

PRESENTATION TO ALL PARTY PARLIAMENTARY GROUPS IN HOUSE OF COMMONS, LONDON

- 9TH MAY 2011

It is a great honour for me to be here to speak a few words about the work APASENTH does for the benefit of a great number of people with learning and multiple disabilities in our community.

I express my gratitude to Britain-Bangladesh All Party Parliamentary Group for providing me this opportunity today at this historic seat of democracy.

APASENTH was formed in 1984 by a group of parents at the Beatrice Tate Special School in London Borough of Tower Hamlets. This parents group was registered as a voluntary organisation in 1987.

The parents had high expectations of education and were discouraged by the lack, or very slow rate, of progress of their children. They felt that because of the combination of their cultural backdrop and their disabilities, their children needed a far greater level of attention and beneficial input than they were currently receiving.

With the help of Tower Hamlets local authority and other supporters, staffs were recruited and a new location was found and APASENTH gradually developed from a modest informal parents group to a fully registered charity providing a wide range of services on a borough-wide level.

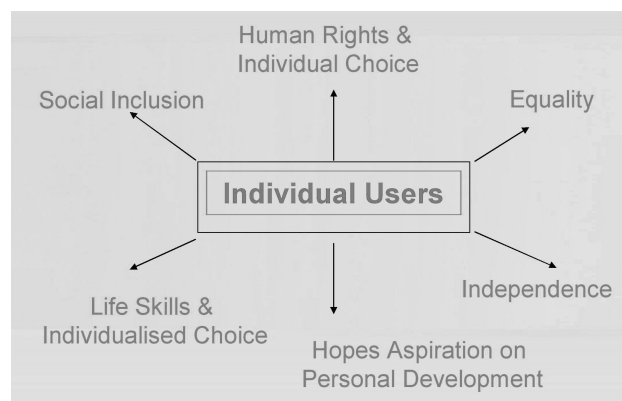
With its commitment and continuous effort to achieve maximum quality, APASENTH, now on its twenty-seventh year, is fast becoming a public service competitor serving the people with special needs in Tower Hamlets and beyond, e.g. Newham, Barking & Dagenham, Hackney, Kingston, Croydon and Redbridge.

We provide services with appropriate cultural understanding and a pledge to make a difference to our learners' way of lives.

The Mission of APASENTH is to become the leading Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) voluntary organisation providing a range of services to support people with disabilities and their carers to improve their quality of life.

Values and Ethos...

'Treating people as Unique Individual Whose Life has been Shaped by Social Inequalities and Discrimination'



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Aims and Objectives:

To relieve poverty, social exclusion and deprivation of children and young adults with learning difficulties and/or with physical disabilities and in particular such persons who are of Bangladeshi origin and living in Tower Hamlets, in particular, but not exclusively by,

1. Improving the quality of life for the above beneficiaries through the provision of advice, support, information and counselling.
2. Establishing and maintaining a Centre for a Children's Play Group and a Parents Social Club.
3. Arranging courses for parents and users which
 - makes them familiar with the welfare, social and educational system of the United Kingdom
 - create awareness in them with regard to various statutory and voluntary provisions available in their benefit.
 - develop a thorough understanding of how to cope with the special needs of their children.
4. Organizing appropriate training programmes for parents and users to help them familiarise them selves with the structural system of a voluntary organization and the basic management issues involved in the running of such an organization.
5. Setting up a Home Care Services for those less able and housebound in Tower Hamlets and other boroughs in greater London.

We provide support through:

- ✚ Home and Community Services
- ✚ Day Care Services (based in Tower Hamlets and Croydon)
- ✚ Disability Training & Employment Support
- ✚ Advice and Advocacy Services
- ✚ Special Needs Support (for children and families)
- ✚ Short Break Services
- ✚ Newly developed residential respite services to be launched soon

Our strengths and strategies:

The main strength of APASENTH lies in the commitment of our parents and also of our work force. The strategies that we have adopted have been mainly to provide services that we felt the families of disabled children and adults needed but which were not being provided by other agencies. We have done so by:

- Identifying the needs in the community through discussion and by research / surveys.
- Informing policy makers in the local authority about the needs and views of the parent groups.
- Seeking funding from the local authority and also from a variety of charitable trusts.
- Commissioning new services as needs emerge.

After successfully awarded and maintaining quality assurance of CQC (Care Quality Commission) and Quality Mark, APASENTH has recently achieved a new accomplishment. It has just been awarded the prestigious "Investors In People" recognition. Minister for Disability Maria Miller MP had visited APASENTH on 2nd of December 2010 to Mark the "Disability Week" with our service users.

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Tower Hamlets is a vibrant and fast growing borough, characterised by its diversity, as well as by high levels of deprivation and inequality. One of the most densely populated boroughs in London, the Greater London Authority (GLA) estimates the Tower Hamlets population to be almost 248,000 in 2011, rising to 267,000 in 2015, and almost 290,000 by 2020.

According to GLA projections, in 2009 50% of the population is estimated to be White (118,176), 34% Bangladeshi (78,639), 3% Chinese, 3% Black African and 3% 'Other'. In the population aged under 20, 59% are Bangladeshi (© GLA 2008 Round Ethnic Group Projections - Low)

In Tower Hamlets 956 people aged 14 and over are known to the Community Learning Disability Service in Tower Hamlets (0.49% of the general population); of whom 784 are adults aged 18 and over (0.42% of the adult population). 44% of service users are Asian or Asian British, and 42% are White.

(Data taken from www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/lgs)

May I take this opportunity to draw your attention to an important concern.

A fair number of parents whose children with learning and multiple disabilities attend APASENTH services do have a close tie with their home country Bangladesh. While the parents are on holiday there, they observe the depressing conditions of the disable people with great pain. They wonder whether APASENTH is able to provide the essential support to these vulnerable Bangladeshis who are suffering from a cycle of social stigma, discrimination and economic hardship.

Though no comprehensive empirical study has been conducted as yet to determine the incidence and prevalence of disabilities in Bangladesh, an estimated number of persons with disabilities in Bangladesh is around 140 million people, which constitutes almost 10% of its total population.

In Bangladesh, disability happens for many reasons such as lack of trained birth attendants and nurses, malnutrition in pregnancy, marriage between close relations, child marriage, wrong pathological diagnosis, babies not being vaccinated, polio, typhoid, paralysis, accident, crime and violence, acid burn, and also because of lack of knowledge and awareness among care providers.

In Bangladesh disability and poverty are inter-linked and reinforce each other. The disables are mostly poor and are subject to gross deprivation and acute vulnerabilities.

The gruesome circumstance of the people with disability is mainly determined by:

- ⇒ Lack of human development and capacity building such as education opportunities
- ⇒ Practice of discrimination, such as the negligence of families and society
- ⇒ Lack of employment opportunities
- ⇒ High medical expenses
- ⇒ Denial of participation in social affairs
- ⇒ Obstacles to mobility and lack of appliances
- ⇒ Lack of opportunities to get organised
- ⇒ Lack of housing, shelter etc.

Poverty makes a parent unable to provide an environment that supports a child's growth and development. Parents in poverty are not in a position to buy assistive devices and to proactively seek out and find appropriate education for their child who is suffering from some kind of disability. Parental literacy, which is lacking in poverty, is strongly associated with education achievement.

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In Bangladesh, widespread discrimination against the people with disabilities and their exclusion from mainstream society lead to extensive economic hardship and loss of their creative capabilities. As a human being they need equal rights from the country, from every sector of society and institution.

I would like to extend our commitment today that APASENTH is happy to consider expanding its services to people with learning disabilities in Bangladesh provided we are asked under a bilateral agreement for this. May I humbly urge to the Hon'ble Chairperson of Britain-Bangladesh All Party Parliamentary Group and His Excellency the High Commissioner for Bangladesh in the UK to think about taking essential initiatives in this respect. We need a certain commitment from the Government of Bangladesh ensuring all necessary support to APASENTH for its smooth functioning before we go to Bangladesh.

Once again I wish to thank you for giving me the opportunity to tell the APASENTH achievements and aspirations this afternoon.

Mahmud Hasan MBE

Director
APASENTH

09 May 2011

For further information – Please contact or visit:

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