



The Chair Speaks.....

It is amazing to see how tiles of different colors and sizes come together to form something as big as a statue, in mosaic art. It is, clearly, more than the sum total of the individual parts, and captures what a network can be. The imagery of the Church – the Building made of the bricks (1 Pet 2); the human body and the different parts (1 Cor. 12) also reflects what is expected of us as a network. Our togetherness is not only about what we can get, which is important, but also about what we can give. “Alone we can do so little but together we can do so much.” (Helen Keller).

It is my privilege to present to you the first edition of the newsletter of Engage Disability Network. Engage Disability (ED) is a movement for strengthening the Christian response to disability in India. It is not a single organization but a coalition of organizations, churches, and individuals, working towards disability inclusion, especially among the Churches. This newsletter captures the heart of what we have been able to do as a network. We are



Rev. Dr. Mathew Abraham C.Ss.R, MD
Chair, Engage Disability
Director General, Catholic Health Association of India

excited about our journey so far, and invite you to walk with us.

A special word of gratitude to all who contributed to our journey, and for realizing this News Letter.

Happy reading!

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INTERVIEW //

Aaron Benjamin

National Co-ordinator
SIVUS INDIA

Tell us a little bit about SIVUS INDIA. What are its objectives?

SIVUS is a Swedish expression that stands for Social Individ Via Utveckling I Samverkan, and means 'socio-individual development through co-operation'. This method provides support to persons with intellectual disability, to enable them to function as independently as possible, both individually and socially.

SIVUS INDIA is a self-funded, independent, voluntary organization working for persons with intellectual disability. It is the official speaker for International Sports Federation for Persons with Intellectual Disability (INAS), which is universally recognized for representing the interests of persons with intellectual disability with regard to sports. INAS adheres to the principle of normalization, which recognizes that persons with intellectual disability are members of the society, and are entitled to the same rights, opportunities and duties as everyone else. They are not special but have specific needs, just like each one of us. SIVUS INDIA, also, aligns its objectives and activities to this principle.

Why do you think being involved in sports is important for those with disabilities?

Amongst several other mediums, participating in sports is considered one of the best outlets for energy and has proved very advantageous for children with disabilities. As an organization that has worked closely with those with intellectual disabilities for more than three decades, we have observed that intellectual disabilities have never been a barrier for people to be successful in sports.. It is well known that participating in sports enables one to concentrate better in the classroom. being successful in sports boosts their morale, and fitness. More importantly, it instills confidence in the child and encourages the child as well as the family to be independent.

Could you share a little about what you have done thus far?

SIVUS INDIA participated in the Football World of 1998 in Leicester and 2002 in Japan for people with intellectual disability. In 1998, India won the Fairplay Trophy and in 2002, India finished in the 14th place. SIVUS INDIA athletes also participated in the 1999 World Athletic Championship in Sevilla, Spain. Ms. S.C Deepa from Karnataka won Silver in both 3000 mts and 5000mts. SIVUS INDIA also participated in the World Indoor Athletic Championships Espinho of 2001.

As part of a wide array of activities undertaken by us, SIVUS INDIA has conducted coaching camps and state games, 'Abilympics', Disabled Day Sports Meet (Karnataka). In 2017, we organized the Bengaluru Sports Meet for persons with intellectual disability where 800 athletes participated. At present, our coaches are deputed to fifteen special schools in Bengaluru where they train students.

Through SIVUS INDIA, a sports academy program is also being organized on a daily basis. The program involves training children with disabilities in specific sport activities.

One story is that of a young boy who, when he was fourteen, was admitted to Ashalaya - Home for the Intellectually Challenged. He was very timid and an introvert. We saw a transformation in him when he began training in sports. He soon became one of the best athletes in the state of Karnataka. He represented India in International Championships and won numerous trophies. At present he is married and is the proud father of two daughters. A few years ago, he travelled all by himself from the north-east to Bengaluru, visited Ashalaya and offered monetary support to help children like him. Participating in sports has certainly made a difference in his life and today, he is accepted and respected as part of the society. Stories like this have been a driving force for our organization and have always motivated us to pursue our goal.

How are you different from Special Olympics?

There are broadly two international bodies for persons with intellectual disability interested in

sports - Special Olympics International and INAS

In Special Olympics, the competition is 'banded', that is, the competition is between athletes of similar ability. For instance, there could be a hundred-metre event for four different levels of ability, and in accordance with a 'banded' format, there would then be four gold medal winners. The level of ability is identified through heats conducted prior to the main games. In Special Olympics, the focus is on participation and every athlete emerges a winner. Special Olympics International is recognized as the sports body for people with intellectual disabilities.

INAS, on the other hand, believes that persons with intellectual disability have the right to participate in a sport of their choice, at the level of ability they desire and achieve. With INAS the competition is open, as in the case of the Olympics. Participation in INAS competitions is solely based on an athlete's performance, as in able-bodied sports. INAS is inspired by the belief that intellectual disability should not be a barrier to enjoying and being the best in sports. INAS' vision is for athletes with intellectual disabilities across the world to have the opportunity to achieve excellence in sport and high-level competition.

Although the philosophies and structures of Special Olympics and INAS differ, they both play an important role in sport for persons with intellectual disability. Both organizations are not competitive but complementary to each other. Across several countries, member organizations participate in programmes organized by INAS as well as Special Olympics, depending on the wishes and abilities of their athletes.

How can people get involved and support your work?

People can engage with SIVUS INDIA in the following manners:

As State Partners

SIVUS INDIA works with state partners who are responsible for implementing the activities in their respective state. In addition, they are responsible for the athlete representation, registration and

selection from their respective states. SIVUS INDIA offers the necessary expertise, medals and certificates for the state games. Organisations/ individuals who are interested in working with us are welcome to contact SIVUS INDIA.

As Volunteers

- ◆ who would be able to train the athletes in different sports
- ◆ who can help in raising funds for the cause
- ◆ who can create awareness amongst stakeholders

As individuals, one can contribute by

- ◆ supporting the organization of weekly and monthly training programs
- ◆ providing refreshments for athletes
- ◆ providing equipments

"Disabled people are tired of being invisible and are declaring their right to an equal chance at life."

-Christopher Reeve

ENGAGE EVENTS //



Family retreats:

Three family retreats have been conducted in this quarter. The theme for the retreats was Arise and Shine, based on Isaiah 60:1.

The first one was organized by the members of the Bangalore hub under the enthusiasm of Ms. Krupa Paulson of Provision India. It was conducted on 28th and 29th of April at Paalanaa Bhavana, Bangalore. The event was conducted in partnership with Joni and Friends and the Archdiocesan Commission for Differently Abled. 15 families affected by disabilities attended the camp. Separate sessions were conducted for people with disabilities, caretakers and children. The second retreat was organized by the Herbertpur hub in partnership with the Joni and friends. It was conducted from the 5th to 7th of June, 2018 at Herbertpur Christian Hospital. 20 families attended the retreat. The third retreat was conducted at the Samvedna Disability resource center in Thathyud, Mussorie by the Mussorie hub. 40 families were part of the retreat and it was held on the 21st and 22nd of June, 2018.

A short video about the Bangalore Family retreat is available at:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wBu1lamHlCo>

Colloquium on Disability Discourse in Theological Education:



Colloquium on Disability Discourse in Theological Education: organised by CSI SEVA (DISHA), Senate of Serampore College (University) and BTESSC from the 24th to the 26th of April, 2018.. The purpose of the Colloquium was to listen to voices of persons with disabilities with a view to

reviewing the syllabus on Disability studies of SSC(U). Engage disability network was represented and the disability inclusion toolkit was introduced at the meeting.

For more information about the event, please click: http://www.csisynod.com/deptnews_view.php?ld=5659&cat=DC

Counseling training for disability issues:

TLM conducted a week-long training program on counseling and the last two days were facilitated by Engage disability with a focus on counseling for disability issues. This training was conducted in Allahabad on the 10th and 11th of May, 2018.

Kerala hub meeting:



A one day meeting was conducted on the 19th of May under the leadership of Dr. Vadavana, Satyam Ministries and the leaders of the Kerala hub. The purpose of the meeting was to bring together various disability organizations, families touched by disabilities and church leaders to discuss the way ahead for the group in Kerala.

Other disability events in the network:



Autism awareness week celebrated by Ashish foundation from 31st March to 6th April, 2018 with

a workshop, radio program and invitation to celebrate with EcomExpress, a logistics company in Delhi.

Family retreat training:

2 days training was held at CIHSR, Dimapur on the 25th and 26th of June, 2018 for the Dimapur hub on conducting family retreats. A one-day event was also conducted for church leaders on the 29th of June to sensitize towards disability issues in their community.

Spinal mela in Raxaul

The meeting (mela) was conducted on the 17th and 18th of April 2018 in Duncan hospital, Raxaul, Bihar. It was a joint effort of CBR (Community Based Rehabilitation), SVJ(Sammilit Vikas Jankari) and Physical medicine and Rehabilitation (PMR) departments along with the NGO Spinal foundation who works with persons with spinal cord injury across the country. A total of fifteen participants, from places as far as Muzzafarpur, were able to take part.

CP mela in Chittoor

It was conducted by Faith Corridors in GFI Church campus, Chittoor as an introductory parent meet of children with cerebral palsy on 17th of May 2018. 12 families were part of the mela.

Summer camps in Bangalore and Udupi

Special VBS 2018, a summer camp was held for the children with disability on 18th to 20th May at Bengaluru and 28th to 30th May at Udupi. About 50 children participated at both the camps with over 75 volunteers helping the children.

Day of Siblings celebrated on 26th of June by Community Initiative, Manipur.

3-monthly get-together: organized by Jesus enables ministries, it brings together persons with disabilities to share with one another and support each other

UPCOMING EVENTS

ED core and advisory group meetings

Date: 22nd and 23rd August, 2018

Venue: CHAI, Secunderabad

Family retreat

Date: 14th to 16th October, 2018

Venue: CHAI training center, Medchal

Welcome!

The Engage Disability Network would also like to welcome the new network coordinator, Mr. Chiranjeevi Aruri, who will be based at the CHAI office in Secunderabad. We are very glad he has joined us and we are sure his enthusiasm and energy will inspire all of us.



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Engage. Include. Be inspired.