



# AFID 2013

21<sup>st</sup> Conference of the  
**Asian Federation on Intellectual Disabilities**  
7 – 11 October 2013, India

*Towards Dignity & Quality of Life  
Evolving Individual Capacity with Family & Community Participation*

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## A Report



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## AFID 2013 - A REPORT

AFID 2013 - the 21<sup>st</sup> Conference of the Asian Federation on Intellectual Disabilities - was held from 7-11 October 2013 in New Delhi India. The conference was organised and hosted by SAMADHAN, whose Founder-Director, Pramila Balasundaram was elected the President of AFID in 2011.

The conference was attended by about 470 delegates from across Asia and the world. The Asian countries represented were Korea, Japan, Singapore, Nepal, Bangladesh, Taiwan, Malaysia, Macau, Indonesia, Philippines, Singapore and Sri Lanka. Additionally, there were also delegates from the U.K, Germany, France, Canada and the USA.

Following are highlights of some key elements of the conference:

### *Main Speakers*

The main speakers of AFID 2013 shared their experience and learning on several topics that are extremely relevant to inclusion for the intellectually disabled. The tone was set by an excellent keynote address by Dr Satish Girimaji, Head of the Dept. of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry, NIMHANS, Bangalore on “A Holistic Approach to Health for People with Intellectual Disability”

Other plenary speakers in order of presentation were:

- Dr Klaus Lachwitz, President, Inclusion International on ‘The Challenges of the UNCRPD’
- Dr Jayanthi Narayan, Former Dy. Director, NIMH and Special Education Consultant on “Inclusive Education for Children with Intellectual disability”
- Dr. Natalia Mufel, Education specialist, UNICEF on “International Early Childhood Intervention and UNICEF Recommendation on ECI Programming”

Additionally, there were 7 papers from AFID member countries which highlighted the services, the problems and achievements of the respective countries for services for persons with disability. The India report was presented by Mr. Awanish Awasthi, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment, Govt. of India.

AFID 2013 was also honoured by the unexpected attendance of Ms. Stuti Kacker, Secretary, Disability Division of the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment on 11 October 2013. She shared the plans of the government for the enhancement of services to people with intellectual disability.

## ***Scientific Paper Presentations***

AFID 2013 saw the presentation of 66 oral papers and 15 posters. These were selected out of over 120 papers that were submitted to the Scientific Committee, which was headed by Dr. T.C. Sivakumar, Director, National Institute of the Mentally Handicapped, Secunderabad.

All delegates received a CD containing the abstracts and full texts of the presented papers as part of their conference kit bags.

## ***Workshops***

Workshops were held on 7 and 9 October for local and national participants but were attended by many delegates from other Asian countries as well.

The themes covered were

- Portage for Asian Countries – Prof. Naoji Shimizu & Prof. Ken Nishinaga
- Creative Dance Therapy – Tripura Kashyap
- Creating Inclusive Classrooms so All Your Children Can Learn – Jo Chopra & Manju Singhania
- A Life Skills Approach to Inclusion – Aparna Balasundaram
- Playing Together and Learning Together – Sheela Ramakrishnan & Rajika Dhiren

The AFID 2013 conference was a great moment combining professionalism and friendliness. We took time to compare our practices and see how some of them converge. I appreciate the efforts of the organisers to let us visit Samadhan Center, so we have had also an idea of a practical realisation in India.

Thanks a lot to organisers, for their availability, kindness and smiles. Viva indian touch!

- Denis Pelsy, France

## ***Study Tours***

On 9 October 2013, delegates had the option to undertake a study tour that combined a heritage site visit with a visit to a local NGO. This gave the international delegates especially a first-hand experience of how NGOs in India work with intellectual disability.

We thank Muskaan, Jan Madhyam, Amar Jyoti, Tamana and Samadhan for their hospitality to the delegates of AFID 2013.

The heritage sites visited were Humayun's tomb and Qutub Minar.

### ***Friendship Night***

Friendship Night is an AFID tradition – a grand and fun filled evening when delegates present a small cultural item from their respective countries. The Guest of Honour for this evening was Mr. Hiroyuki Ota, representing Mr. Yuki Yoshi Watanabe, Founder of the ISFnet Group, AFID 2013's first corporate supporter. India's contribution was a recital of Odissi and a medley of folk dances, both presented by Alpana Nayak and her students, including disabled children. Other contributors were Sri Lanka with a Baila, Singapore and the Philippines with songs, Japan with a traditional dance and Korea with an audience-rousing performance of Gangnam Style.

### ***AFID General Assembly***

The 21<sup>st</sup> AFID Conference was concluded on 11 October 2013 with the meeting of the General Body. The business consisted of election of new Board members and confirming existing members. The new Executive Board as finalized at this meeting are:

- President - Ms. Nandhini Wijayaratham of Sri Lanka
- 1<sup>st</sup> Vice-President - Mr. Mamun of Bangladesh
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice-President - Mr Kamaraj of Malaysia
- 3<sup>rd</sup> Vice-President - Mr Sachidananda of Nepal

The AFID flag was then handed over by outgoing President Ms. Pramila Balasundaram to Ms Nandhini Wijayaratham, the new President for 2014-2015.

### ***Star Raft Award 2013***

It has been an established practice for the Japan League on Intellectual Disabilities to organize a competition among AFID member countries for excellence in services to the intellectually disabled. The Star Raft Award 2013 for outstanding activities provided by volunteer organisation was awarded to Dr. Manish Ranjan, IAS, Mission Director, National Rural Health Mission in Ranchi, Jharkhand. The award of Y 100,000 was received by Dr Manish Ranjan and his colleagues who had travelled to Delhi for the conference.

## **FOCUS ON SELF ADVOCATES**

While AFID 2013 provided all delegates with the learning and networking opportunities that are a key takeaway of such forums, the focus of this conference was very definitely on persons with intellectual disability. Usually while the conference is all about them, they are excluded from actually participating. The aim this time was to make them an integral part of this conference. Following are brief accounts of some of the aspects of the conference that highlighted this focus.

### ***Inauguration by a Self Advocate***

Unlike the usual practice of inviting a celebrity or dignitary to inaugurate a conference of this stature, AFID 2013 was inaugurated by Ms. Aarti Sood, a young woman with moderate intellectual disability and hydrocephaly. She had prepared for this occasion for over a month and did an excellent job, speaking clearly and confidently. Ms. Sood is a teacher's assistant in SAMADHAN's special education unit in Dwarka.

The invocation song, "Humko Man ki Shakti Dena" was presented by children of the Samadhan Day Care Centre and was followed by the lighting of a lamp, the traditional Indian way of inaugurating functions.

### ***Self Advocates' Panel Discussion***

Six young women with varying degrees of intellectual disability from the SAIL (Self Advocates for Independent Living) Project, were invited to participate in a panel discussion. They spoke about their experiences of living independently, their jobs, their problems and achievements and also answered questions from the delegates on various matters including boyfriends and marriage.

The session was moderated by Dr. Asha Singh, a parent and one of the founders of SAIL.

### ***Activities for Self Advocates***

Throughout the conference there were special activities for self advocates, such as craft, dance, music, a field trip to the Craft Museum and, finally, a Forum for self expression.

These activities were ably conducted by a team from Jan Madhyam, led by Jan Madhyam founder, Ranjana Pandey.

"It was one of the friendliest and warmest conferences I have been to in a long time and I really appreciated the break from tradition in it being opened by a self advocate- it reminds us that we are there for the betterment of others and to create a more equal and understanding society, not to pander to the ego of dignitaries! Well done on such a brave step- a first in Asia from my experience.

- Caroline Essame, UK

### ***Paper Presentations by Self Advocates***

Five self advocates from Japan submitted abstracts along with other non-disabled delegates. Their abstracts were selected for presentation and presented among other scientific papers.

### ***Exhibition of Art by Intellectually Disabled Artists***

The art exhibition, organized with the goal of providing opportunities for self advocates to express themselves through art, received an overwhelming 270 entries from member countries of the AFID. However, due to space constraints only 35 selected were displayed.

Three main prizes and two consolation prizes were awarded. Malaysia won first prize, Singapore second and India the third. The prize distribution was presided over by Mr. Vinod Gulati, noted Delhi restaurateur. Mr. Gulati has been a long-time supporter of SAMADHAN, supplying free lunch to the children and staff at the Dakshinpuri centre, everyday for the last 15 years.

### ***Speaker Slots for Self Advocates***

For the first time, self advocates from member countries were invited to speak during the main sessions in the auditorium. Two self-advocates, Ms. Yuki Arakawa from Japan and Ms. Aarti Sood from India spoke on their work, their achievements and their dreams.

### ***Volunteer Team of Self Advocates***

A team of self advocates from the Shaurya Centre participated with enthusiasm as volunteers. This team of young intellectually challenged volunteers carried the day. They set the tone by their presence and were a constant reminder of the true purpose of the conference.

It is a wonderful achievement for Samadhan that is been given the honour of holding this conference because it has come to India after so many years. It is a very good opportunity for pooling in our experiences, specially of the Asian countries, regarding the mainstreaming and empowerment of persons with intellectual disability.

- Stuti Kacker, Secy., MSJE

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Mr. Victor Daniel	Alice and Jayachandran Menon, Australia
CBM India	Japan League on Intellectual Disabilities

### *Conference Organisation Support*

We acknowledge and thank the following for the generous sharing of their time, expertise and special talents:

- the Children's Book Trust, New Delhi, for their support in selecting, framing and displaying the art work as well as publishing the catalogue for the Art Exhibition
- Ranjana Pandey, Founder-Director, Jan Madhyam for planning and implementing the daily activities for self advocates, along with volunteer staff from Jan Madhyam
- Alpana Nayak and the students of ALPANA for the Odissi Recital and medley of folk dances at the India Culural Showcase
- Interpreters from the Korean congregation at Centenary Methodist Church, Delhi

### *Staff of Samadhan*

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Runa Neogi	Sangeeta	Monica
Ved Prakash	Neelam	Sarojini
Nidhi Talwar	Kulwant	Dr. Bhatia
Krishna Vatsa	Anita	Faiz Ahmed
Manoj	Babita	
Aditya	Yamuna	

### ***Volunteers***

We acknowledge and thank the following volunteers for the dedicated, willing and always cheerful sharing of their time and abilities:

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Usha Grace Anthony  
Geeta Narayanswamy  
Atreyu Balasundaram  
Sanjana  
Jairusha  
Hitika

Raminder Gulati  
Damini Mohan  
Staff & Students of Shaurya  
Students of Lady Irwin College  
And others

### ***Scientific Committee of AFID 2013***

Sivakumar Thaliadan - Director, National Institute for Mentally Handicapped, Secunderabad  
Dr. Om Sai Ramesh – Faculty, Psychiatry  
Dr. Sunanda Koli - Pediatric Neurologist and Founder, CARENIDHI  
Dr. K.B.Kumar - Head, Clinical Psychology, Sweekar Rehabilitation Center  
Dr. Jayanthi Narayanan - Freelance Consultant on Special Education  
Dr. Usha Grover – Director, National Institute for the Mentally Handicapped, New Delhi

### ***Organising Committee of AFID 2013***

Pramila Balasundaram – President, AFID and Founder-Director, Samadhan  
Sivakumar Thaliadan - Director, National Institute for the Mentally Handicapped, Secunderabad  
Dr. Poonam Natarajan- Director, National Trust  
Dr. Sunanda Koli - Pediatric Neurologist and Founder, CARENIDHI  
Dr. Jayanthi Narayanan - Freelance Consultant on Special Education  
Dr. Anil Cherian – Director, Community Health & Development, Emmanuel Hospital Association  
Dr. Madhumita Puri – Executive Director, Society for Child Development  
Dr. Usha Grover - Special Education, National Institute for the Mentally Handicapped, New Delhi  
Ranjana Pandey – Founder-Director, Jan Madhyam

### ***AFID 2013 Conference Secretariat at Samadhan***

Ms. Pramila Balasundaram – President, AFID and Founder-Director, Samadhan  
Ms. Sumathi Morgan – Executive Director, Samadhan  
Mr. Ashok Sood - Finance  
Ms. Janak Gandhi – Coordinator, Art Exhibition  
Ms. Smita Hopper - Conference Coordinator