



International Society For
Augmentative And Alternative Communication

**INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY FOR
AUGMENTATIVE AND ALTERNATIVE
COMMUNICATION**

ISAAC INDIA

Newsletter

**2024 - ISSUE 3
DECEMBER 2024**

VISION

AAC will be
recognized, valued and
used throughout the
world

MISSION

To promote the best
possible
communication for
people with complex
communication need



International Society For
Augmentative And Alternative Communication

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From the Desk of ISAAC India Chapter

Towards Equity: A Perspective

The adoption of Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) has been widespread in high-income countries, yet its application in low and middle-income countries (LMICs) faces unique challenges and opportunities.



AAC in LMICs often lags behind high-income countries due to limited resources, lack of awareness, and insufficient training for professionals. Despite these challenges, there are promising initiatives and an increasing recognition of the importance of AAC.

In India, many government and nongovernmental agencies are distributing locally-made AAC devices to those in need. Start-ups are also emerging to make these products more affordable, accessible, and sustainable.

Efforts to raise awareness, promote advocacy, and provide professional training are ongoing across the country. Several leading institutions, such as the All India Institute of Speech and Hearing (AIISH), the National Institute for the Empowerment of Persons with Intellectual Disabilities (NIEPID), the National Institute of Speech and Hearing (NISH), and the National Institute for Empowerment of Persons with Multiple Disabilities (NIEPMD), are working closely with key NGOs like the Indian Institute of Cerebral Palsy (IICP) and Vidyasagar. The ISAAC-India Chapter has also initiated a newsletter, which is widely circulated.

From the Desk of ISAAC India Chapter

Towards Equity: A Perspective Contd.

Despite these efforts, AAC devices in LMICs are funded either publicly or out-of-pocket. Even when public funding is available, the maintenance costs often fall on the families or individuals. Charity initiatives have significantly supported the distribution of assistive technologies (ATs), but according to the World Health Organization (WHO), nine out of ten people who need ATs globally do not have access to them. Large-scale donations of high-end ATs from wealthier countries have been beneficial, although they often involve bulk shipments of used or outdated systems. Ironically, these systems cannot be distributed to needy citizens in the donor countries but have helped many in LMICs.

A recent AAC conference in India highlighted several key issues for donors and facilitators distributing used high-end ATs:

- Ensuring sustained supply to beneficiaries.
- Empowering beneficiaries with access to repair facilities.
- Designing a protocol to return unused or nonfunctional gadgets to donor countries for better recycling capabilities.
- Encouraging technology transfer as a form of empowerment.
- Initiating collaborative R&D initiatives at ISAAC headquarters.

The conference concluded with the remark that low-cost technology should not be overlooked. In LMICs, this is a valuable and practical starting point. Professionals should not be solely dependent on high-tech AAC devices but should also utilize accessible low-tech AAC aids.

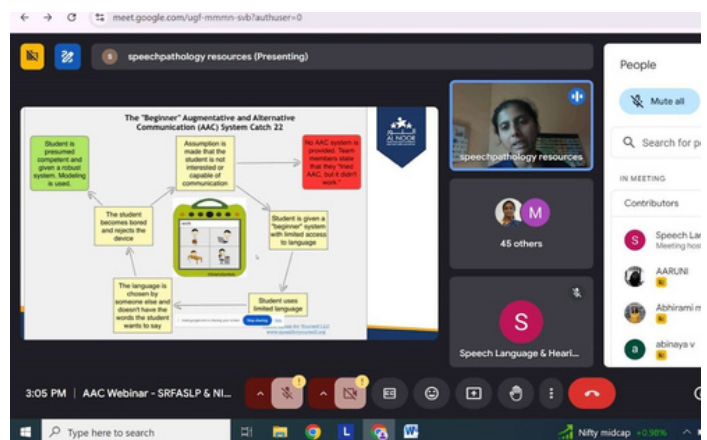
(Thanks to Dr.Sudha Kaul, Dr Ajish, Dr Reuben, and Dr Usha Dalvi for their valuable suggestions)

Best wishes
Prof. Rangasayee
Patron - ISAAC India Chapter

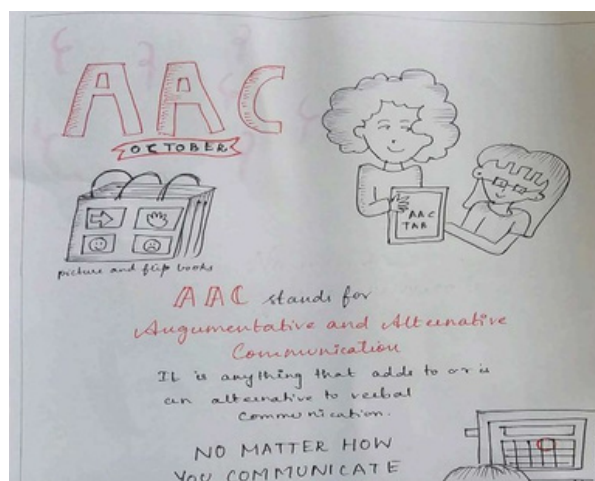
AAC AWARENESS MONTH - 1) SRIHER

Sri Ramachandra Faculty of Audiology and Speech Language Pathology, SRIHER (DU), Chennai organised the following to observe AAC Awareness month in October 2024

i) Webinar titled 'Beyond Speaking: AAC in Clinical Practice for SLP', in collaboration with National Institute of Speech and Hearing (NISH), Trivandrum. Resource faculty: Ms. Elizabeth Saju, Assistant Head of the Department of Communication, Language, and Speech at Al Noor Training Centre for People of Determination, Dubai, UAE. Approximately 300 students and alumni from Sri Ramachandra Faculty of Audiology and Speech Language Pathology and National institute of Speech and Hearing, including several alumni attended. Participants gained valuable insights and ideas about integrating AAC into their clinical practice.



ii) Awareness poster making competition for students. Many of the posters showcased range of myths, facts, scope of AAC in creative ways.



AAC AWARENESS MONTH - 1)SRIHER

iii) Insight exchange as group activity for students with specific case scenario involving AAC. Each team presented their scenario, detailing the device used, its type, cost, advantages, disadvantages, and more.

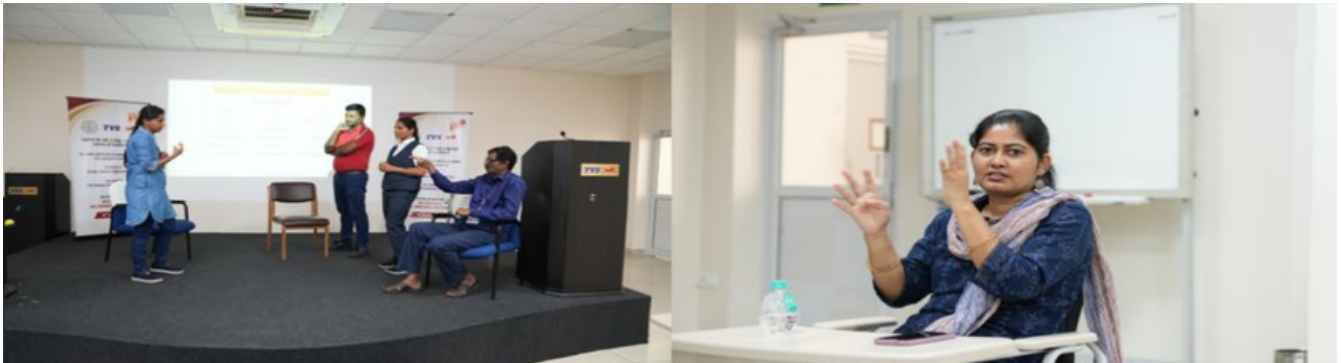


iv) Communicating through non-speech ways by students and faculty for 2 hours to raise awareness, and understand the mode used for communication better.



AAC AWARENESS MONTH - 2) AIISH

Center for Augmentative and Alternative Communication and Sign Language (C-AAC & SL) at the All India Institute of Speech and Hearing had organized various events as a part of AAC Awareness Week between 16th October - 21st October 2024. The events included Quiz Competition on AAC for Staff, Parents, and clients of AAC users, Competition of communication efficacy using high-tech AAC for parents/AAC users, and Communication Board Making Competition for Parents. Overall around 38 participants participated in these events. In addition, Ishanya India Foundation conducted a two - day training program for the parents of the children on using AVAZ. After successful completion of the training program, all the 10 parents were given subscription for AVAZ app. Here are the glimpses of all the events.

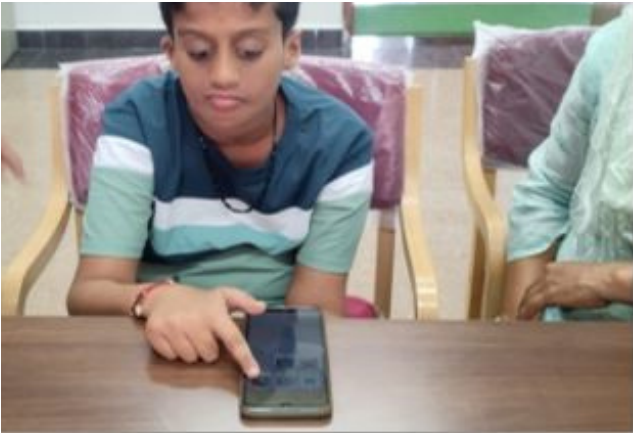


i) Workshop on Basic Indian Sign language was conducted for 40 staff members of TVS motor company, Nanjangud;



ii) Participants at the Quiz Competition on AAC

AAC AWARENESS MONTH - 2) AIISH

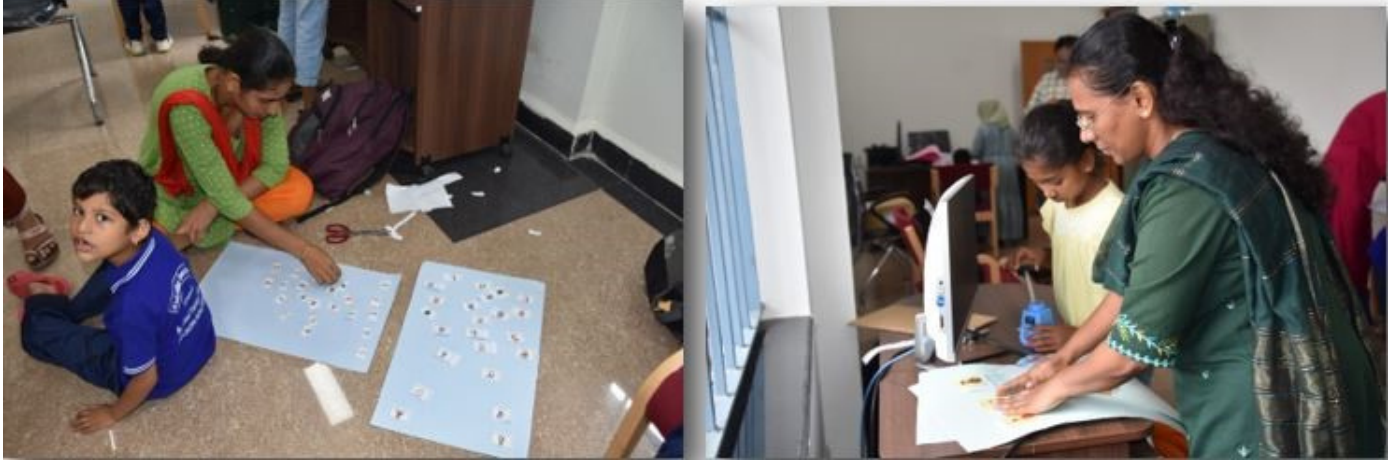


iii) AIISH Clients participating in the Competition on communication efficacy using high-tech AAC for AAC users



iv) MoU with Ishanya India Foundation and beneficiaries of the AVAZ application with tablet PCs

AAC AWARENESS MONTH - 2) AIISH



v) Communication Board Making Competition for Parents of AAC Users at AIISH



vi) Prize winners

CONFERENCE AND WEBINAR DETAILS

Webinars Conducted by ISAAC India Chapter (**October - December 2024**)

1. November 29, 2024: **"Gift of New Abilities Using the State of-the-Art TTS for Indian Languages"** Another webinar by ISAAC India Chapter showcased the Bhashini AI app, a cutting-edge text-to-speech conversion software for Indian languages. Dr. Shiva Kumar H R (Co-founder & Director, Bhashini AI Solutions Pvt. Ltd.) and Prof. A. G. Ramakrishnan (Head of Business Development, Bhashini AI Solutions Pvt. Ltd.) led a demonstration and an interactive discussion, highlighting the app's features and applications.

2. November 9, 2024: **"Use of PECS in Communication and Language Development"**. ISAAC India Chapter conducted a free webinar featuring Dr. Andy Bondy and Ms. Lori Frost, Co-founders of Pyramidal Educational Consultants, Inc., as resource persons. The session focused on the use of the Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS) in fostering communication and language development. It was well-received by participants, with engaging and interactive discussions.

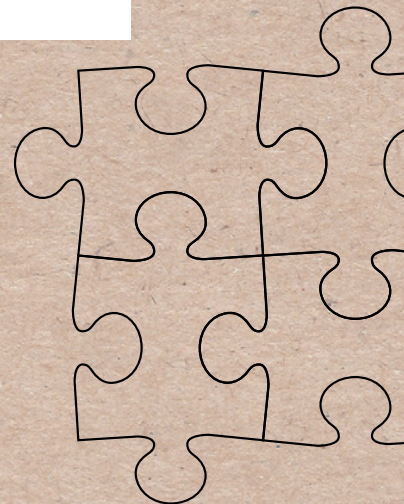
3. September 27, 2024: **AAC services in India and Indigenous Apps- Part 2- AVAZ AAC App**. All sessions were highly informative and interactive, reflecting ISAAC India Chapter's commitment to advancing knowledge in augmentative and alternative communication (AAC).

PUZZLE TIME

FIND THE BELOW 10 WORDS
RELATED TO AAC

I N V V S S W I T C H E S P Y
I U C D D D R I C O A E W D S
Y C N E R A P S N A R T S G E
I A D S W E E T R M C D G G I
G I S E S U M S P A E T E E T
A E A E R E E D E T E S A T I
A U O M A U E S S U T D N A T
D H T A G D E G U U N C E U I
S S R K I R P D R Y G M A E S
N C U A U N K E R I A E N A I
G A N T U G S M S S T C I E G
I U C O V U S E A A G U N E N
P I S N A A U S S E V I R E S
P T E C N S S O I C S R I S D
O A U G M E N T A T I V E C C

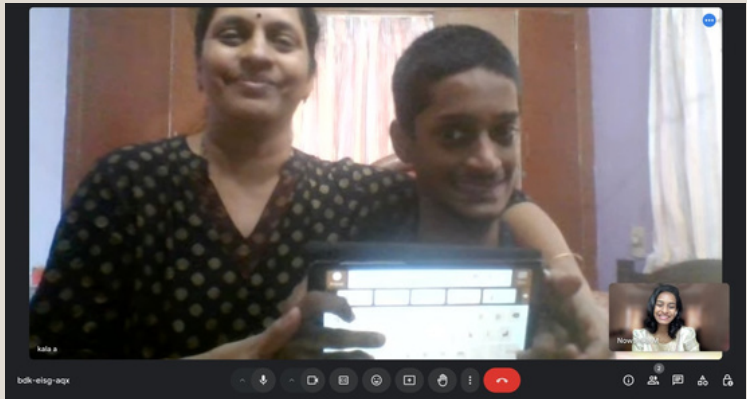
Pictures ,Makaton, Gestures,Transparency ,
Switches Aided, Signs ,Unaided ,Augmentative



VOICES FROM USER

On December 26th, 2024, an interview was conducted in collaboration with Vidyasagar featuring Mr Prahalad, aged 23, and his mother, Mrs. Srikala, regarding the usage of Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC).

Mr. Prahalad, who has Cerebral Palsy (CP), is minimally verbal and uses communication aids like AVAZ and letter charts to express himself.



Mrs. Srikala, Prahalad's mother, shares their inspiring journey and experience with AAC....

“Prahalad was introduced to letter charts by speech therapists when he was seven years old while attending an inclusive school. However, by the time he reached 8th grade, I decided to move him to Vidyasagar because he struggled to keep up with academics in his previous setting. That's when he was introduced to AVAZ. At first, Prahalad found AVAZ challenging, but since he was already familiar with using mobile phones, he picked it up within 1–2 months. The professionals at Vidyasagar worked extensively and patiently with my son and me, giving us ideas and motivation to keep going. The COVID-19 pandemic gave us more time to explore AVAZ during online classes, and that really boosted his confidence. We also tried other options like flashcards and multiple-choice options for communication. But AVAZ has become our go-to now. Even at home, he is quick to turn to AVAZ whenever we face difficulties in understanding his gestures.





VOICES FROM USER

Right now, he's pursuing 12th standard through NIOS and preparing for his Home Science exams scheduled for April–May 2025. To help him prepare for the exam and improve spelling skills, we are using letter charts extensively alongside AVAZ now!

One of the proudest moments for us was when Prahalad met Chief Minister M.K. Stalin at an AVAZ stall. The Chief Minister appreciated how well he used AVAZ and encouraged him to keep using it.

Honestly, I feel so proud of Prahalad. Ever since we found a way for him to express his thoughts, he is cheerful, actively participates, and his interest in learning has grown so much. His interest is the sole facilitator of implementing AVAZ, all credits go to him! The only message I have for other parents is that AAC, and in my case, AVAZ, works like magic! It's so useful and effective. It will definitely take some time, but the end results are absolutely fruitful! I couldn't have done this without the help of supportive professionals at Vidyasagar and family members.

I hope this interview inspires families to introduce apps like AVAZ to children with communication needs. It made all the difference in my child's life, I hope it does for others in need too."

Thanks to Ms. Kalpana Rao, Principal & team at Vidyasagar, Chennai for the permission and connect.

Thanks to alumni from SRIHER (DU) for the support - Ms. Nowshika M for the interaction & article preparation; Ms. Shruthi Ranganathan for designing the newsletter



COMIC TIME

AAC – YOUR FRIEND



Students, professionals & researchers are invited to share the reference of their research work in the field of AAC to

secretaryisaacindia@gmail.com

to be included in the next issue of ISAAC India Chapter Newsletter

**LAST DATE TO SUBMIT
15TH MARCH, 2025**

Readers Column

This place is for you!!!

Please send your
comments/suggestions for our next
issue

ABOUT ISAAC INDIA CHAPTER & IT'S MEMBERSHIP



The International Society for Augmentative and Alternative Communication (ISAAC) works to improve the lives of children and adults who use AAC. ISAAC's vision is that AAC will be recognized, valued and used throughout the world. ISAAC's mission is to promote the best possible communication for people with complex communication needs.

In April 2008, ISAAC India chapter was registered formally under societies registration Act (1860) of India. ISAAC India chapter helps to create awareness, training, research and development of indigenous aids and advocacy.

HOW TO BECOME ISAAC INDIA CHAPTER MEMBER

ITEM	PRICE
Professional	Rs. 2,500
People who use AAC and their families	Rs. 950
Student	Rs. 1,500
Institutional	Rs. 11,500
Corporate	Rs. 48,500
Retired	Rs. 1,500

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Headed by Dr. Usha Dalvi, supported by Ms Manavi Jalan

Website and Social media committee

Headed by Ms Bhavana Botta

Newsletter

Headed by Prof. Rangasayee, Dr. Krupa M. and Dr. Amulya P. Rao

Conference Committee

Headed by Dr. Ajish Abraham



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International Society For
Augmentative And Alternative Communication

INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY FOR AUGMENTATIVE AND ALTERNATIVE COMMUNICATION

ISAAC INDIA



The arrival of 2025 offers a moment of reflection, a chance to appreciate the past year while embracing the promise of fresh starts and new possibilities.

ISAAC INDIA CHAPTER WISHES EVERYONE A



Let's welcome the year 2025 with open arms and help everyone to become more social.....