AMICI NEWS

SRMAB's Computer training:
Keeping with the times

Notwithstanding a contracture on his back and paralysis of both the legs owing to polio, Krishnamurthy is all enthusiasm for computer training. He is one of the beneficiaries of the computer training programme organised by the AIFO supported Malavalli Samudaya project

(Sri Ramana Maharishi Academy for the Blind).

Having completed second PUC successfully, Krishnamurthy has now applied for self employment loan.

Acquiring basic computer skills has added to his confidence. He is one of the 79 PWDs in the Malavalli project area who have benefited from the computer training programme.

The programme which was introduced in 1998 barely a year after the project itself began work in the year has benefited non PWDs as well. Till date, 229 non PWDs have also benefited from the Computer training centres set up by the project in four taluks.

After seeing the success of the first centre set up in Halagur, the project opened similar centres in Kirugavalu, Malavalli and Krishnarajpet taluks. In fact, one visually impaired girl who under went training at Halagur has been appointed at the centre itself to train others.

More about making computers disabled friendly. Turn to page 2.

Polling victories: The NCPEDP way

For the first time in the history of independent India that a serious attempt is being made by the Election Commission to ensure that visually impaired voters are able to exercise their franchise in an independent and dignified manner.

This is thanks to the initiative of AIFO supported project NCPEDP. Project convenor Mr Javed Abidi and a delegation of blind activists not only staged a massive demonstration in front of the election commission on September 28, but also succeeded in eliciting a promise from the deputy election commissioner Mr A N Jha that efforts would be made to make the polling process disabled friendly.

Already two to three prototypes of Electronic voting machines with Braille Signage are being made ready at the Electronics Corporation of India Ltd. in Hyderabad.

In addition, it was agreed that the list of candidates with their respective Serial No. and their Election Symbol will be available in Braille (in the concerned language depending on the region / State) with the Presiding Officer of the Polling Booth / Polling Station.

If the test run is successful, the EVM would be used in at least some constituencies, especially in the Bye-Election to the Asif Nagar constituency in Hyderabad, Andhra Pradesh.

The Election Commission has also stated that while mass producing EVMs may not be possible for these elections, at least the list of the candidates will be printed out in Braille in the urban constituencies of Maharashtra.

Bidding Adieu…..

AMICI wishes a fond farewell to the two teams of AIFO group from Italy. They were here from September 13 on a ten day visit to our projects.

Registration of cases
By Dr N Manimozhi

This issue, I shall confine myself to merely presenting the format for Registration of leprosy patient, as a new patient as given by the Government of India.

We shall take up the community approach where the registering of the patient is at his or her place of present residence.

These in turn could be categorized into permanent resident and temporary resident. In case the patient is a permanent resident, meaning a person coming under the same SHC, PCH, CHC, hospital of the district/state, register and give MDT.

If the patient is a temporary resident limited to only flying visits up to a few days or a month, the method would be- If it is MB/PB then record and give MDT and issue identity slip and advise the patient to report to the nearest SHC/PHC of his permanent residence. Also send a referral slip by post to PHC for registering the case in their record. Up to minimum of six months and upto 11 months after diagnosis- If PB:Register and give MDT. If MB-Record separately and give MDT for period of stay. Issue identity slip and advise the patient to report to the nearest SHC/PHC of his permanent residence. Also send a referral slip by post to PHC for registering the case in their record. Up to minimum of 12 months after diagnosis-If MB/PB-register and give MDT.

All in the family: The story of three blind girls

When all his three daughters developed cataract and turned visually impaired, the world of fifty year old Paramalappa came crashing down. Paramalappa of Bennikal village of the dry district Bellary, in the southern state of Karnataka shares his sorrow with his cousin turned wife Bharmavva.

Living in a rural community, Paramalappa not only had the 'misfortune' of having three female children but had to contend with their visual impairment as well.

The fact that the surgery attempted on one of his daughters failed, kept him from trying anything more to help his three daughters. And so, remained 13 year old Ulagavva, 11 year old Basamma and eight year old Rekha with no ray of light in sight.

The project staff of Assisi Leprosy Centre, Hagaribommanahalli came across the family during their disability survey. However, for six long years, all attempts by the staff to motivate him to get his daughters operated again failed. Memories of the first failure were too strong on his mind and he remained unmoved.

It was the visit of AIFO CBR coordinator Mr Jayanth Kumar, himself visually impaired that changed all that. His own example and persuasion bore fruit. With the help of the CDPO, the CBR staff took the family to the nearby town of Davangere to consult an eye specialist.

Thanks to their efforts, today, two girls have regained full sight while one partial sight.
By Y B Jayanth Kumar

Achieving cent per cent child literacy: Indiranagar childrens project

Situated in the outskirts of the dusty Ranchi town in the newly formed state of Jharkhand in north India, the project deals exclusively with leprosy affected persons in a settlement which has come to be known as Indiranagar.

With a population of 435 of which half are female, the colony has 150 families which are headed by leprosy affected patients. Though most are cured, they are not able to work owing to their visible deformity. Only around 21 persons in this colony work as labourers for a living.

The project has focussed on education of the children to bring about a steady economic growth in the colony. This gains importance in the light of the fact that most of the children have disabilities arising out of leprosy.

> **The speciality of the project is that this is one leprosy colony which has achieved 100 per cent success in educating children. Not a single child is out of school. No mean achievement this, considering that seven years back, not a single child was in school! And it has not taken AIFO much investment. One and half lakh rupees per year has achieved this phenomenal success!!**

It was in 1994 that the project took up the cause of these patients who had been an isolated part of the society with no outside help till then. A school was constructed and with the help of AIFO immediately after, the project has taken up the challenge of rehabilitation and educational upliftment of Indira Nagar. Children not only get dresses, books but also mid day meal complete with egg and milk. Apart from books and stationary, the children are given dresses on festive occasions and health support in the shape of buckets, soap etc.

In the colony a social worker has been engaged to co-ordinate the development efforts under his direction the villagers try to keep the colony clean. Village lanes have been repaired and drains have been laid wherever possible.

To cater to the adult population, the project also runs adult education program in the school. So far, nearly 24 men and women are being educated through this. The main problem however that continues to dog the project is the fact that nearly 45 inmates of the colony are over 65 years of age and are not even able to muster two meals a day by begging.

The project proposes to develop the village as a model village with electricity and safe drinking water and an overall clean and hygienic environment.

Meetings/Events

Aug 26th to Sept 2nd:CBR coordinator Mr Jayanth Kumar conducted CBR training for staff of Arogya Matha Lepros Hospital, Kollapur.

Sept 11th: Mr Jayanth participated in the taluk co ordinators review meeting for Malavalli CBR project at TRDC.

Sept 17th: Mr Jayanth participated in the seminar on Inclusive Education organised by AIFO supported project NCPEDP at Delhi.

Sept 24th: Dr S Anjali attended a meeting of DLOs of 13 districts and DTSTs of six districts at Bellary to discuss their action plan for three months.

Sept 30th and Oct 1st: AIFO representative Mr M V Jose participated in the state review meeting on leprosy elimination at Goa.

> ## Upcoming events
> **October 11th and 12th:** AIFO medical coordinator Dr N Manimozhi and state DTST coordinator Dr S Anjali attend DTST review meeting at Ranchi.

JAWS 4.0: A boon to visually impaired persons

By Y B Jayanth Kumar

The words you are now reading have been typed by me. You see, why this becomes significant is that I am visually impaired. Yet, since three and half years, I am a regular user of the computer thanks to an assistive device called JAWS. This software screen reader device enables me to access information and to manage my work easily.

JAWS stands for Job Access With Speech. It is a software device to enable visually impaired persons, to function on equal terms with abled persons, and some times even better, in this rapidly growing competitive world.

This particular screen reader device is developed by a group of experts of Freedom Scientific Training Unit Saint Petersburg United States of America who also have difficulties in seeing.

AIFO India has organized this facility through local dealers for enabling me to access information, prepare reports, and monitor work done by AIFO projects easily. This device also helps in coping with advanced technology. Using the key board commands, I can navigate the documents, text books and even explore the programmes in windows, internet, web site, etc. This software helps differently abled people to perform better now, compared to the past and also helps them to compete at higher levels.

I see this as a good opportunity to prove my capabilities in taking up research, higher studies, working at policy making levels, etc.

This software also helps me complete my tasks in time as well as deliver effective service to the organization. It also ensures my full contributions in planning; implementing, monitoring and evaluating AIFO supported developmental programmes in India as described in my role.

How I learnt the use of JAWS

I call it "need based learning". I first came to know about this software through my friends. Till then, without sound, computers had remained uninteresting to me. All efforts by my friends and well wishers to get me to learn computers had failed to pique my interest.

My chance at getting to know the advantages of JAWS came when AIFO representative Mr Jose proposed that we buy the software for my use.

When I first heard this, I felt elated. Within a matter of few weeks, I could make full use of JAWS and that too without formal training. The help and support extended by my colleagues, friends and software support literature in Braille helped expedite the process of my learning to the use the software.

It is important for all of us who are differently abled to make use of such advancements in technology which can help to put our efficiency and skills to optimum use. As my responsibilities at work increased, I learnt additional skills of managing the computer. Now I can confidently manage such programmes like excel, word, power point etc.

My capabilities on the computer never fail to surprise my parents and friends and when I pause to think about it-Me too!

Words of Wisdom

You see things; and you say, "Why?" But I dream things that never were; and I say, "Why not?"

Book Post