for communication. And other family members learned a unique ‘home made’ set of signs to talk to Ashfaaq.

When Ashfaaq was 3 years old, he was enrolled at Maafannu School. There were no special classes for the hearing impaired at this school, so naturally Ashfaaq felt lost being away from the familiar walls of his home where daily interaction was easy. He could not understand anything that was happening in the class around him, so started acting a bit rebelliously instead. He was oblivious to the fact that he had no hearing at all. It was all he was used to for as long as he could remember.

So aged 7, when his mother explained to him about his hearing impairment, it did not make much difference to him at all. But he always got a bit irritated when he saw people mouthing conversation because he knew they were conversing, and because he could not understand what they were talking about.

Later, in the same year, Ashfaaq was enrolled at special classes at Jamaaludheen School, where he was introduced to general sign language and basic school subjects like English and Mathematics. It

was very difficult for him at first, but he slowly learned to use what he was learning in school to interact and communicate outside home, within a broader community. After that, Ashfaaq completed schooling as far as he could go at Jamaaludheen School.

Ashfaaq has come a long way since then. Initially, he had to experience all the difficulties of not being able to communicate in a social environment while he was a small child. He had experienced the enormity of will and effort needed for learning to interact in a new social context through sign language. And he has experienced the happiness and satisfaction he can get from being able to communicate freely among his close group of friends, family, or beyond.

And in 2008, he channelled all his experiences and knowledge from his twenty one years of life in the 'signing world' to a very important cause. He helped compile the first sign language dictionary in the Maldives. The sign language dictionary is a collaborated work funded by Handicap International and carried out under the supervision of the Education Development Centre of Maldives and Jamaluddin School. Now completed, the sign language dictionary is an easily accessible source of reference for deaf persons, parents, family members, and friends, as well as for teachers and social workers.

The team in charge of compiling the sign language of local communities visited deaf communities in five different atolls. Each such group use a unique set of signs, all created and evolved to match the motions of their daily life, the sights they see, and or the feelings they feel. Ashfaaq uses his experiences from life to interact with deaf communities in different corners of Maldives. Every now and then, he travels to meet a unique group of individuals in an island community

to talk to them, to identify their signs, and to pass on the information to his colleagues who then interpreted it for the sign language dictionary.

Now this project is completed, Ashfaaq continues to be a major advocate for the deaf community. In future, he will be more involved in promoting sign language through training programmes targeted for sign language teachers, rehabilitation workers, interpreters, and other social groups.

For now Ashfaaq is in high spirits. For one, he has met a lovely girl in Komandoo Island, resulting in frequent visits to the island. He is happy to hang around with his close group of friends in Malé, to watch football, play video games, or to religiously follow the latest episodes of the thriller American series - Prison Break. He has not yet realised the importance of the work he is currently doing for the deaf communities around the Maldives. He is unaware that he is already a great role model for many deaf youngsters in the islands he visits.

But of course, Ashfaaq is happy with himself for being able to do something good for his community. He is happy because children growing up with hearing impairment now have access to a sign language dictionary, so they can hopefully express themselves more freely, communicate their dreams and aspirations more openly. And their voices can be heard by the rest of society.



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 impairment 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.

كَرِيْمًا رَحِيْمًا اَرْسَلْنَاكَ بِالْحَقِّ بَشِيرًا وَنَذِيْرًا
 لَقَدْ جَاءَكَ الْحَقُّ بِالْحَقِّ الْاِسْمُ الْاِسْمُ الَّذِي اسْمُ رَبِّكَ الَّذِي عَلَّمْتَ
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تے شہرہ منڈی میں: جو کراچی کے بسوں کے لیے بنی گئی تھی، وہ اب بھی ہرگز نہیں چلتی۔
 اس وقت بھی وہاں پر کئی کئی بسیں کڑھاتی ہیں، جس سے لوگوں کی بہت سی مشکلات
 پیدا ہوئی ہیں۔ بسوں کے ڈرائیوروں کو بھی کئی قسم کی پریشانیوں کا سامنا کرنا پڑا ہے۔

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رَشْمِ عَرَبِيَّ

سوسوئی قریب ...



رَشَوْرَتِي

