



International Alliance of Academies of Childhood Disability

QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER



Message from Arnab Seal, President, IAACD

Dear friends and colleagues of IAACD Member Academies,

The IAACD has just celebrated a wonderful meeting of our community at the EACD-IAACD Triennial meeting in Heidelberg, Germany. It marked the 4th IAACD conference and it was the biggest one to date. Meeting Presidents Prof Rainer Blank, Prof Christian Schaaf, IAACD Scientific Chair, Prof Roslyn Boyd, and Local Scientific Chair, Sebastian Schroeder, left no stone unturned to ensure this was a memorable occasion for science and networking. Our sincere thanks and congratulations to them.

The meeting marked another transition for IAACD. Prof Christine Imms who has led the IAACD for the last 4 years handed over the reins of the President role to me. Christine has been a truly inspirational leader who has helped the IAACD have strong foundations of governance, fostered expanding global networks and explored engagement of people with lived experience. She led us to formulate a vision, mission and strategic plan for the IAACD which we are well on course to deliver. All this she did at all times of the day and night, with unfailing kindness, efficiency, patience, humility and always with a smile. A leader unparalleled, who we were incredibly lucky to have and whose wisdom we will continue to lean on. Thank you, Christine!

Those of us who were lucky to be in Heidelberg were happy to celebrate our first President, Prof Hans Forssberg, who had forged together the Alliance and whose vision of a global network of childhood onset disability we are pursuing. It was heartening to hear Hans' appreciation of the progress that the IAACD had made, of his dream becoming a reality.

Of course, all this is possible due to the incredible generosity of individuals who have volunteered their time and expertise to the IAACD, working through its committees, its initiatives and fostering global collaboration. Their enthusiasm has made up for the challenges of finances, pandemics and other barriers. The IAACD owes a huge debt of gratitude to you all.

I feel very privileged to take on this leadership role in IAACD. My own passion is in knowledge exchange initiatives, knowledge translation and global capacity development, particularly in low and middle income (LMIC) countries. This is enabled through a spirit of open communication and collaboration of equal partners learning from one another. Working together across the IAACD family of academies we can strengthen our global community. I encourage you to get involved. It is truly rewarding and fun!

The IAACD family is diverse with different geographic locations, different languages, culture and economies, but we all have a common vision. Our Strategic Plan outlines our vision as follows:

'A world where all those with child onset disability and their families attain optimal health and wellbeing and live in inclusive societies which allow them to reach their full potential for independence, societal participation and happiness.'

To achieve this dream, we need to have people with lived experience on our journey, as equal partners in our discussions, our work, and all that we do. We all are in this together, sharing the same hopes and aspirations, for those with child-onset disabilities and their loved ones. Once we stand together, only then would we be able to bring about meaningful change. The IAACD now has an aspirational charter for co-advocacy for and with people with lived experience. At present our member academies are giving this charter the attention it deserves. All member academies are at different stages of this inclusive journey in different global contexts, but my hope is that we will all make progress. Our recent conference in Heidelberg is a testament how rich and fulfilling this inclusive approach can be for us all.

I look to your support to make this vision a global reality.

Arnab Seal

In this newsletter you can expect:

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General Business

Creation of resources for humanitarian crises

The International Alliance of Academies of Childhood Disability (IAACD) would like to bring together interested people to create a collection of useful resources (e.g., toolkits, checklists, videos, infographics) for humanitarian crisis situations (natural disasters, man-made disasters, health crises, famine and food insecurity, refugee displacement or complex emergencies of multiple overlapping crises). These resources will be designed for use by families, young people and service providers.

The work will be led by a core group with global representation, which will co-ordinate smaller teams focused on reviewing and curating specific types of resources. We recognize that there are many good quality existent resources. Our aim is to identify and curate the most relevant and best available resources for children with disabilities and their families. Where gaps are identified, the group may consider developing new resources. Where possible, efforts will also be made to translate materials into multiple languages.

Website Updates

We have a beautiful, resource-rich website that was co-developed with CanChild, who currently hosts the site (www.iaacd.net). As we move forward, our website must meet the needs of our member organizations and committee work. This requires accessibility updates, mobile compatibility, translation services, video content, and more! We are currently reviewing bids for website hosting and updates to meet this need.



The graphic features the logos of the Eastern Africa Academy of Childhood Disability (EAACD) and the International Alliance of Academies of Childhood Disability (IAACD) at the top. Below them is a central map of Africa surrounded by five circular images: a beach, a savanna with acacia trees, an elephant, a waterfall, and a modern building. To the right of the map is the text "Ubuntu - I am because WE are Humanity Towards Others". At the bottom, a list of member countries is displayed: KENYA . BURUNDI . ERITREA . ETHIOPIA . RWANDA . SOMALIA . SUDAN . TANZANIA . SOUTH SUDAN . UGANDA . DJIBOUTI. Below this list is the text "EAACD-IAACD CONFERENCE SUMMER 2028" and the email address "info@eaacdafrica.org".

**EAACD-IAACD CONFERENCE
SUMMER 2028**

info@eaacdafrica.org

Committee Updates

- **Global Professional Education:**
 - Annual Listening and Sharing sessions planned for November 7, 2025 on “Moving to adulthood: Finding and navigating support pathways.”
 - New working groups created for postural control and dysphagia
- **Research:** Please join us in congratulating Dr. Jill Heathcock being named the new Research Committee Chair!
- **Academy Membership Advisory:** They are seeking at least one additional member organization this year and are actively looking at regions in needs of representation.
- **Finance:** Developing a scholarship plan for the 2028 triennial meeting.
- **Communications:**
 - We will be transitioning from X to BlueSky. Please follow us at @iaacd.bsky.social
 - Be on the lookout for a new LinkedIn page and WhatsApp IAACD Community
- **Conference Planning:** The 2028 triennial meeting will be hosted by the EAACD in Mombasa, Kenya!
 - Specific tracks
 - Early intervention
 - Assistive technology
 - Rehabilitation
 - Inclusive education
 - Family-centered care
 - Policy development
 - Highlights
 - Simulated real-world interventions with virtual reality and AI-driven scenarios
 - Role-play workshops for inclusive education, family-centered care, and rehabilitation techniques
 - Modern Plenaries
 - TED-style lightning talks
 - Ask Me Anything sessions



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of Academies of
Childhood Disability

**IAACD Global
Professional Education
Committee**

**Listening and sharing
sessions 2025**

**Save the date:
7th November
2025**

**Moving to adulthood:
Finding and navigating
support pathways**

**Travel the globe with us for 24 hours of virtual
Listening and Sharing sessions**

See past sessions <https://iaacd.net/kh-home/listening-and-sharing-sessions/>
