



**TIBA SERVICES FOR THE BLIND
FROM HUMBLE BEGINNING TO A HOLISTIC WELFARE ORGANISATION**

(Mohamed “Boeti” Eshak)

TIBA Services for the Blind has its roots in 1949 when the Coloured and Indian Blind Association was established to serve the Coloured and Indian persons residing in Johannesburg. But, like all other services, apartheid reared its ugly head and dictated that these services for the vulnerable people should be based on racial lines.

The first major setback for the harmonious Coloured and Indian Blind Association, based in Coronationville, came in the findings of the Bosman Commission. This commission declared that social welfare services must be racially constituted if they desired State subsidy. The commission also recommended that the employees of the organisation requesting State subsidy must also be on a racial basis.

It was during this period that the Coloured and Indian Blind Association experienced difficulties in operating as a mixed group welfare organisation because the government directive - Circular 29 of 1966 - demanded that welfare organisations serve their own racial groups. As a result, the South African National Council for the Blind underwent a structural change in 1968, and separate divisions were formed for the different races.



In the interest of the prevailing political situation, it was decided that the Coloured and Indian Associations be dissolved to protect the interest of the protective workshop, which was receiving State subsidies. The assets of the Associations were amicably settled between the Coloured and Indian communities. It was also a sad and a heart-breaking separation.

With the majority of Indians forcefully moved to Lenasia, they were denied any social services for their wellbeing. The late Mr AR Mia, who was an active community member prior to his blindness, became aware of the plight of the neglected blind persons in Lenasia.

In 1973, Mr A R Mia activated a committee to undertake measures to assist the blind and representations made to the Coloured and Indian Blind Association for their assistance and as a result a sub-committee, chaired by Mr EE Patel, was established in Lenasia. The dedicated members of the sub-committee were Ebrahim Essop Patel, Essop S Bhana, Rashida Monia, Shirley Watkinson, Moosa Makda, and others became quite active.

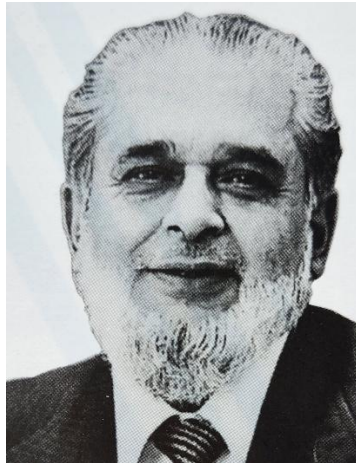
The Lenasia sub-committee established an office at the old Post Office building to conduct their affairs. They also acquired the services of Miss A Mistry as a social worker and much assistance became available to the blind in terms of counselling and social work services, registration of grants, and social activities.

The Lenasia sub-committee then took the bold step to establish an organisation to serve the blind within the “Indian” community. Then came the forerunner to Tiba – the launch of the Transvaal Indian Association for the Care of the Visually Impaired.



The first annual general meeting was held on 24 September 1977 at the AEL Centre in Mint Road, Fordsburg and attended by Messrs IFH Mayet M E Naidoo, Z Isane, Essop S Bhana, Morgie Naidoo, Ebrahim Patel, C N Naidoo, M S Makda, M Lalaram. H M Bhabha, I Loonat, R Wadia, S Naidoo, C Saloojee, AM Jadwat, V Naidoo, J Tavaría, R Monia and J Adams, nearly all of whom have since passed on.

Mr IFH Mayet was elected chairman, with Mr Ebrahim Patel his deputy. Mr Essop S Bhana was chosen for the treasurer's position, and his understudy was Mrs M ER Naidoo. Morgie Naidoo was appointed secretary. Messrs CN Naidoo, S Naidoo and J Adams were elected to serve on the executive.



Mr IFH Mayet

The name adopted at the annual general meeting was the Transvaal Indian Association for the Care of the Visually Impaired. It was later changed to Transvaal Indian blind Association (TIBA) because the original name was too cumbersome.



Over the years, TIBA worked with part-time staff and occupied rented office space at the old post office and then relocated to the Jiswa Centre. Because of increased workloads, it employed a full-time social worker, Mrs K Shah, and a part time typist-cum-clerk.

It must be noted that although it became a racially based welfare organisation, TIBA discreetly provided services to the African and Coloured members as well.

Their first attempt to raise funds was a jumble sale, which raised the princely sum of R87. The organisation's petrol bill was an average of R50 a month – which was considered quite high.

Under the watchful supervision of Rashida Monia, TIBA organised a recreation club for the blind, and they organised outings and excursions to various places in and around Johannesburg.

In 1984 Mr IFH Mayet stepped down as chairman as he entered the political space and in stepped Ebrahim Essop Patel. Mr Patel guided TIBA to great heights with his unwavering commitment to the cause of people with blindness, until he resigned in

August 2013 because of ill health. Even though Mr Patel had a special place in his heart for persons with all disabilities, the biggest space was surely held for his services rendered in the upliftment of the blind in the community.

Mr Patel initially split his time between the MC Kharbhai School for the Deaf where he served at an executive level, and TIBA Services for the Blind as the chairman. In his later years he was based at the TIBA offices and relentlessly worked in the upliftment of the centre and the rendering of a sterling service. After his resignation in 2015, he was replaced as chairman by Dr Cyril Samuels.

One of the first major public events and awareness programmes organised under Mr Patel's chairmanship was the inaugural fun run in 1987. This proved to be a highly popular event on the Lenasia community calendar but was scrapped after 1993 because of the lack of manpower.

With the demand of TIBA's services increasing, they finally acquired their own premises in Vulture Avenue in Lenasia Extension 1 (Rainbow). In 1994, Tiba established its very popular Eye Clinic under the supervision of then social worker, Mrs Nirmala Desai, and Orientation and Mobility Instructress, Miss Yasmin Hoosen, with the assistance from final year Optometry students from the Rand Afrikaans University (now the University of Johannesburg).



The Eye Clinic operated from the organisation's confined office space. It provided eye examinations and dispensed spectacles at a nominal fee. Clients needing further eye care were referred to ophthalmologists at the Lenasia South Hospital. Tiba provided free transport to persons requiring ophthalmological services from the Lenasia South Hospital.

In 1998, Tiba established its first Protective Workshop for persons with visual impairment and blindness under the supervision of the social worker, Mrs Faranaaz Waja. This workshop operated from a small garage on Tiba's premises.

By the year 2000, this protective workshop was catering for persons with numerous disabilities. This change came about due to the fact that services needed to be holistic and not specialised if resources and manpower were available.

As TIBA was providing its services to all racial groups and to vulnerable people beyond the boundaries of Lenasia, it was decided to change its name to **Tiba Services for the Blind**.

For several years, the organisation provided transport to community members to hospitals in Johannesburg for eye-care services and cataract surgery. It also succeeded in providing orientation and mobility training for those in need.

In 2007, and with the great assistance from community donors, the Tiba Centre on Nirvana Drive was officially opened by then Constitutional Court judge, Mr Justice Zak Yacoob, and long serving Tiba treasurer, Mr Essop S Bhana.

In May 2017, the Board of Management of Tiba decided to rename the Tiba Centre in memory of their long serving and late chairman, Mr Ebrahim Patel. Hence, the building is now known as the EE Patel Tiba Centre. Tiba Centre on Nirvana Drive currently provides services to all communities and our key services are:

1. Social Work Services.
2. Educational Awareness programmes for the aged, Youth, Pre-school and Foundation phase learners, Teachers and the Vulnerable in the community educating them on various eye pathologies.
3. Co-ordinating First Aid Training for teachers and high school students.
4. The Protective Workshop, which has 40 full time clients, are in receipt of rehabilitation services such as yoga, arts and crafts, library readership programmes, sports and fitness programmes, life skills and orientation and mobility. These clients are also receiving contract work on a small scale whereby they provide packaging services to companies. These clients are also transported every day to and from our centre in the organisation's combi.
5. Primary Health Care - Eye Clinic services are provided twice a week. We see annually almost 400 patients. Spectacles are also dispensed if needed. Patients requiring cataract removal surgery are annually referred to Lenmed Ahmed Kathrada Private Hospital for free surgery. Annually about 100 patients are beneficiaries for the free cataract surgery.
6. The Twinkle Stars Early Childhood Development Centre for learners with special needs such as Autism, Blindness, Asperges Syndrome, Developmental delays, etc. This centre currently caters for about 50 children, some from as far as Soweto.
7. Tiba hosts an annual Open Health Day with its partners - Lenmed Ahmed Kathrada Private Hospital, Islamic Medical Association of South Africa, Fountain of Inspiration and the Muslim Aids Programme - and a host of medical screening is undertaken on the day. They also have specialists in certain fields available to advise patients. during which about 450-600 persons of the community are given free medical assessments such as blood pressure, sugar, cholesterol, HIV /AIDS, eye tests.

8. Tiba hosted major fundraising events annually – a banquet and a golf day – until 2021, when they had to curb these activities because of lack of manpower. These events were well supported by the community and companies.
9. A major community upliftment project of Tiba's in partnership the Lenmed Ahmed Kathrada Private Hospital is its "Right to Sight - Cataract Programme", where patients that are screened by Tiba's Eye Clinic are referred for free cataract surgery at the Lenmed AK Private Hospital. Over 100 persons receive free cataract surgery annually.
10. With the advent of Padel, Tiba decided to host an annual fundraising Padel tournament, courtesy of the Ormonde Padel Club.
11. Tiba hosts an annual sports day for its protective workshop clients and Twinkle Stars learners.

Tiba provides a holistic service. Any member of the community with disabilities is free to receive counselling and supportive services by our social worker.

While Tiba receives subsidies from the Department of Social Services and the Department of Health, this is not sufficient to cover the total costs of services and salaries. Therefore, we appeal to businesses and philanthropists to come forward and assist Tiba financially to continue to provide much needed services to vulnerable members of the committee. Banking details can be obtained from the Tiba offices.

Tiba prides itself in its governance procedures, especially its finances. All monies received are recorded and receipts issued. Audited financial reports are also available.



Mr Mohamed "Boeti" Eshak

The current board of management of TIBA Services for the Blind consists of:

Chairman - Mr Mohamed Ismail Eshak (aka Boeti)

Vice Chairman - Mr Ashraf Wadee

Treasurer - Mr Ahmed Takolia

Secretary - Mr Farouk Areff

Assistant Secretary: Ms Rafia Malik

Executive Committee Members

Mr Yusuf Patel

Mrs Annitjie Diratsagae

Dr Cyril Samuels – co-opted member

Mr Faizel Patel – co-opted member

Management Committee Members

Mr Vinod Desai
Mr Yusuf Essay
Mr Farouk Lambat
Mr Essop Makda
Mr Aboobakr Manack
Mr Iqbal Madhi
Dr Masood Byat

Contact details:

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- **www.tiba.org.za**

*It is not what Tiba Services for the Blind can do for you. It is what you can do for Tiba.
Hands that serve are holier than hands that pray.*