



Summary of World Autism Awareness Day Activities in South Asia

Children with Autism, their parents and other caregivers will meet with heads of state and other local dignitaries all over India on 2 April 2008, World Autism Awareness Day and hand over the Autism Rights Charter.

Based on current world figures for individuals with an Autism Spectrum Disorder, it is estimated that there are perhaps as many as 1 in 100 who have an Autism Spectrum Disorder. Keeping this in view the United Nations General Assembly, by unanimous consent, passed the resolution of the Third Committee designating April 2nd as World Autism Awareness Day in perpetuity starting in 2008. 2nd April 2008 will therefore be the first time that World Autism Awareness Day (WAAD) will be observed across the world. Heads of states in countries across the world are receiving local autism groups to help raise awareness on this day. The world and local media are closely following the developments around this day.

Action For Autism (AFA), the pioneering parent-run organization for Autism in India has for over 17 years actively spread awareness about autism and worked towards creating an inclusive environment for individuals with autism. Action for Autism is actively collaborating with South Asian partners in Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and Pakistan to be able to create mass awareness on this day. As a part of observance of WAAD in Delhi, Action for Autism has organized a series of events in the city named **Autism Awareness Jamboree (AAJ)**. In Hindi, *aaj* means "Today." *If you have a scheduled activity that you would like added to this list, please contact AFA at actionforautism@gmail.com.*

India

1. **Meeting with Head of State and prominent political leaders.** In New Delhi, Action for Autism is taking a group of children and their parents to meet with Dr. Manmohan Singh, Prime Minister of India, Ms Sonia Gandhi, Chair Person, UPA, and Ms Sheila Dikshit, Chief Minister of Delhi State and apprise them about autism, current activities by parent organisations and the help sought from the Government. **Similar meetings are planned at Mumbai, Kolkata, Chennai, Bangalore and other major cities.** For example, families and educators in Vadodara are organising a delegation comprising autistic children with their parents, teaching staff and a Trustee / Member of Board of Management to call on the dignitaries of Baroda and present a ROSE Autism Awareness Band, and Autism Charter. They are also organising a rally and seminar for spreading awareness about Autism, where publicity material in English and the local language (Gujarathi) will be distributed.
2. **Art Carnival.** This is an art competition being organised for school children (from mainstream as well as special schools) to create and encourage awareness, bonding and inclusion. At Kolkata an art exhibition of paintings by special children is being organized, to be held at UMA.
3. **Free Consultations.** Free clinic is being organised to provide consultations to parents by getting the services of a Paediatrician, Psychologist, Occupational Therapist, Special educators, Music Therapist, and Social Workers at one sitting.
4. **Banners Display.** We have prepared a set of three awareness banners, which will be displayed at heavy traffic zones to create awareness with the general public. Leaflets will also be made available.
5. **Press coverage.** We are providing press releases to both print and electronic media for wide publicity.
6. **Awareness raising among Members of Parliament.** We are sending a packet of information to all 779 of our law makers (Members of Parliament). This packet contains a special card about Autism, the Autism Charter and copy of message from the UN Secretary General to all the Members of Parliament. We are also presenting the VIPs (Heads of State, Mayors and other dignitaries) the "Autism Charter."



Pakistan

1. **Press coverage.** Publication of a supplement in two major daily newspapers - one English one Urdu - on WAAD, articles on what is happening in Pakistan in terms of parents efforts and Government support needed.
2. **Workshop.** A workshop for teachers of special schools in the province of Punjab on Autism teaching methodologies in collaboration with Department of Special Education Govt of Punjab. Similar workshop planned in the city of Karachi in collaboration with the Govt of Sindh.
3. **Banners Display.** Posters to be printed in Karachi, Lahore and Islamabad and distributed for display in important places such as educational institutions.
4. **Rallies.** Parents support group rallies in Lahore and Karachi.
5. **Awareness Programme for Paediatricians.** Launching of Ramaq Centre Paediatricians Awareness Programme on Autism.

See <http://www.autismpakistan.org> for details.

Bangladesh

1. **Press Coverage.** Special Supplement in leading newspapers with messages from the President and Advisors.
2. **Other activities**
 - a. Round table discussion
 - b. Mmovie and documentary shows
 - c. Art and crafts exhibition
 - d. Children cultural programme, rally, concert
 - e. TV discussion highlighting the day
3. **Coordination with other agencies.** We are also coordinating with other organizations like Action Aid, Handicap International, National Forum of Organizations Working with Disability, etc in spreading awareness.

Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka will be organising a media campaign, public awareness raising activities and launching a training programme for the Primary Health Care setting. They anticipate good impact in creating awareness.