



International Society For
Augmentative And Alternative Communication

INDIA CHAPTER

**INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY FOR
AUGMENTATIVE AND ALTERNATIVE
COMMUNICATION**

ISAAC - INDIA CHAPTER

Tri-annual Newsletter

ISSUE 2
August 2026

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
INDIA CHAPTER

In this newsletter you will find:

- From the Desk of ISAAC - India Chapter (Page 1-8)
- Tech Update (Page 9-11)
- Celebrating Indian Independence Day with AAC (Page 12)
- Celebrating Indian Independence Day with AAC users (Page 13)
- Voices from The User (Page 14-16)
- Upcoming conference (Page 17)
- Publication in AAC (Page 18-19)
- Puzzle and Comic (Page 20-21)
- Note (Page 22)
- About ISAAC - India Chapter & it's membership (Page 23)
- ISAAC India Chapter Office Bearers (Page 24)
- ISAAC India Subcommittees & In-charges (Page 25)



From the Desk of ISAAC - India Chapter

Notes from ISAAC - India Chapter EC Team

My Voice Through Art: When Silent Voices Painted a More Inclusive World

“The main thing is to be moved, to love, to hope, to tremble, to live.”

These words by Auguste Rodin capture the spirit of My Voice Through Art, a remarkable celebration of creativity, resilience, and inclusion held at the Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture, Kolkata, from 24–27 July 2026. Showcasing extraordinary works by artists with disabilities, especially with Complex Communication Needs, the exhibition challenged deeply rooted stereotypes and demonstrated that creativity knows no barriers. More than a display of paintings, it invited visitors to encounter the artists as people fully and vividly alive to the world around them.

My Voice Through Art was conceived in March 2023 as a unique collaboration between the Department of Special Education at Stockholm University, the Indian Institute of Cerebral Palsy (IICP), Kolkata, and INUTI Art Gallery, Stockholm. At the IICP Media Lab, young adults with disabilities explore photography, painting, digital media, filmmaking, literature, and other forms of artistic expression, discovering and nurturing their own creative voices. Halfway across the world, INUTI Art Gallery has created a similar space in Sweden, where artists with disabilities are recognised and celebrated as creative practitioners in their own right. Together, these institutions envisioned a project that would cross geographical and cultural boundaries while celebrating artistic expression as a universal language. Five artists from the IICP Media Lab – Deep Dolui, Aniket Mukherjee, Mampi Singh, Barsha Bhattacharya, and Putul Biswas – joined four artists from INUTI on this remarkable cross-cultural artistic journey. Each brought to the project a distinct imagination, artistic language, and way of seeing the world.

This extraordinary collaboration culminated in exhibitions in Stockholm and Kolkata. The exhibition in Stockholm was graced by the Ambassador of India to Sweden, while the Kolkata exhibition was inaugurated by Mrs. Anjumit Nobis, the Honorary Consul of Sweden in Kolkata, reflecting the project's significance as a cultural bridge between the two nations.

At the heart of the project lay a series of profound questions: How does an artist discover their own voice? How is that voice shaped by culture, lived experience, and identity? How can artists from different countries connect through creativity despite differences in language and communication?

The exhibition featured five paintings each by the five artists from the IICP Media Lab. Together, the works revealed not one story of disability, but five distinctive artistic worlds. Each painting carried the imprint of an individual personality, memory, imagination, and way of experiencing life, an attempt at answering the aforementioned existential questions.

What made the Indian collaboration especially remarkable was the leadership of two pioneering advocates of Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC), Barsha Bhattacharya and Putul Biswas, both members of the ISAAC India Chapter. They were joined by Mampi Singh, an AAC user who communicates through gestures and signing. The leadership and creative work of Barsha, Putul, and Mampi in this project is particularly significant, because it offered a poignant reminder to the world that AAC is not merely a means of augmenting or replacing speech. Rather, it is the pathway through which a person discovers, shapes, and expresses a creative identity, the means through which one finds and claims one's own voice.

For persons with Complex Communication Needs, that voice may not always emerge through words. It may take form through a gesture, a symbol, a colour, a line, or the movement of a brush across a canvas. Yet it is no less intimate, no less powerful, and no less deserving of being heard.

Society too often judges persons with disabilities, particularly those with Complex Communication Needs, by their inability to speak rather than by the richness of their thoughts, imagination, and creativity. They are reduced to their impairments, while their inner worlds remain unseen.

My Voice Through Art stood as a powerful rebuttal to these misconceptions. It placed the artists, not their disabilities, at the heart of the conversation, allowing their works to speak of dreams, memories, identity, joy, struggle, humour, belonging, and hope.

A particularly enriching aspect of the collaboration was the exploration of traditional art forms from both India and Sweden. The artists were encouraged to reinterpret cultural motifs through their own unique perspectives. Over three rounds of online workshops, they shared their works, reflected on their creative processes, exchanged ideas, and forged meaningful friendships that transcended borders. These workshops became spaces of encounter. Artists communicating in different ways and living in different cultural worlds found common ground through images, colours, memories, and imagination.

The Kolkata exhibition, however, carried an added layer of poignancy. It was dedicated to the memory of Barsha Bhattacharya, an accomplished artist, poet, advocate, and one of the driving forces behind the project, who had passed away just weeks earlier. The exhibition opened with a heartfelt tribute to her extraordinary life and enduring legacy. Her absence was deeply felt. Yet so too was her presence, in the paintings she had created, in the project she had helped shape, and in the confidence and courage of the artists she had inspired. Her creative voice remained everywhere.

Another remarkable feature of the exhibition was the presentation of certain selected artworks by Madhuri “Mithu” Kapur, one of IICP’s founding students, the first President of the ISAAC India Chapter, a computer professional, and an accomplished artist. While her paintings were not part of the workshop collaboration itself, their presence carried a special significance. Through her art, leadership, and advocacy, Madhuri has long been a torchbearer for the work now being carried forward by her friends and peers. Her paintings connected the exhibition to IICP’s rich legacy of artistic expression and self-advocacy, while inspiring a newer generation of artists to claim space on their own terms.

The response from visitors was overwhelming. Artists, teachers, students, families, and members of the general public visited the exhibition, many leaving deeply moved by the power and originality of the artworks. The exhibition also received encouraging coverage from the press, helping to carry its message of inclusion far beyond the gallery walls.

Many of the artworks were offered for sale. Putul Biswas's paintings attracted particular admiration for their deeply imaginative portrayals of dreams and inner worlds. Both Putul and Barsha had evolved distinctive artistic techniques to adapt to their limited hand function, transforming physical constraints into unique visual languages that captivated visitors.

Three paintings each by Putul Biswas, Barsha Bhattacharya, and Mampi Singh found eager buyers - an affirmation that art created by persons with disabilities deserves not sympathy, but appreciation on its own artistic merit. Visitors responded to the paintings themselves: to their beauty, tenderness, humour, mystery, emotional depth, and originality.

For many visitors, the exhibition was transformative. It challenged long-held assumptions and revealed that persons with Complex Communication Needs possess rich inner worlds waiting to be experienced, if only society is willing to listen. It did not ask visitors merely to admire the courage of the artists. It asked them to meet the artists through their work - to see what they loved, remembered, imagined, and hoped for.

Barsha Bhattacharya once wrote:

"We are working to create an equitable society for all, and we are determined to use every possible means to spread our words. Then people will wake up and listen to our silent voices."

My Voice Through Art was one such powerful means.

The exhibition was far more than a display of paintings. It was a declaration of identity, dignity, and belonging. It reminded us that a voice need not always be spoken to be unmistakably present.

Barsha's voice continues to resonate through every canvas, every brushstroke, and every artist she inspired. Her dream of an equitable society lives on in the work of those who created beside her and those who will follow. It is now our collective responsibility to carry that vision forward - until every silent voice is not merely noticed, but truly heard.

MS. SWATI CHAKRABORTHY
VICE-PRESIDENT
ISAAC INDIA CHAPTER



From the Desk of ISAAC India Chapter

Circular Economy & Assistive Devices - A perspective

In the circular economy, nothing becomes waste, and everything retains value. A shift from a 'take- make- dispose' linear economy to creating a closed-loop system where nothing becomes waste, and everything retains value (Rejaul Karim, et al., 2025, <https://www.igi-global.com/book/strategic-innovations-circular-economy/>). It talks about cradle-to-cradle instead of cradle-to-gate (as a product), which excludes transportation for marketing, consumer use, and end-of-life disposal.

The ultimate goal of CE is to delink economic growth from consuming finite natural resources. It's systemic and universal; not a glorified recycling program. It promotes the elimination of waste and pollution, keeps materials in use at their highest possible golden value, and shifts from selling products to selling services. The following are examples:

- i. Sell cooling as a service instead of aircons
- ii. Sell sound amplification (hearing) instead of hearing aid
- iii. Illumination is a service sold instead of bulbs, prompting such companies to produce long-lasting bulbs that are easy to repair, upgrade and reduce power consumption too
- iv. Clothing, furniture, etc., too have entered the Circular Economy.

In Circular models, products have to come back to the producer, for which the infrastructure and related networking need to be made viable to harmonize with the cradle-to-cradle circuit. Design, technology, and consumer mindset need to move towards this disruptive action point for the larger good to the present and future health of the planet.

In India, the welcome initiatives of NITI Ayog in implementing Circular economy (<https://www.niti.gov.in/divisions/cell/circular-economy-cell>) is very reassuring.

Be that as it may, the WHO/Europe has released a new guidance report outlining how countries can extend the life of assistive products, optimize resource use and reduce their environmental impact (<https://www.who.int/europe/news/item/02-07-2026-who-releases-new-guidance-on-the-repair--refurbishment-and-recycling-of-assistive-technolog>). Soon, the Assistive Technology standards may have to align with ISO 59010: 2024, which guides organisations moving from a traditional linear model (make, use, dispose) to a sustainable circular economy. A key clarification of significance is design for circularity. This involves proactively designing assistive devices, keeping their entire lifecycle in mind. It's about more than just making devices recyclable; it's about engineering them for longevity, modularity, and ease of disassembly. The essence of this approach is to facilitate repair, refurbishment, and component reuse. For instance, designing wheelchairs with easily replaceable parts or developing software-upgradable communication aids are concrete examples of design strategies that support circularity.

The movement of used, outdated, non-repairable assistive devices to poorer countries either as charity or as a humanitarian effort may stop for good in this graceful shift. E-waste management may largely become a matter of the past!!!

PROF. RANGASAYEE R.
FOUNDER PRESIDENT & PATRON
ISAAC - INDIA CHAPTER





Tech Update

Giving Voice, Bridging Cultures: The Indigenous AugMented Mobile Application (I-AMMA) and PODD Book

Communication is a basic human right, yet millions of persons with intellectual disabilities (PWID) in India struggle daily to express their needs, emotions, and thoughts. Existing AAC systems are largely Western-developed and poorly suited to India's cultural and linguistic context, and PWID have communication needs distinct from those with other developmental disabilities. To fill this gap, NIEPID, Secunderabad, under the Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities, Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, Government of India, developed I-AMMA, a culturally and linguistically appropriate AAC mobile application, alongside a companion PODD (Pragmatically Organised Dynamic Display) communication book.

Development was iterative and participatory. Twelve initial categories, drawn from literature and the experience of speech-language pathologists, special educators, vocational trainers, and families, were refined by an expert committee into a two-level structure organised by communicative and cognitive ability. Level 1 (severe/profound ID) is split into Level 1.1 & Level 1.2.

The level 1.1. include four fixed categories (food, emotions, toilet, pain), and Level 1.2, which adds health & hygiene and leisure, with customisation options. Level 2 (mild-to-moderate ID) encourages phrase and sentence building.



Tech Update

Giving Voice, Bridging Cultures: The Indigenous AugMented Mobile Application (I-AMMA) and PODD Book (contd.)

Picture icons were open-source images validated through familiarity testing with experts, caregivers, and PWID themselves. Built on Flutter with a Firebase backend, the app's usability was assessed at each stage using the System Usability Scale, with user and caregiver feedback shaping refinements.

Every screen includes a danger/alarm icon and displays the user's name, phone number, and address for safety and identification. An add-on icon lets caregivers and therapists expand vocabulary as needs evolve, and parents can record their own voice as verbal output. I-AMMA is currently available in English and Hindi, with 22 additional regional languages in progress, and is being prepared for release on the Google Play Store and Apple App Store.

Since technology access and battery life cannot always be assured, the team also created a low-tech PODD communication book mirroring I-AMMA's categories and levels, with matching danger/yes/no quick-access tabs and personal-detail fields. Developed separately for Level 1 and Level 2 users, and in both pocket and A4 sizes (A4 for initial training, pocket for ongoing use), it lets users move fluidly between digital and paper formats. A three-month training programme with PWID and caregivers showed encouraging gains in functional communication, supporting both tools as practical everyday aids.



Giving Voice, Bridging Cultures: The Indigenous AugMented Mobile Application (I-AMMA) and PODD Book (contd.)

I-AMMA and the PODD book mark a step toward AAC technology built for and with Indian PWID, their families, educators, and therapists. Future plans include expanding language support, enriching voice-output and customisation options, and reaching more persons with intellectual disabilities across the country.

The mobile application will be available soon at the Google Play Store and Apple App Store. To buy the PODD book and to get more information you may write to the Department of Library & Information Sciences, NIEPID at dlis@nimhindia.gov.in or niepid.aslp@gmail.com.

Funding: Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (Divyangjan), Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, Government of India.

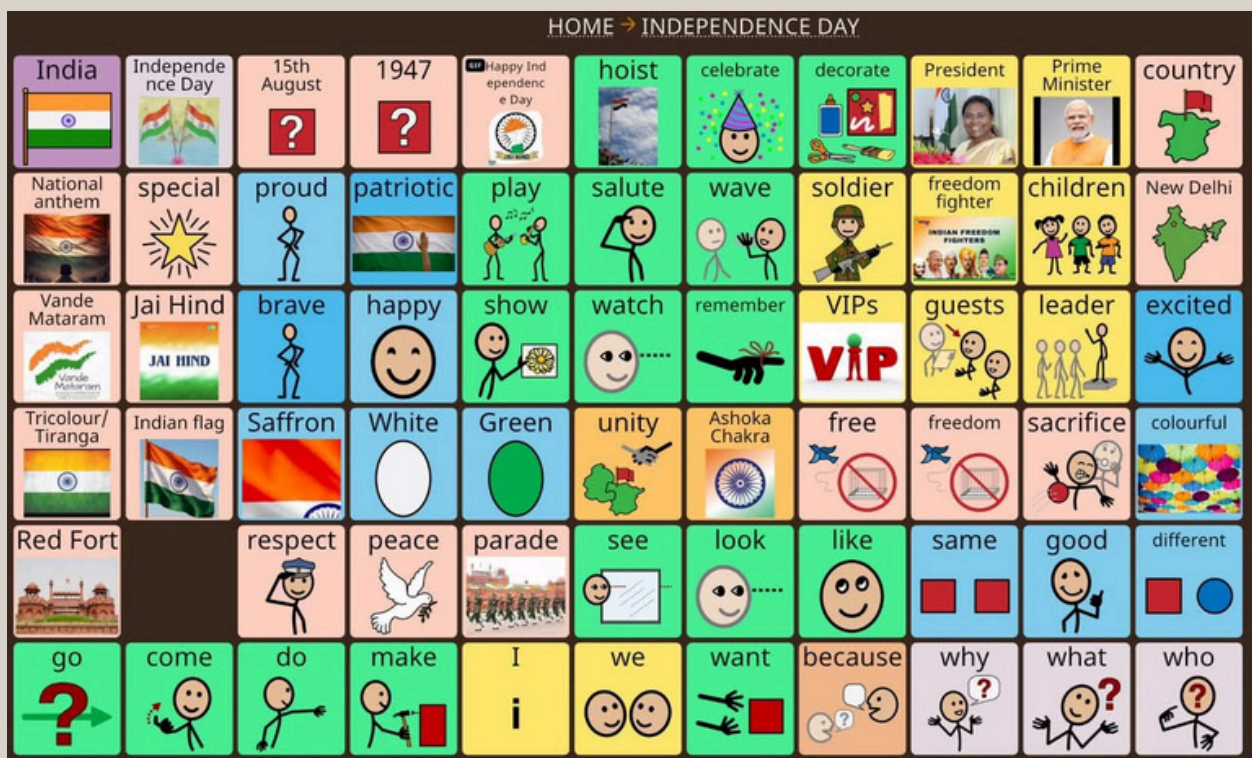


Celebrating Indian Independence Day with AAC



COURTESY: AVAZ, INVENTIONS LAB

<https://avazapp.com>



COURTESY: SUBODHA COMMUNICATION HUB, BANGALORE

<https://www.subodha.co.in>



Celebrating Indian Independence Day with AAC users

Communication, Inclusion & Freedom

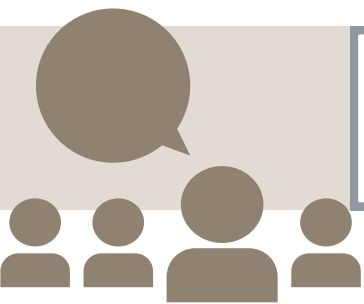


On 15 August 2026, the Indian Institute of Cerebral Palsy (IICP) celebrated India's 80th Independence Day with a meaningful gathering of students, staff and families.

A particularly inspiring moment was seeing Devangi Mohanta, a young AAC user, lead the National Anthem using her VOCA (Kathamala). In the accompanying video, Md. Aryan, another AAC user, introduces the cultural programme.

These moments beautifully remind us that communication is not limited by speech. Every voice matters, and every voice deserves to be heard.

A celebration of independence, inclusion and the many ways in which people express themselves. 



VOICES FROM USER

Our AAC Journey

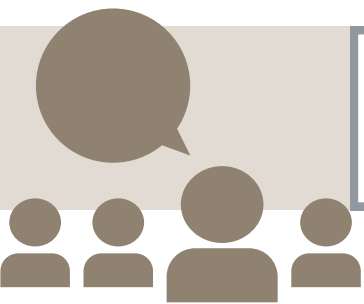
My name is Thejaswini, and I am the parent of Navaneet S.S. Navaneet is now 12 years old. He is non-verbal and was diagnosed with mild autism at the age of 2½ years.

From the time of his diagnosis, we began speech therapy, behavioural therapy, and occupational therapy, hoping he would gradually develop communication skills. When he was around four years old, professionals introduced us to AAC (Augmentative and Alternative Communication) and PECS (Picture Exchange Communication System).

At that time, I was not aware of AAC, and honestly, I was not ready to accept it. Like every parent, I wanted my son to speak verbally like other children. I believed that using picture cards or a communication device might prevent him from developing speech, so I chose to continue only with speech therapy.

Although Navaneet communicated by taking my hand and leading me to what he wanted, he had no effective way to express his thoughts, feelings, or choices. As the years passed, our family became increasingly worried about his future.





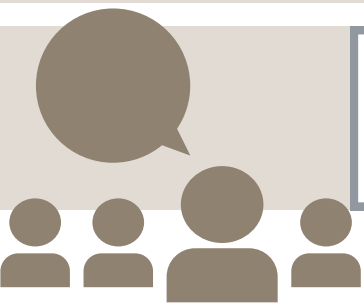
VOICES FROM USER

When Navaneet was around ten years old, his therapists once again recommended AAC. They explained that we should not wait for speech before giving him a way to communicate. I attended AAC workshops and received training, but initially I still lacked the confidence to use it effectively at home. After about six to eight months, his speech therapist introduced the Avaz AAC app during therapy sessions.

Slowly, I began to notice positive changes. Navaneet became comfortable using the device, started imitating sounds, and gradually showed steady progress. This gave me confidence to continue supporting him with AAC.

Today, using the Avaz app, Navaneet can tell us how he came to school, what he had for breakfast, greet people, express his needs and wants, and communicate using meaningful words. He can identify colours, numbers, vehicle names, and many other concepts. He is still learning and does not yet communicate independently in every situation, but every day he continues to improve. He also attempts to produce new sounds and answers simple questions, such as choosing the food he wants. He understands many daily activities, like switching appliances on and off and knowing where to go.



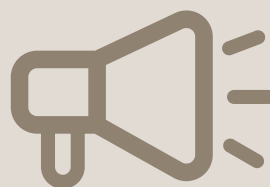


VOICES FROM USER

Looking back, I regret not introducing AAC earlier. I now realise that AAC does not stop a child from developing speech. Instead, it provides them with a voice while speech is still developing and often encourages communication and language growth.

My message to other parents is simple: please do not make the mistake I made. If your child's therapists recommend AAC, give it a chance. Start early, be patient, and trust the process. AAC can open the door to communication, confidence, independence, and a better quality of life.

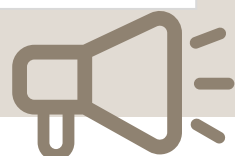
One important lesson I have learned is that communication is more important than speech. Every child deserves a way to express their thoughts, needs, and emotions. Whether that is through speech, AAC, signs, or pictures, what truly matters is giving them a voice and celebrating every small milestone along the way.





UPCOMING CONFERENCES/WEBINARS

Date	Event	Location	AAC relevance	Our recommendation
2 Sep 2026	USSAAC AAC Goal Writing Webinar	Online	★★★★	Attend
7 Oct 2026	USSAAC Classroom AAC Webinar	Online	★★★★	Attend
19–20 Oct 2026	ISAAC International Forum	Zagreb	★★★★★	Top priority
20–22 Oct 2026	Closing the Gap	USA	★★★★½	Good
21–22 Oct 2026	ATAAC 2026	Zagreb	★★★★★	Top priority
10–11 Nov 2026	ISAAC Virtual Conference	Online	★★★★★	Top priority
12–13 Nov 2026	Breaking Barriers Congress	Barcelona	★★★★★	Consider submitting





PUBLICATION IN AAC

High-tech augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) in Asia: a narrative review of barriers, facilitators, and implementation strategies

Kamal Sharma, Murugesan Krupa & Vidya Ramkumar



Sharma, K., Krupa, M., & Ramkumar, V. (2026). High-tech augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) in Asia: a narrative review of barriers, facilitators, and implementation strategies. Disability and Rehabilitation: Assistive Technology, 1–23.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/17483107.2026.2709296>

Purpose

The use of low-tech Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) in low-middle-income countries (LMICs) is largely adopted among individuals with communication disorders, whereas the adoption of high-tech AAC remains limited compared to high-income countries. In order to elucidate the discrepancy, this review identifies and addresses the systemic facilitators and barriers to the implementation of high-tech AAC in Asia's diverse contexts from 2015 to 2025.

Method

Following the PRISMA guidelines, 29 articles published in English from 11 Asian countries between 2015 and 2025 were systematically reviewed from six major databases. The quality of the articles was assessed using Mixed Methods Appraisal Tool.

Results

The included studies reported facilitators, including enhanced interaction, academic participation and user empowerment driven by modern technology and training. Critical structural impediments were reported, particularly financial constraints, poor professional training and sociocultural attitudes across Asia. Limited implementation was further exacerbated by inadequate government support, educational deficits and concerns about the accessibility of technology.



PUBLICATION IN AAC

Conclusion

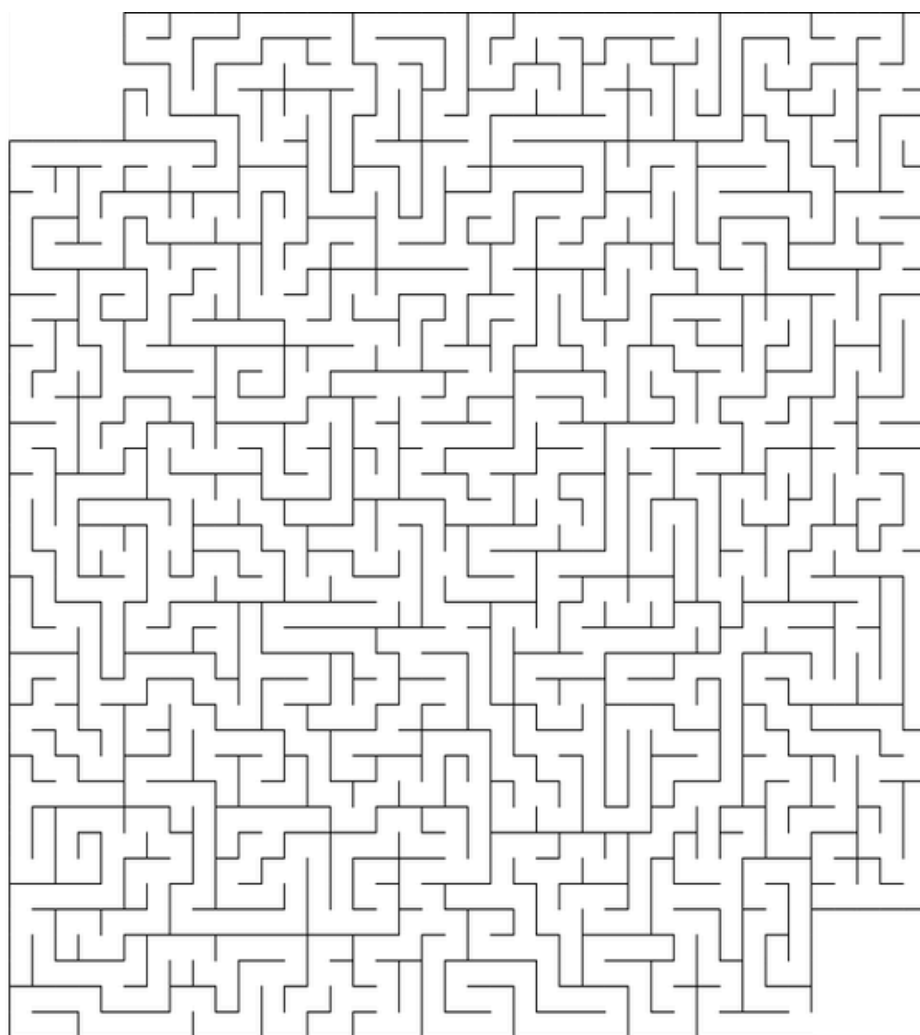
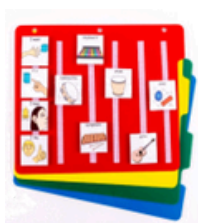
The review highlights significant access gaps to high-tech AAC in diverse Asian contexts, emphasising context-specific interventions attuned to cultural, economic and infrastructural factors. It outlines practical measures, such as localised training, policy advocacy and affordable device integration, to advance AAC adoption, communication and quality of life for individuals with developmental disabilities. These promising strategies, though descriptive, call for empirical research to confirm real-world impacts.

IMPLICATIONS FOR REHABILITATION

- Based on the review, integration of high-tech AAC into rehabilitation supports improved communication autonomy, enabling individuals with ASD, CP and ID to express their needs, regulate their emotions and participate more meaningfully in daily interactions. This strengthens social engagement and enhances overall functional outcomes in therapeutic settings.
- Inclusion of high-tech AAC in interventions facilitates cognitive, linguistic and behavioural development. These contribute to better academic readiness, reduced frustration and improved participation in structured therapy tasks. Consistent use of high-tech AAC tools can enhance natural speech production when paired with evidence-based strategies.
- Rehabilitation outcomes improve significantly when caregivers, educators and therapists receive systematic AAC training, as it promotes consistent use across homes, schools and community settings. Strengthening stakeholder competence and reducing contextual barriers ensures sustainable communication and long-term improvements in quality of life.

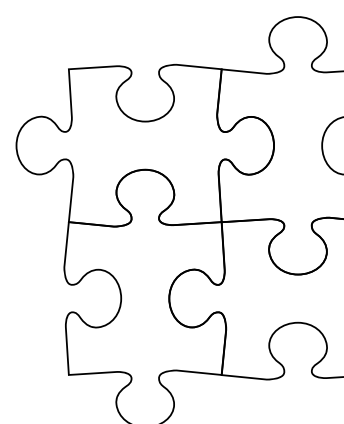
PUZZLE TIME

Instructions: Help the Child with Autism find his PECS book by solving the Maze



Answers for previous issue puzzle:

ACCESS AIDED BOARD
CORE DEVICE DISPLAY
FRINGE MODEL PICTURES
SCANNING SGD SYMBOLS
TABLET TOUCH VOICE



COMIC TIME



Images created using ChatGpt

NOTE

We would love to hear about the activities and initiatives you are conducting to raise awareness about AAC, research work in the field of AAC, upcoming conferences and any indigenous technology updates! Please share the information to secretaryisaacindia@gmail.com

DEADLINE: 20th November 2026

Readers Column

This place is for you!!!

Please send your
comments/suggestions for our
next issue to
secretaryisaacindia@gmail.com

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 the 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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