

NAD'S Annual Activities Report 2012 – 13

5TH NATIONAL DEAF CONFERENCE

12th & 13th May, 2012

INDIRA HOLIDAY HOME, SECTOR – 24B, CHANDIGARH

The 5th National Deaf Conference organised by National Association of the Deaf saw participation of more than 150 deaf adults who came from all over the country. The two-day conference entailed presentations by Dr. Madan Vasisht (Associate Professor, Department of Administration and Supervision, Gallaudet University, Washington DC, USA), Mr. Sibaji Panda (Professor of B.A. Applied Sign Language Studies at IGNOU, Delhi & Lecturer, International Institute for Sign Languages and Deaf Studies, University of Central Lancashire, Preston, UK), Mr. Zorin Singha (President) and Mr. A.S. Narayanan (General Secretary) respectively, of National Association of the Deaf.

Dr. Vasisht explained the culture of the deaf community and domestic violence in the deaf community. Deaf are those individuals who, in addition to not hearing, are members of the deaf community, subscribing to the unique cultural norms, values and traditions of that group. This community usually uses Indian Sign Language (ISL) as their first language. Their primary language is ISL, which has its own rules of grammar and syntax. Deaf become more susceptible to victimisation because of their inability to communicate with law enforcement, medical professionals, etc., helplessness and the tradition of secrecy within the culture/protection of perpetrators who are members of the community.

Dr. Madan Vasisht talked about NAD and their work that is getting recognition in every aspect of the deaf world. He insisted that more deaf individuals should join NAD and support their work and also, help them to create a greater base of membership.

Mr. Sibaji Panda explained the theme “Diversity and Unity”, how each and every individual is different yet united by a particular cause or a feeling of oneness. There are diverse modes of communication within the deaf community ranging from Sign Language to Oralism to Total Communication. He further explained if a person focuses on the differences rather than similarities, it becomes hard to progress. Unity becomes a tricky thing. We need to learn to be united in diversity.

Mr. Sibaji Panda encouraged our deaf youth to try to be an agent of change. There are problems everywhere and most may not know how to solve it. There is one process to solving a problem, no matter if it's big or small. It is a slow process to make “change” happen, it is simple though not easy and it requires “strategy execution”. We need to start by first, identifying the issue then pinpointing the actual problem. After determining what can be done, we have to create a team with action plan which would help us to monitor accountability and then, make an impact. The key is to overcome impediments and bypass “NO's”. He concluded with one of the popular quotes that “You don't have to be great to get started but you have to get started to be great.”

Mr. Zorin Singha and Mr. A. S. Narayanan shared their report on the developments, achievements and ongoing process being done by NAD. They shared the success of the Census of India 2011 that included the question on disability and also, the inauguration of Indian Sign Language and Training Centre (ISLRTC). Mr. Anuj Jain explained the

Unity/Disunity PowerPoint presentation to all deaf delegates. It helps them to have more unity between their deaf associations with different deaf associations in the parts of India.

After the Conference, most of the deaf delegates rode on the double bus from CITCO sponsoring the free of cost for double bus and went on tour to the city of Chandigarh and Rock Garden and Sukhana Lake, they had a good time and fun much for enjoying on tour to Chandigarh. We specially thank CITCO sponsoring us.

STATE LEVEL WORKSHOP ON EMPOWERMENT OF DEAF WOMEN
Conference Room, Free Church, 10 Parliament Street, New Delhi
on 24th June 2012

The State Level Workshop on Empowerment of Deaf Women was held on 24th June, 2012 in New Delhi organised by National Association of the Deaf. It was a one day long workshop on empowerment of deaf women from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

Smt. Geeta Sharma is a deaf person and also, the woman secretary of National Association of the Deaf, New Delhi. She starts the workshop every 3 month to conduct the workshop for deaf women for NCR/Delhi.

She made various presentations referring to deaf women. Deaf women leaders attended the workshop from Delhi/NCR. Most were enthusiastic and keen to have learnt things presented by Smt. Geeta Sharma and also Smt. Reena Jain who is a Committee Women member of NAD.

Programme was held in order to raise awareness and create a positive space in society for the deaf community and women's issues. 65 deaf women attended the workshop in Delhi.

Grassroots Advocacy International Training for the Deaf
at Gallaudet University, Washington DC, USA
from 1st to 7th July, 2012

Mr. A. S. Narayanan, Secretary, Mr. Anuj Jain, Project Director, Mrs. Geeta Sharma, Women Secretary and Mr. T. K. M. Sandeep, Treasurer of National Association of the Deaf participated in the Grassroots Advocacy International Training from 1st to 7th July, 2012 at Gallaudet University in Washington, DC, USA. Grassroots Advocacy International Training is the G. "Bummy" Bursetein Leadership Institute, a unit of the Graduate School and Professional at Gallaudet University, has committed to improving the quality of personal and professional lives of deaf and hard of hearing individuals, the G. "Bummy" Burstein Leadership Institute ensures and assures the following training experiences and outcomes for participants

- Thorough understanding of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
- Preparation for work at national level leadership positions
- Effective leadership skills to organize grassroots level deaf people into dynamic and productive groups
- Hands-on training in strategic planning and goal setting

- Knowledge of leadership styles and identification of one's own strengths
- Improvement in human relations skills
- Knowledge of emotional intelligence and its uses
- Certificate of completion

3rd NCPEDP – MphasiS Universal Design Awards
 India International Centre, 40 Max Mueller Marg, New Delhi
 14th August, 2012

We were invited to the Presentation Ceremony of the 3rd NCPEDP – MphasiS Universal Design Awards Ceremony at Indian International Centre on 14th August, 2012. National centre for Promotion of Employment for Disabled People has instituted The NCPEDP – MphasiS Universal Design Awards with support from MphasiS and in association with AccessAbility and BarrierBreak Technologies. Shri Mukul Wasnik, Hon'ble Minister for Social Justice and Empowerment was the Chief Guest. Mr. Javed Abidi, Honorary Director, NCPEDP, Mr. Dinesh Venugopal, Executive Vice President and Head, New Ventures, MphasiS, Ms. Shivani Gupta, Director, AccessAbility and Ms. Shilpi Kapoor, Managing Director of BarrierBreak Technologies joined our Minister on the stage.

There were 10 awardees under the following categories:

A. Persons with Disabilities

Mr. Dipendra Manocha

B. Working Professionals

1. Mr. Abhishek Syal
2. Prof. Prabhat Ranjan
3. Prof. Rachna Khare
4. Mr. R.R. Joshi

C. Companies/Organisations

1. Indian Institute of Management, Bangalore
2. Microsoft Corporation India Pvt. Ltd.
3. National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS)
4. Sri Vishnu Educational Society
5. Travel Another India

Once the ceremony ended, a brief session took place led by NAD on the recent developments and arising issues in the deaf community. Around 225 deaf persons came for this session.

55th International Week of the Deaf Celebrations 2012

'Sign Bilingualism is a Human Right' Conference

Seminar Hall No. 3 & 4, India International Center, Max Mueller, New Delhi
 on 24th September, 2012

We have over 17 million deaf people in India and of which only 5% go to school. The quality of education that is provided in deaf schools is poor because the society has a hard time

understanding the culture and linguistic needs of the Deaf community. With this, we decided that there was an urgent need to create awareness on 'sign bilingualism' especially among principals and teachers of deaf schools because they play a major role in a child's life. Sign bilingualism is based on the idea that, as deaf children can potentially easily acquire sign language and may have difficulty in accessing spoken language, they should be given the opportunity to develop sign language. Acquisition of sign language gives deaf children a strong base to learn a second language. Within different educational settings the relative use of the two languages (sign and spoken/written language) may differ, but an essential feature is that the each language is recognized as distinct and used differently. While working towards the same goals as spoken language based approaches, sign bilingualism recognizes the need for a different classroom practice, using different means to achieve the same ends. It also recognizes the Deaf community, that group of Deaf people who see themselves as a linguistic and cultural minority group rather than a disabled group. A sign bilingual approach encourages the involvement of deaf as well as hearing people, and recognition of the culture of Deaf people (Gregory 1993 and 2005).

National Association of the deaf invited all the deaf schools in Delhi and NCR, both Government and Private. Over 30 teachers and principals participated in our conference. Shri Mukul Wasnik, Hon'ble Minister of Social Justice and Empowerment was our Chief Guest and Smt. Stuti Narain Kacker, Secretary of the Department of Disability Affairs, Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment was our Guest of Honour.

Shri A.S. Narayanan welcomed our Chief Guest and the Guest of Honour and talked about the status of deaf education in India. When a deaf child is advised and forced to learn a spoken language on his own and is unable to hear and understand the language, automatically the education system produces poor educated deaf children who barely understand what they are reading, hardly able to write and converse. But, with the help of sign language, the visual mode of communication, the traditional method can be changed but for that, sign language needs to be recognized as an official language of India. Sign language should be the medium of communication to impart education to deaf children. With this, Mr. Narayanan gave the floor to Dr. Madan Vasishta, Chief Advisor to Indian Sign Language Research and Training Centre (ISLRTC).

Dr. Vasishta talked on 'Bilingual Education' and how sign language can be incorporated as well. A hearing child comes to school with a language that is his mother tongue that he learns through his parents. Through a fair language base, the child learns how to read, write and communicate but 99% of the deaf children who come to school have no language. He is taught words and sentences but, no understanding of those words and sentences. According to the research in America, deaf children with some residual hearing and lipreading skills can and do acquire language but most do not. After 12 years of schooling, the reading and writing level of most of the deaf children are 4.5 Grade and as for India, we are still unaware. But mastery of sign language as a first language leads to learning of spoken/written languages as a second language. The deaf child is able to integrate the visual form with a written form in his head which speeds up their learning process. Similarly, the deaf children of deaf adults

who use sign language as a first language learn a lot faster and at par with their hearing peers as well through the bilingual approach. All deaf schools need to adopt this model. Indian Sign Language (ISL) provides the easiest and quickest linguistic environment for the acquisition of a first natural language for Deaf children. ISL is fully VISUAL as well as a complete language. ISL in the classroom makes information fully accessible to Deaf children, which is the 1st step in learning and English literacy development. Therefore, ISL should be the language of instruction because Deaf children do not have to struggle with structure to access content. The less frustrated they are when they learn, the more motivated they will be to learn.

Smt. Kacker expressed the need to have a standardized Indian Sign language which can be practiced everywhere and by everyone. Also, she urged upon the organisation to give a list of deaf icons from our country because we have heard about many deaf icons from other countries but we would like to give the same platform to the deaf icons from our country.

Shri Mukul Wasnik suggested that an orientation programme on sign language and its understanding for MPs, policy makers, ministries, senior officials and other stakeholders are important and this should take place in the month of December with the full support from the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment. Also, since ISLRTC will be completing a year of laying the foundation stone on 4th October, 'Foundation Day' should be celebrated inviting everyone and talking on sign language. Another initiative is the establishment of the Department of Disability Affairs and the work seems to be moving at a good pace. There are also plans to revise the ADIP scheme and include deaf people as well. Also, a revised draft bill of Persons with Disabilities to replace the PWD Act 1995 has been sent to all the Ministries of various states. Comments are to be expected by 30th September. We are seeing a change for the better.

Then a Q & A round took place between Dr. Vasisht and principals and teachers. It was an interesting session with teachers and principals wanted to gain more knowledge on sign language and how it is practiced in America and how to make classroom teaching better.

The second session was taken by Dr. Surinder Randhawa, Senior Consultant to ISLRTC. She talked on the practical approach of sign bilingualism. Bilingualism aims to develop proficiencies in two languages.

Sign bilingualism in Indian scenario would mean use of Indian Sign Language for communication and as medium of instruction and teaching language(s) of the majority (Hindi, English, Gujrati, Marathi etc.) as second language mainly through reading and writing. Speech can be taught to those who have the aptitude to learn it but it will not be enforced. Bilingual education is the only way for deaf children to gain equal opportunities and allowing them to become full citizens in their own right. Dr Hauser from the Rochester Institute of Technology (USA) presented that research from Neurosciences and Psycholinguistic studies has shown that there is no evidence that learning a sign language interfered with the learning of a second language (including speech). National sign languages are the mother tongues of deaf people and the only language that they acquire fully and

effortlessly. WFD and EUD strongly urge stakeholders in education to take under consideration the unique needs of deaf children by supporting their sign language acquisition as well as the learning of the national (written) language. Sign language is a full language and it is not dependent on any other language. Research has shown that a deaf child gain most of the information visually but miss out on the majority of information when it is transferred either through speech or gestures. Gallaudet University has principals, PhDs, teachers who are deaf. Why not the same for our country? The Deaf community is the untapped resource of our country.

The last session was taken by Smt. Ruma Roka, Founder of Noida Deaf Society (NDS). She talked about the future of deaf adults. How to make them independent inspite of the poor education system? This is where NDS comes in. They bridge the gap between the school education and the skills for employment required by companies. The deaf students who study at NDS learn how to stand for themselves, empower oneself, more importantly, how to communicate. Every course that is taught at NDS is through Sign Language only. Courses like English, Computer Skills, Soft Skills, ISL Classes, etc. are all taught through sign language. From having only 5 students and one centre to now, 804 students and 5 centres, NDS has a vision to have a big centre with residential facility. They have 15 deaf trainers and management staff.

Shri Zorin Singha, President, National Association of the Deaf thanked everyone for taking time out and participating in our conference. He also shared how Smt. Ruma Roka had been a communication bridge for him and his family when his son had taken a fall from the top floor of his school to the basement. His son had lost a spleen, one kidney and multiple fractures in his skull. He said that it would have been more difficult had Smt. Roka not been there being his voice.

The teachers and principals, upon interacting with our guest speakers, were enlightened and understood, empathised what a deaf child felt. They supported the concept of sign bilingualism; moreover, they were interested to learn sign language so that they can communicate with the children better and understand better.

55th International Week of the Deaf Celebrations 2012

Deaf Awareness March

‘Sign Bilingualism is a Human Right’

Jantar Mantar to India Gate, New Delhi on 27th September 2012

National Association of the Deaf (NAD) is truly a representative organisation of deaf people in India. This includes a strong 4,500 membership across the country. It was formed in December, 2005.

The deaf movement in India is currently in a very nascent state. NAD advocates for the rights of the deaf and liaises with the Government and policy makers. We are currently hosting State Level Meetings across India to spread awareness among the deaf people on their rights and to also recruit more members.

On the occasion of 55th International Week of the Deaf, National Association of the Deaf organised a 'Deaf Awareness March' on 'Sign Bilingualism is a Human Right' on 27th September, 2012 at 3:00 p.m. from Jantar Mantar to India Gate through Tolstoy Marg and Kasturba Gandhi Marg. Over 650 deaf persons from Delhi and NCR participated in this march.

We celebrate International Week of the Deaf in the month of September every year through various events. The World Federation of the Deaf announced the International Week of the Deaf to be celebrated from 24 to 30 September 2012. Deaf Associations throughout the world organize events, marches, campaigns and meetings to highlight current topics that they wish to be addressed by local or national authorities. Their aim is to attract the attention of decision makers, general public, and media to the problems and concerns deaf persons face and make them understand that deaf people have human rights too! So the International Week of the Deaf is all about getting together, feeling united and powerful and showing that unity to the rest of the world. This week also increases solidarity among deaf people and their supporters and is used as a way to stimulate greater efforts to promote the rights of deaf people.

This march was covered by Hindustan Times, UNI, Indian Express and even some Mass Communications college students. The march came to a halt at India Gate where everyone gathered around and Mr. Zorin Singha, President of NAD, Mr. A.S. Narayanan, Secretary of NAD, Mr. Anuj Jain, Joint Secretary of NAD and Mr. Vishal Arora, Treasurer of NAD talked on the importance of International Day of the Deaf. Because we have an invisible disability, it becomes all the more reason as to why we need to create awareness and make ourselves visible in the eyes of the society. And, an important need to recognize sign language as an official language of India. Sign language is our mode of communication.

We have over 17 million deaf people in our country. The quality of education that is provided in deaf schools is poor because the society has a hard time understanding the culture and linguistic needs of the Deaf community. Our teachers need to be equipped and trained in Sign Language before teaching a class of deaf children. Indian Sign Language Research and Training Centre should train the teachers in Sign Language and Deaf culture so that education can be imparted in the best way possible.

Sign bilingualism is based on the idea that, as deaf children can potentially easily acquire sign language and may have difficulty in accessing spoken language, they should be given the opportunity to develop sign language. This gives them a foundation of having a full command of one language. This foundation helps learn another language better. Within different educational settings the relative use of the two languages (sign and spoken/written language) may differ, but an essential feature is that the each language is recognized as distinct and used differently. While working towards the same goals as spoken language based approaches, sign bilingualism recognizes the need for a different classroom practice, using different means to achieve the same ends. It also recognizes the Deaf community, that group of Deaf people who see themselves as a linguistic and cultural minority group rather than a disabled group. A sign bilingual approach encourages the involvement of deaf as well as hearing people, and recognition of the culture of Deaf people (Gregory 1993 and 2005).

55th International Week of The Deaf Celebrations 2012
State Level Workshop on Empowerment of Deaf Women
at Auditorium, Fr Agnel School, Gautam Nagar, New Delhi

on 30th September, 2012

Over 70 women participated in this seminar from Delhi and NCR. Many new faces and most of them were youngsters. Mrs. Deepika Taneja welcomed all of the participants as they all celebrated the last day of International Week of the Deaf and being the last Sunday, they also celebrated International Day of the Deaf. She called upon Ms. Nirupama Kaul to talk on the essence of International Day/Week of the Deaf, Deaf Awareness March and the role of World Federation of the Deaf and United Nations in this celebrations. Being deaf is an invisible disability which brings a great need for awareness. A deaf person cannot be easily spotted among the crowd, no. This is why every year, the last week of September, we celebrate the International Week of the Deaf. Earlier, since 1951, International Day of the Deaf was celebrated on the last Sunday of September but few years ago, WFD decided to extend the celebrations to a whole week where the cultural activities performed by the deaf will take place. She further explained the importance of United Nations.

To add further to Ms. Kaul's presentation, Ms. Angel Singha took over the next session to explain the work that United Nations does, its background, the understanding of Human Rights and what is United Nations' Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD). She showed a video from the time when United Nations was established, how it functions, its Headquarters, etc. Then, she asked the audience the meaning of human rights to them. Few said the freedom to choose but rest were puzzled. Then, she showed another video which was animated on the basic understanding of human rights where a person is respected and has dignity, has a right to education, socialise, capable of making decisions, working, having a family, among many other. United Nations has 9 international treaties among which UNCRPD falls under, she explained. It was designed for persons with disabilities by persons with disabilities. India is the 7th country that ratified UNCRPD on 1st October, 2007. There is a paradigm shift in the disability sector from a medical model to a right based model. She talked on Article 5: Equality and non discrimination which is the crux of CRPD and Article 6 that talks on 'women with disabilities'. She explained the concept of 'reasonable accommodation' which means a temporary fix which is done now and not ten years later. Then she ended her session by showing a movie on a deaf girl who had the will power to play violin. It seems impossible but that's the part, it might seem impossible but it never is.

Then the ladies were divided into five groups and puzzles were given to them. Once assembled, the groups had words like love, faith, hope, etc which is the most important thing for a person to survive. And, lastly, a skit was shown where a pregnant lady is in labour and she has five children, first depicting sign language, second; interpreters, third; IWD, fourth; education and fifth being accessibility. Sign language is the centre and the culture of a deaf community.

Smt. Geeta Sharma, Women Secretary of NAD gave her vote of thanks. She said it was important for us to keep ourselves aware of our surroundings. CRPD is ours and very few people among us knew about its existence. Deaf community is invisible but we need to create awareness otherwise unreached would feel alone, helpless. It is our moral responsibility to reach the unreached. Then, she invited the ladies to join her for coffee and snacks.

1ST FOUNDATION DAY
INDIAN SIGN LANGUAGE RESEARCH AND TRAINING CENTRE (ISLRTC)
4th October, 2012 at IGNOU, Maidan Garhi, New Delhi

We were invited to the first foundation day of Indian Sign Language Research and Training Centre (ISLRTC) on 4th October 2012. The Director I/C of ISLRTC, Prof. A.K. Singh welcomed the paneled guests i.e., Shri Gopi Nath Pradhan, Vice-Chancellor of IGNOU, Dr. Madan Vasishta, Chief Advisor of ISLRTC, Shri A.S. Narayanan, Secretary of National Association of the Deaf (NAD), Shri Sibaji Panda, Lecturer of BAASLS and Dr. Hemlata, Coordinator of BAASLS and the friends of the Deaf Community and students. He invited the guests and two students to light the lamp to start the function.

Before the Director asked Shri Pradhan to address the audience, he asked Dr. Vasishta and Shri Pradhan to present a laptop to a student of BAASLS whom the faculty found hard working, sincere, determined and with a bright future. Shri Pradhan thanked everyone for taking time out and being a part of ISLRTC's first year of completion. Soon, the advertisement for posts at ISLRTC will be out and we will have experienced staff and faculty along with the sanction by the Ministry of the construction of the ISLRTC building. The dreams of the deaf community will be coming to life and taking shape.

Prof. Singh then invited Shri Narayanan to share his journey. He journeyed through the time when ISLRTC was only a seed of thought, a dream. Many years ago, NAD had started to demand from the Government for a research and training centre of Indian Sign Language. NAD went to various offices of MSJE and MHRD and met with all the high officials in the Planning Commission (PC) to explain the needs of the Deaf community and they were given promises that 'something will be done' but no action had been taken. Finally, the 11th Five-Year Plan had an entire chapter on disability. That Plan mandated the setting up of a Sign Language Research and Training Centre, a National Captioning Centre, at least one residential school up to class XII for deaf students in every state and one degree college in every zone, among other things. But, more than two years after the Plan came into force and the implementation had been zero.

Then, NAD demonstrated against this delay. The Deputy Chairman of PC talked to the PM and later met with Shri Mukul Wasnik, Minister of SJ&E, who started the process which led to the final establishment of ISLRTC on 4th October 2011. He couldn't believe that one year had passed. ISLRTC was and is the result of the hardwork of thousands of deaf people. All of them came out in the streets to demand for the right to use their mother tongue. NAD is thankful to the Government for establishing ISLRTC last year. This is only a beginning. Soon, ISLRTC branches will be all over India. ISL classes will be in towns and villages and all the schools will use ISL for deaf students. All teachers of deaf students will use ISL. This will make communication and learning by deaf children easier. This will also lead to more interpreters. We need 4 lakh interpreters but have only 200 now. New training programmes will help produce quality and proficient interpreters. It will take time but one day, we will have enough qualified interpreters to meet our need. We will have excellent professors and researchers who will research on ISL. We will know more about our language. We must work together to make sure our rights are preserved. ISLRTC has done some good work in the last year and we hope that it does much more in the coming years. The Deaf community must constantly provide its support to ISLRTC.

Prof. Singh said that never had he ever thought that he would be a part of the Deaf community in any way and now he is and he has never enjoyed more than being a part of this community. This vision will be real soon with the constant guidance of Dr. Vasishta and Shri

Narayanan, people who talk less but work a lot unlike the professors who talk a lot but work less.

Dr. Madan Vashista mentioned that if it weren't for the advocacy of National Association of the Deaf, we wouldn't even be having ISLRTC in the first place. Without ISLRTC, we cannot teach ISL or even train the hearing teachers of deaf schools or having a state level workshop of sign language interpreters or educate parents about the needs of a deaf child and link them to organisations that can assist in the child's upbringing.

Shri Sibaji Panda shared the same views as Dr. Vashista. He requested the deaf community to constantly give its support to NAD who truly fights for the needs of the Deaf community and is extremely proactive in its work. As for ISLRTC, since it has taken BAASLS under its wings, we hope to be able to reach the students that are unreachable using IGNOU's networks and BAASLS can have more students in the coming years.

The ceremony ended with students dance performances, skits and jokes showing the culture of the Deaf community.

CBR Training Program for Porters
at New Delhi Railway Station, New Delhi
from 19th to 24th November, 2012

Action for Ability Development & Inclusion (AADI), Delhi held a series of trainings for porters (Coolies) at New Delhi, Nizamuddin and Agra Cantt Railway Stations where we were also present from 19th to 24th November, 2012. These training were meant to facilitate porters in assisting persons with varied disabilities. We held 18 such training at different stations side by side. We shared our communication barriers at railway stations especially when all announcements inside the station are auditory. We taught them basic sign language which would make the communication easier with the deaf counterpart. It was an eye opener for us and the porters at how open and willing they were to suggestions and changes and clearing their doubts.

This training was essential because around 1,400 delegates from 75 countries will be travelling from train to Agra, India for the first CBR World Congress in India from 26th to 28th November 2012 which was organised by CBR India Network. The Congress would facilitate and develop/strengthen CBR as a key strategy to reduce poverty and enhance the quality of life of people with disabilities and their families, and ensure that the benefits of the convention on the Rights of Person with Disabilities reach majority of the world's people with disabilities.

Will the govt hear them out?
Despite HC Order, Hearing Impaired Barred From Driving Test
from Times of India, New Delhi
on 24th November, 2012

NEW DELHI: Despite being empowered by the Delhi high court to take a driving test, hearing-impaired people continue to be barred from it. HC gave a verdict last February allowing totally deaf people to take the test, though it clarified that any further privilege as a special category could not be granted.

"We are obliged to certify that if an applicant is totally deaf, he has to be called for the test if he applies for a learner's licence without the medical certificate. And if he passes the test as required under Rule 11, he shall be granted the learner's licence," says the order. It adds, "If a person belonging to the said category satisfies the necessary criteria, he shall be allowed to obtain the licence."

One and a half years have elapsed but the order has not been complied with. Though the Delhi transport department said the Central Motor Vehicles Rules 1989 needed to be changed for implementation of the order, the road and highways ministry said the HC order was binding.

In the meantime, hearing-impaired people continue to face discrimination. For example, Anuj Jain, 41, was not allowed to take the test despite fulfilling all the criteria. "I applied for a driver's licence at the Surajmal Vihar RTO on November 2. I filled all the forms and submitted an ID proof, medical certificate and documents. I then sat for biometric registration, moving on to the driving test section," explained Jain in sign language, which was interpreted by his aide.

But he was in for a rude shock. "At the time of the test, my interpreter was asked to leave. When she insisted that I had hearing impairment, they rejected my application, saying I was not eligible," Jain said. Jain had produced the HC order but it was brushed aside by the officials, who said there had been no communication from the higher-ups.

Five other hearing-impaired people shared the same grievance. Zorin Singha, president of the National Association of the Deaf, said this problem is faced by most of their members. "Every tenth hearing-impaired person has complained of the same problem," said Singha. When TOI spoke at an RTO office in the city, the officials admitted that they did not allow deaf people to take a driving test. "We allow people with locomotive disability to take the test, provided they bring their customized vehicle, but not hearing-impaired people," said an official on condition of anonymity.

In the 2011 order, the prosecution had submitted a response by Delhi Police on queries related to safety. Delhi Police cited a court order which states "due to lack of auditory distraction the deaf have far better focus and concentration needed to drive the vehicle".

Yet, when TOI contacted the Delhi transport department, officials said implementation of the order would require a change in legislation. "The Delhi Motor Vehicles Act is based on the Central Motor Vehicle Rules. Unless there is a change in that, the DMV Act remains the same," said a spokesperson of the transport department.

However, a senior Union transport ministry official said, "The provision in the Central Motor Vehicle Rules does not prohibit anyone with disability from taking a driving test. If they are then found to be unfit, they may be refused a licence."

(From Times of India, New Delhi on 24th November, 2012)

World Disability Day 2012
“Recognise Indian Sign Language as one of the official languages of India”
from India Gate to Jantar Mantar, New Delhi
on 3rd December, 2012

On the occasion of World Disability Day, 3rd December 2012, National Association of the Deaf (NAD) received participation of more than 10,000 deaf persons today. Deaf persons came from 20 different states including Uttarakhand, Tamil Nadu, Himachal Pradesh. Their demand was to meet the Home Minister to discuss on including Indian Sign Language as one of the official languages of India.

NAD started the solidarity rally at 11.00 a.m. from India Gate and finished at 12.00 p.m. at Jantar Mantar. The formation for the rally was 2 kms long. After sending two letters to the Home Minister and consistently following up with his office for over a month for an appointment, NAD felt a strong need to have a rally and to not move until the Home Minister gives them the time.

After raising our demand repeatedly, NAD were given an appointment with Addl. P.S. to Home Minister at 5.30 p.m. Mr. Zorin Singha, President of NAD and Mr. A.S. Narayanan, Secretary of NAD went for the meeting along with the Sign Language interpreter. While they waited in the lobby, the Home Minister came to them and talked to them about their need. Mr. Narayanan explained the need for giving Indian Sign Language the official status. The development of the Deaf community is hinged on Sign Language because their life is entirely based on vision and common language, the culture is also based on visual expression and Sign Language. Home Minister assured them his support and directed his OSD to talk to them in detail. He also mentioned that Indian Sign language falls under the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution. Minister will be directing Mrs. Rushima Goel, JSHR of Languages to look into their matter. NAD has written to her and they look forward to a positive response.

State Level Workshop on Empowerment of Deaf Youth

Auditorium, PHD Chamber of Commerce & Industry, PHD House, Sector 31-A, Chandigarh
16th December, 2012

We have also been able to successfully conduct the State Level Workshop on Empowerment of Deaf Youth at Auditorium, PHD Chamber of Commerce & Industry, PHD House, Sector 31-A, Chandigarh on 18th December, 2011.

The seminar started with the welcome note by Mr. Jagdip Singh Sodhi, Executive Member of NAD. Mr. Rishikesh Anand, Deaf Youth Team of NAD shared the powerpoint presentation about the reports of NAD's Activities 2005 to 2012. Mr. Rahul Garg, NAD's Deaf Youth Team explained the meaning of the deaf empowerment.

Mr. Rahul Garg and Mr. Rishikesh Anand, NAD's Deaf Youth Team organised a one on one question-answer round where N.A.D. was supposed to answer questions asked by the participants, any questions regarding their functioning, administration, fund raising, etc. This session led to trust building between the organisation and its members. There are about 155 deaf young people from Punjab participated in the Seminar. They are a lot of excitement by our workshop.

4th National Workshop on the Grassroots Deaf Leadership 2013
at Indian Social Institute, 10 Institutional Area, Lodi Road, New Delhi
from 5th to 8th January, 2013

National Association of the Deaf organised the 4th National Workshop on the Grassroots Deaf Leadership from 5th to 8th January 2013 at Indian Social Institute, Lodhi Road, New

Delhi. Over 85 participants including deaf students participated in this workshop which was led by Mr. Kevin J. Nolan, (Gallaudet University's Gerald "Bummy" Burstein Institute, Washington DC, USA).

Mr. Nolan showed a testimonial video of his brother who is deaf and how much he had to struggle to get into the Military and his journey which inspired our participants that nothing is impossible. This workshop opened eyes of our participants in exploring the issues that limit the participation of deaf persons in society and day to day life and how we can combat, fight these issues by dividing the participants into groups. N.A.D. is an advocacy organisation, and took suggestions from the participants which will be helping in their work. Mr. Kevin organised a one on one question-answer round where N.A.D. was supposed to answer questions asked by the participants, any questions regarding their functioning, administration, fund raising, etc. This session led to trust building between the organisation and its members. Throughout the workshop, we had several group works where brainstorming took place on how an advocacy organisation works, what qualities take to be a leader, a loyal follower and how we can create visibility for the deaf community which will lead to the Government allot resources accordingly.

Dr. Madan Vasishta, Chief Advisor of Indian Sign Language Research and Training Centre (I.S.L.R.T.C.) took a session on Emotional Intelligence explaining how one is supposed to react calmly during intense situations. We even had Smt. Pooja Parvati, Research Coordinator of Centre for Budget and Governance Accountability who provided a basic session on how the Government budget works, how the disability budget is decided and so on. Budget is a new concept which was introduced to the disability community couple of years ago and it is still a new concept for the deaf community. Another session on Right to Information Act 2005 was led by Shri Javed Abidi, Convenor of Disability Rights Group. This session enlightened the participants that they could seek their rightful information from various government agencies and this is a great tool for advocacy organisations to have concrete data and records for their work.

This workshop took a more practical approach with a lot of brainstorming which had left a positive impact on our participants and we hope that next one would be the same kind and better!

Children of Deaf Adults Workshop (CODA)

at New Delhi
on 6th January, 2013

National Association of the Deaf organised the Children of Deaf Adults Workshop (CODA) on 6th January, 2013 at Indian Social Institute, Lodhi Road, New Delhi. Over 15 children of deaf adults participated in this workshop which was led by Mr. Kevin J. Nolan, (Gallaudet University's Gerald "Bummy" Burstein Institute, Washington DC, USA) & Dr. Madan Vasishta, Chief Advisory, Indian Sign Language Research & Training Centre.

Both Mr. Kevin and Dr. Vasishta took a session with children of deaf adults (CODA) discussing how the deaf world and hearing world is different and children bridge that gap. Children had their doubts cleared, had some back and forth questions for their parents moderated by Mr. Kevin.

This workshop took a more practical approach with a lot of brainstorming which had left a

positive impact on our hearing children and we hope that next one would be the same kind and better!

REPUBLIC DAY TABLEAUX 2013
at New Delhi on 26th January, 2013
Department of Disability Affairs
Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment
Government of India

**THEME OF THE TABLEAUX: INCLUSION, ACCESSIBILITY OF PERSONS
WITH DISABILITIES AND EMPOWERMENT**

Rabindranath Tagore has rightly said, “The problem is not how to wipe out the differences but how to unite with the differences intact”.

According to Census 2001, there were 2.19 crore persons with disabilities in India constituting 2.13% of the population. Physical and mental impairments result in disability. Attitudinal and environmental barriers hinder full and effective participation of persons with disabilities on an equal basis with others in society. Disability can be mitigated by changing our perception and by creating a more conducive environment.

The Republic Day tableaux 2013, of the newly set up Department of Disability Affairs, of the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, Government of India, portrays **persons with disabilities as equal citizens of the nation** enjoying all fundamental rights and freedoms in an inclusive society.

The tableau showcases **inclusion** through a live cultural program, led by a DPO (Disabled Persons Organisation), Disabled Power Group. The group is an inclusive group which includes persons with disabilities and non disabled persons, performing to a song carrying a message of solidarity, celebration and dreams. A sculpture on the side of the tableaux depicts inclusion in creative arts. Inclusion as citizens is represented through a picture of a woman holding different identity cards symbolizing equality between all. The tableaux carries the message that the needs of persons with disabilities are the same as other citizens, which has been represented by portraying the symbols of various sectors like health, education, sports, recreation, religion, financial services on a revolving Rubik's Cube.

Accessibility is a key to opening doors and pathways. **Physical** accessibility is showcased on the tableaux, through a ramp allowing wheel chair users to perform freely. A sign language interpreter (Angel Singha) is seen translating the song on the tableau which depicts accessibility in **communication**, which will also be screened on the LED screens on the sides of the trailer. Accessible communication is also depicted on the semi-circular sides of the trailer wherein the words from the Constitution of India, “Equality” “Fraternity”, “Justice” and “Liberty” have been written in Braille and Sign Language. At the bottom of the trailer is a runner of disability signs and symbols, which increase accessibility of **information** in the public information systems.

Empowerment is symbolically represented through all the above depictions and concretized in the sculpture of persons with disabilities and others holding each other and moving forward, with the National Flag in the centre. Mural paintings depicting contributions of people with disabilities cover the sides of the tableau.

**Sign6 International Conference of Sign Language Users
at Goa
from 7th to 9th February, 2013**

Mr. A.S. Narayanan, Secretary, Mrs. Geeta Sharma, Women Secretary, Mr. Anuj Jain, Project Director and Ms. Angel Singha, Interpreter participated in Sign6, International Conference of Sign Language Users in Goa from 7th to 9th February 2013. This conference focuses on research on sign languages and deaf studies and a global scope is important for capacity building because Deaf communities are quite small in number in many countries.

Mr. Narayanan was one of three plenary presenters. He talked on the genesis of Indian Sign Language Research and Training Centre. The Indian Deaf community fought hard to get ISLRTC on the 11th Five Year Plan Document. There had been so many rallies, protests and meetings to bring this paper to life. And, on 4th October 2011, we had laid its foundation stone in IGNOU. This shows that slowly government is recognising Indian Sign Language and that day isn't far when ISL would be one of the official languages of India.

There were several sessions like sign language and linguistics, community, culture and deaf education and the status of the same in South Asia. The mode of communication throughout was International Sign Language and Indian Sign Language. We received exposure on the grammatical functions of the A-handshape & the I-handshape in Korean Sign Language, age-related sociolinguistic variation in sign languages with particular reference to Nepali Sign Language, rethinking established concepts in Deaf Studies and many more. There were several critical issues discussed like work on sign language endangerment with UNESCO and how to put deaf women's needs in every policy especially violence against women.

**National Convention for Youth with Disabilities
at New Delhi
from 7th to 8th February, 2013**

National Centre for Promotion of Employment for Disabled People (NCPEDP) organised a National Convention for Youth with Disabilities in New Delhi on 7th & 8th February, 2013.

The objective of the Convention is to reach out to young disabled people and expose them to the social sector movement of India, including disability and other allied fields. This would help us to identify and inspire the next generation leadership of not just the Indian disability sector but also those who could be agents of change in other fields. Mr. Zorin Singha, President of N.A.D. was requested to speak at one of the sessions on 'Disability Movement in India'. He talked about the struggles of the Indian Deaf community of 18 million. He shared his testimonials and how the Deaf community is breaking the barriers slowly and steadily.

The Convention, a first of its kind, was a 2 day affair which included addresses and interactive sessions with well known voices of the social sector (including social entrepreneurs), senior leaders from the corporate world, and bureaucrats as well as politicians.

They had participation from the top universities, colleges, and other educational institutions of the country including 6 Deaf and Hard of Hearing students. This included the IITs, IIMs, other management, media and law colleges.

**International Women's Day
at Indian Social Institute, 10 Institutional Area, Lodi Road, New Delhi
on 8th March, 2013**

We organised the International Women's Day at the Auditorium of Indian Social Institute on Friday, 8th March 2013. This is a step taken for raising awareness and creating a positive space in society for disability and women's issues. The deaf women are doubly disadvantaged first by disability and second with the added vulnerability of their gender. We saw a gathering of around 75 deaf women. We invited Mrs. Vandana Bedi, Consultant and Trainer for Development & Disability and Vice President of AADI.

The seminar started with the welcome note by Mrs. Rajni Khandelwal, NAD's North India Deaf Woman Committee. The first session was taken by Ms. Angel Singha on 'Emotional Intelligence' where the ability to understand others and act wisely in human relations was discussed along with the functioning of our brain, that during a situation that triggers us, it tends to leave us with less space to think and act wisely.

The next session was taken by Mrs. Bedi where she divided the participants into three groups and asked them to pen down the issues that they face in their daily life. Once that list was made, she related the issues with the existing laws, international treaties and organisations that can be a valuable tool. She explained the issues one by one resolving with the help of existing laws and alongside creating a bridge or a link between a regular person and our tools.

These two topics had never been discussed before on the event of International Women's Day. It was a refreshing and an eye opener to all the participants. We concluded the seminar by cutting the cake and celebrating the day.