

Bangladeshi Mental Health Association



Report, 2002/2003

Report on work from 1 February 2002 to 31 January 2003

BANGLADESHI MENTAL HEALTH ASSOCIATION

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Chair: Dr Michael Radford
Chief Executive Officer: Ms Lily Ahmed

Introduction

Founded in 1992, the Bangladeshi Mental Health Association (BMHA) is a company limited by guarantee, now seeking registration as a charity. The Association works in both the UK and Bangladesh; over the last year our work has been mainly in Bangladesh.

Work in Bangladesh

The Association in Bangladesh is now registered as a Non-Governmental Organisation with the NGO Affairs Bureau. Overall management of the Bangladesh branch is vested in a Sub-Committee which is divided into an Advisory Committee and an Executive Committee. These are formed of Bangladeshi people with experience, enthusiasm and connections (see pages 4–5 below for membership)..

The Association is committed to equal opportunity and good employment practice.

BMHA's mission statement in Bangladesh:

- To promote and, where necessary, to provide a culturally appropriate community-based mental health service to the people of Bangladesh.
- To work to counter all kinds of violence and, when it occurs, to contribute to the amelioration of its consequences. This will include work with the victims of gender violence in all its forms and with their families and neighbours when appropriate.
- To advance and encourage the conditions for self-support by way of mental health education, education in consequences, and in any other way. This may be done directly, by sponsorship of self help groups and by support of the efforts of others.
- To promote social inclusion by sponsorship of opportunities for social contact, education, employment, environmental activities, recreation and other leisure activities for those who have need of such because of their mental health experiences and factors such as youth, advancing age, infirmity, disability, gender, rejection, isolation, lack of confidence or stigma.
- To preserve the status of the Association as non-party in politics and non-sectarian in religion.

February to April 2002

BMHA's paid staff in Bangladesh – Dola the Project Co-ordinator and Kausar the Admin Officer – worked with Lily Ahmed as Chief Executive and Country Director and Professor Tahmina Akhtar as Deputy Chief Executive (both unpaid) to establish the Bangladesh branch formally, to develop the branch's programme of work, and to pursue registration of BMHA with the NGO Affairs Bureau

Planning was continued for an international conference on mental health to be held in Dhaka in February 2005. Meetings were also held with the WHO's Bangladesh director, Brigadier Shazan Hafiz, and Professor Nazim Ullah Chowdhury to promote a greater concern for mental-health issues in Bangladesh.

June to September 2002

BMHA established a base at the Monorog Clinic in Dhaka, thanks to the generosity of Professor Hidaytul Islam, chair of the Bangladesh branch's executive committee. Lily set up a mental-health service-users group at the clinic, and had embarked on fundraising for the branch from international funders in Bangladesh when, at the end of July, she and the branch's treasurer, Mr Salekur Rahman, were involved in a serious car accident which left Lily incapacitated for the rest of this visit to Bangladesh.

October 2002 to January 2003

After convalescing in the UK, Lily returned in October. Larger premises for the branch were secured in the Mohamedpur district of Dhaka, and by mid-November the branch's staffing comprised an Office Manager (Dola), an Admin Officer (Rana), a PR Officer (Kazal) and a driver and cook/cleaner.

The branch's secretary, psychiatrist Dr Mohit Kamal, acted as BMHA's voluntary consultant, working with mental-health out-patients; and Dr Michael Radford carried out clinical fieldwork in villages near Dhaka during visits from the UK. Mental-health facilities were also provided for "out-class" people of Pakistani origin living in the Bihari Camp; and the branch continued its work with the Durjoy and Shakti projects working with commercial sex-workers, and its campaigning on related drug-abuse issues.

In October the branch joined with Bangladesh's Institute of Mental Health to celebrate World Mental Health Day, organising a very successful rally and seminar for students to draw further attention to mental-health issues. BMHA also participated in events organised by ActionAid for World AIDS Day, and worked with ActionAid to develop cognitive-therapy counselling for people with learning difficulties.

In December, registration with the NGO Affairs Bureau was secured. ActionAid's Project Leader organised training sessions for BMHA staff, and financial and admin policies were formulated, together with the branch's Mission Statement (see above).

Bangladesh Branch Sub-Committee Members

Advisory Committee:

Chair, Dr Nizam Uddin Ahmed - Public Health Physician, National Consultant, Behaviour Change Support Intervention, National AIDS/STD Programme, etc

Dr Farouk Alam -Senior Psychiatrist, Secretary-General, National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH)

Mr M R Choudhary - Managing Director, Olympic Group Ltd., Textile and Garments Ltd., and Olympic Navigation Ltd.

Mr Manzoor Hasan (Barrister at Law) - former Executive Director, Transparency International Bangladesh

Professor Moinul Hoque - Pharmacist, Comilla Medical College

Mr M Salekur Rahman - formerly Senior Executive (Accounts), for Bangladesh Shipping Corporation, and for Rahman, Rahman, Huq and Co, Chartered Accountants, Managing Director, Gamges Textiles and Garments, Ltd.

Ex-officio:

Dr Michael Radford, Chair, BMHA (UK)

Ms Lily Ahmed, Country Director

Bangladesh Branch Executive Committee:

Chair, Professor Hidaytul Islam - first Director-cum-Professor, NIMH (retired)

Secretary, Dr Mohit Kamal -Senior Psychiatrist, NIMH

Acting Treasurer, Mr Salekur Rahman

Dr Tanamay Prakash Biswas - Junior Psychiatrist

Mr Azmir (Sohal) Hussain - Executive Officer, ActionAid

Miss Mussarath (Sharmi) Hussain - Dhaka University Student

Mrs Nasreen Jabin - Lecturer, Women's College, Dhaka

Mr Ziaur Rahman - Consultant, Clean Energy Alternative, Inc.

Dr M A Rassal - Consultant Neurologist

Ex-officio: Ms Lily Ahmed, Country Director

Work in the UK

In between periods of time spent in Bangladesh, Lily has continued to work with Committee members and volunteers to maintain the continuity of BMHA's activities in this country, based at its office in Albert Road, Handsworth, Birmingham, where an informal drop-in centre is operated. Birmingham City Council supports the work by providing office space, heating and telephone. Development work in the UK was badly affected by Lily's car accident in Bangladesh (see above) and subsequent convalescence here; but progress was made on BMHA's application for registration as a charity, and fundraising was carried out for work both in the UK and in Bangladesh.

Throughout the year Lily and BMHA volunteer Rekha Sarkar have assisted Dr Michael Radford in clinical visits to Bangladeshi patients in Birmingham.

President, Directors and Committee Members of the Bangladeshi Mental Health Association

President

Mr Jahangir Alam

Directors

Dr Michael Radford Chairman

Mr John Jenkins Vice-Chair

Mr Harris Ali

Committee

Mr Henry Coore Company Secretary

Mr Morris Price Secretary

Mrs Amdoni Biswas

Mr Berkeley Broom

Mrs Sandra Cole

Cllr Mahmood Hussain

Mr Ken Jackson

Cllr Amin Kazi

Mrs Veenu Luxmi

Mrs Santosh Minhas

Dr Harish Mehra

Dr Y Qureshi

Ms Shamimara Rajpar

Dr Vinod Singh

Dr Ashok Vora

Mr Fred King

Mrs Eileen Ali

Mr Vinod Mehta

Mr Ahmed Sani

Chief Executive Officer: Ms Lily Ahmed