

Inauguration Ceremony

by

Smt. Sonia Gandhi

8 September 2006



**ACTION
FOR
AUTISM**

Sector 5,

Jasola Vihar,

Behind Sai Niketan

New Delhi 110025

CF COSMO FILMS LTD.

CELEBRATING **25** YEARS



BOPP Films

DEFINING OPPORTUNITIES
DESIGNING TOMORROW

A PART OF YOUR DAILY LIFE

COOPERATE OFFICE
30, Community Centre, Saket, New Delhi 110 017, India
Ph: +91-11-2686 3968 / 9, 5166-4812
Fax: +91-11-2686 0093, 5166-4813
Email: muta@cosmofilms.com

Visit us at : www.cosmofilms.com

FACTORY & ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICES
B-14/8/6-9, MIDC, Industrial Area, Wajal,
Aurangabad 431 136 (M.S.), India.
Ph: +91-210-2554 611-14, 2552 581-83
Fax: +91-210-2594 416



Message from the Director

It is fifteen years since Action for Autism took off; nearly ten years since the first step towards the National Centre for Autism was taken. It is with a sense of quiet accomplishment that we contemplate the huge distance that the autism community has traversed in these eventful years.

Action for Autism is more than an organisation: it is a movement. It is a matter of great satisfaction that this movement has been the catalyst for everything that is happening in India today in the area of autism. In the process, somewhere along the way, we have also gained a formidable reputation as an organisation of impeccable integrity and quality of work.

AFA started as an informal parent support group, with a focus on creating awareness and supporting each other. But a growing understanding of Autism, and living experiences with individuals with autism, sharpened the direction of the organisation towards inclusion and empowerment, and a movement for creating an equitable society.

The founding philosophy behind AFA was quite contrary to the commonly held perceptions of disability. AFA did not view autism or disability as a tragic condition, but rather as a different way of being, as 'normal' for the person with autism, as the worldview of a neuro-typical person is 'normal' for her. This philosophy was in many ways unique given the typical perceptions prevalent in society.

As a result the AFA family of parents is enabled to look beyond their own children and at the wider community; and its exceptional professionals imbibe the AFA philosophy of loving and accepting without judgments.

AFA has been fortunate in achieving many important gains for the broader autism movement. From focusing attention on the dire need for services, to advocating for the rights of persons with autism and their families. But perhaps most importantly, AFA has pioneered the demystification of professional expertise. AFA has been able to train parents as confident and competent professionals: educating and training their children, being a support for other families, acting as instruments in the spread of awareness, and advocates in legal issues in the disability sector.

None of all this would have been possible without a dynamic partnership between parents and professionals, of members that extend beyond even the boundaries of India, and the many hundreds of wonderful individuals with autism that it has been our privilege to know.

But this is just the beginning. The National Centre for Autism is a dream that has been in the making for many years. This centre will bring together persons with autism spectrum disorders, parents, professionals and researchers. . It will carry forward its work on rights-based issues. The National Centre has much to do in ensuring education, employment, and life itself, in inclusive environments.

AFA has set up an infrastructure for the timely diagnosis of children at risk, runs a model school for their intervention, and trains parents and professionals. Our next step is to build on their future: make available an infrastructure to strengthen our young peoples' existing work skills by setting up model training units, and build residential units, and thereby direct/guide youngsters towards independent living.

The National Centre will in short expand and extend the many activities already underway, and will allow a level of integration and coordination that otherwise would not be possible.

Today marks a milestone in the relatively short but remarkably vibrant history of the autism movement in India. The small 'movement' has crystallized into a Centre that is marked by joy, determination, learning, sharing, and vibrancy. As Shrimati Sonia Gandhi dedicates the National Centre for Autism to individuals with autism, and all those who love them, share their lives with them, learn from them, and teach them, we know that we still have very far to travel indeed. The road ahead is long and difficult, but each of us knows, with certainty, that WE WILL DO IT!



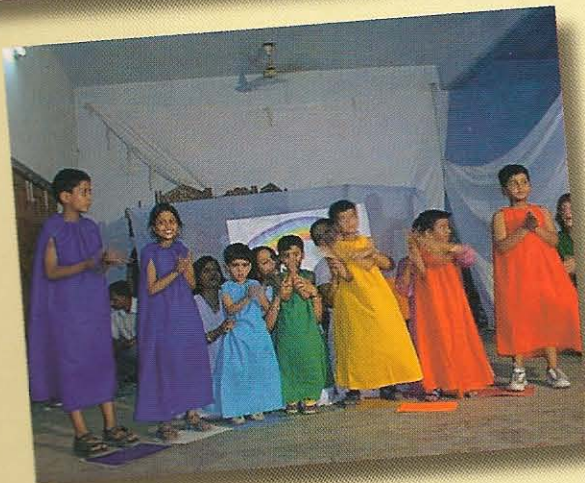
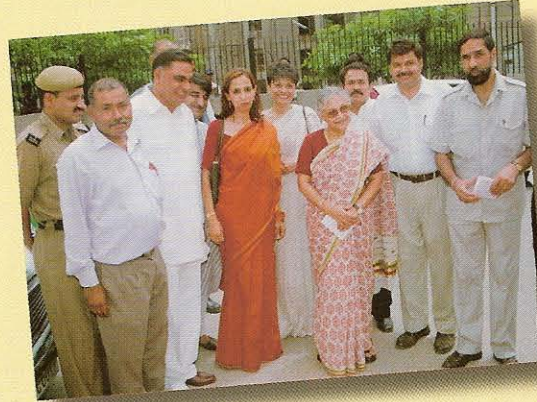
Merry Barua



ACTION FOR AUTISM & THE NATIONAL CENTRE FOR AUTISM

Action For Autism (AFA) is a movement for self-empowerment of the autism community. Since 1991, AFA has worked tirelessly to put autism on the disability map of India, through education, training, research and advocacy activities. As the national autism organisation of India similar to the national autism organizations in the U.S. and U.K., AFA began with just a few determined parents pooling together their knowledge, experience and resources as a way to help their own children and to make sense of this complex disorder. Over the years, AFA has grown to provide a wide array of services and activities that now reach thousands of families throughout the country. Frequent workshops

provide training; an autism journal reaches Indian families around the world; diagnostic and consultative services are available on site; a model school for children, adolescents, and young adults with autism provides



A Few Facts

- Autism is not caused by the child's environment.
- 80% of those affected by autism are males.
- With early, accurate diagnosis and appropriate intervention people with autism can make remarkable progress and lead productive lives.
- The diagnosis of autism is increasing at a sharp rate. Current epidemiological studies indicate that 1 child in every 250 has an Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). This makes Autism the third most common developmental disorder, more common than Down's Syndrome.
- There are around 4 million people in India with ASD yet little understanding or awareness of the disorder currently exists.
- Autism is not a Western disorder. It occurs in all parts of India, irrespective of background, religion or class.

educational and vocational training for people with autism, and also serves as a training facility. Training for mothers and other caregivers ensure carry over of skills into the home.

The Movement has achieved many important gains for the autism community. It has helped focus attention on the dire need for services, and thereby facilitated the start of schools and intervention centres in places as far apart as Kolkata, Goa, Chennai and Salem. AFA has advocated for early intervention for children with autism, which leads to greater mainstreaming, which in turn has been a catalyst for inclusive practices in mainstream schools. AFA has developed teaching methods as well as modules for training parents that are replicated, and has developed modules of training for professionals. AFA's efforts in advocating for the rights of persons with autism, has led to the inclusion of autism in legislation, and acknowledgement of the specialised educational needs by the Rehabilitation

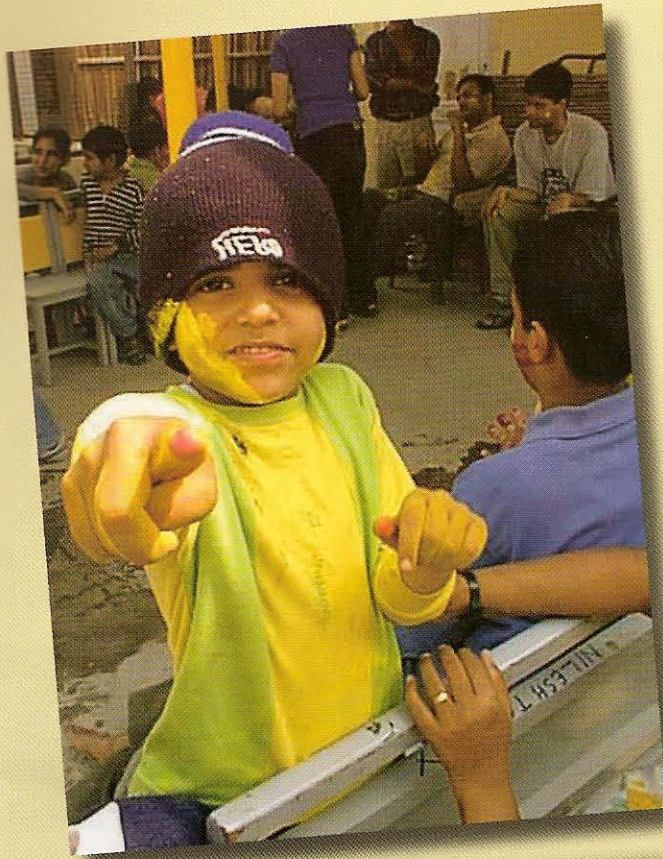


How can I recognise someone with autism?

A child with autism may look like any other child but has distinctive and unusual behaviour and speech patterns. She may:

- repeat or echo words and questions
- reverse "you" and "I"
- enjoy rocking, spinning or hand flapping
- repeat the same activity for a long period of time
- appear to be hyperactive
- be sensitive to sound or touch
- prefer routine and structure, dislike change
- become upset for no apparent reason
- appear indifferent to pain, heat or cold
- seem unaware of danger
- avoid eye contact
- appear not to hear
- not use "pretend play"
- not mix with other children



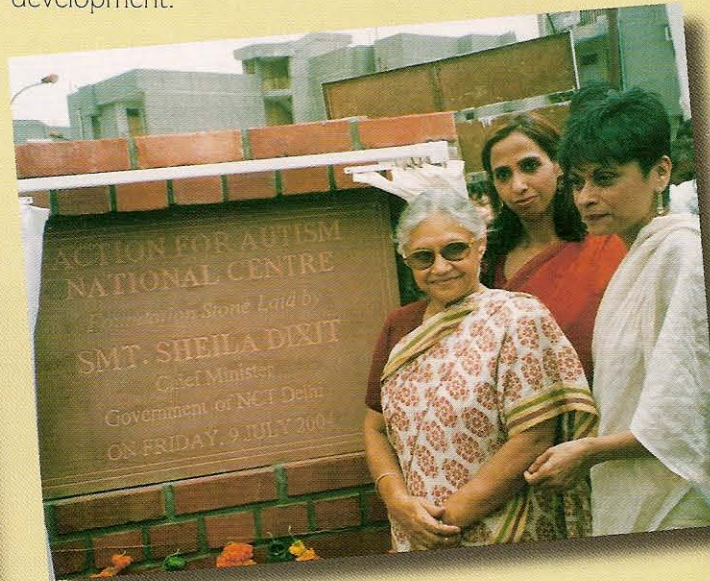


Council of India. AFA conducted and collaborated in research and awareness activities that led to a sharp increase in the number of children being diagnosed by pediatricians, and greater awareness among this group.

But two of AFA's most important achievements have been:

Firstly, conveying one particularly important message to parents, educators and other professionals throughout the country that given proper intervention, all people with autism can improve.

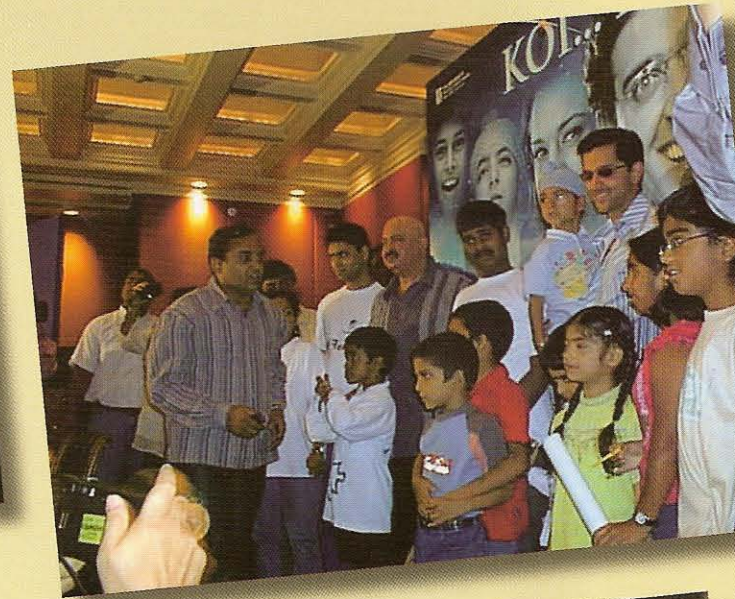
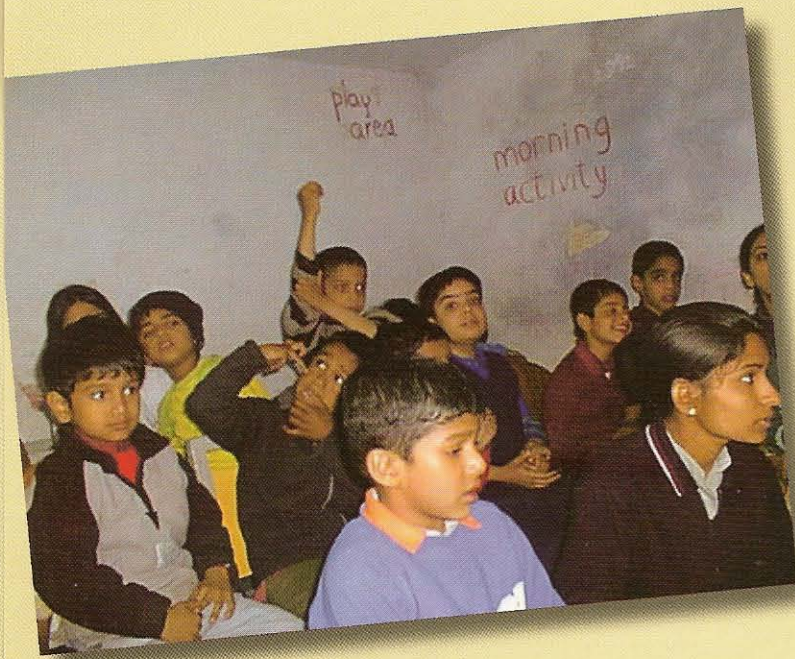
Secondly, empowering families to accept their children without judgments, and take charge of their lives and of their children's development.



AFA's Pioneering activities in Advocacy and Rehabilitation

- Successfully raised awareness among medical professionals leading to earlier diagnosis
- Represented India in the launch of the *World Autism Organisation*
- Initiated the observation of *Autism Week* across the country
- Successfully lobbied to include autism in *legislation*
- Successfully lobbied for a government recognized *Teacher Training Programme*
- Launched the first *website* on Autism in Asia
- Produced the first of *films* on awareness and teaching methods
- Started the first autism-specialist *school* in South Asia
- Developed *teaching methodologies*
- Started the first *teacher training programme*
- Produced the first of *manuals and training materials*
- Facilitated the start up of *support groups* in different parts of the country
- Published *Autism Network*, the first specialist journal
- Undertakes *research* on rehabilitation methods and outcome
- Initiated the launch of *Autism India Network*, a National Federation of autism-specific organizations

As a national organisation AFA functions as a dynamic partnership of parents and practitioners, of members that extend beyond even the boundaries of India. The National Centre for Autism is a dream that has been in the planning for many years. This centre will bring together persons with autism spectrum disorders, parents, professionals, other care givers, and researchers. It will expand and extend the many activities already underway by Action for Autism, and



will allow a level of integration and coordination that otherwise would not be possible. The inauguration of the National Centre for Autism is a crucial milestone in the movement to access the rights of children and adults with autism spectrum disorders and multiple disabilities in India.

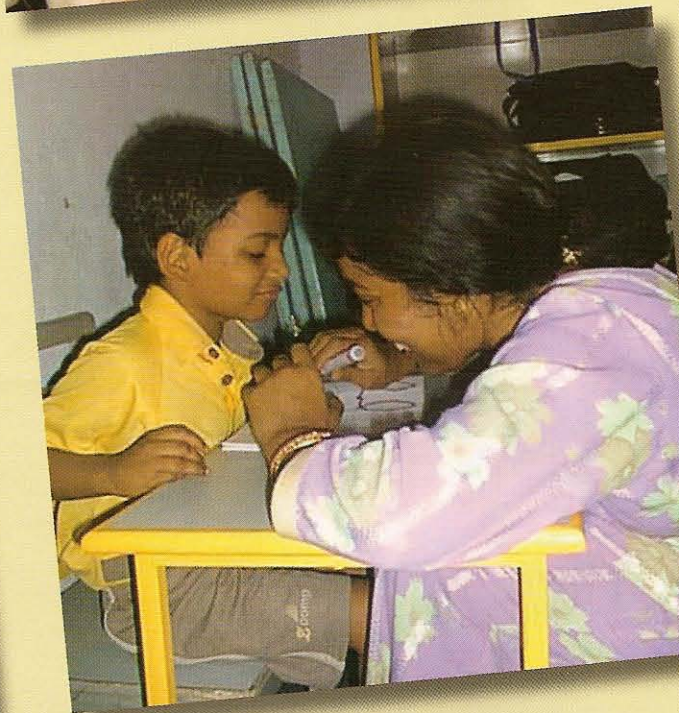


Services and Activities of AFA

AFA's programmes cater to families across all economic and social strata. Economically disadvantaged families are supported through sponsorships.

These include:

- Diagnosis & Early Intervention Assessment and developing Individual Education Plans
- Open Door School
- Family & Parent Skill Building including Counselling, Early Intervention, Home Management and Mother-Child Programmes and Parent Support Groups.
- Training course for professionals
- Training Workshops
- Resource Centre
- Advocate for rights of persons with disabilities
- Create awareness
- Maintain an informative website:
<http://www.autism-india.org>
- Network with organisations in related field



Action For Autism's vision is a society that views the interdependence of people of every ability as valuable and enriching and that seeks to provide equal opportunities to all.



Phones : 23019080

ALL INDIA CONGRESS COMMITTEE

24, AKBAR ROAD, NEW DELHI - 110 011

Sonia Gandhi
President



MESSAGE

I am glad to learn that the work on the National Centre for Autism is complete. This is a very important step in the provision of services for persons with autism in India. Action For Autism has been pioneering the autism movement in India and this is a noteworthy step in that direction.

The National Centre will enable Action For Autism to expand and extend its activities to provide early and accurate diagnosis, make referrals to appropriate services, train and counsel persons with autism and their families, promote inclusion, train and inform practitioners and medical professionals as well as society at large, advocate for rights, undertake research activities, and help many more children with autism and their families. Its plans include efforts towards further ensuring their future through the setting up of group homes and creating employment opportunities.

The National Centre for Autism will empower individuals with autism and I hope will in time enable them to become spokespersons for their own rights. In turn, the empowerment of people of different abilities will enable our country to progress and prosper.

The National Centre is the result of the dedication and determined efforts of a group of parents at Action For Autism, who have changed the way we in India view Autism. I wish their efforts and this particular endeavour every success and hope they continue to receive all the support and encouragement that they richly deserve.

New Delhi
September 5, 2006



SHEILA DIKSHIT
CHIEF MINISTER

GOVT. OF NATIONAL CAPITAL TERRITORY OF DELHI
DELHI SECRETARIAT, I.P. ESTATE, NEW DELHI-110002

D.O.NO. :
Dated :

MESSAGE

It gives me immense pleasure to know that the National Centre for Autism is being inaugurated on 8th September, 2006 at New Delhi. A commemorative souvenir is also being brought out on this occasion.

I am sure that The National Centre for Autism would go a long way in the provision of services and the securing of rights of the autism community in India. It would also help in expanding and extending its useful services. It is imperative to provide proper intervention to children with autism. I am much satisfied to learn about the various activities of Action for Autism, which has been commended by one and all.

My best wishes for success of the entire endeavour.


(SHEILA DIKSHIT)



आनन्द शर्मा
ANAND SHARMA

विदेश राज्य मंत्री
भारत
MINISTER OF STATE FOR EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
INDIA



MESSAGE

The inauguration of the National Centre for Autism fulfils a long cherished dream, to have a dedicated facility for children with Autism Spectrum Disorders.

The Centre will play a role of immense significance for the future of the autism community. Facilities for children with autism are not widely available in India. This lack has so far deprived them of the education and support that they so urgently need.

The establishment of the National Centre for Autism is a major accomplishment of the autism community. It is fitting that this facility is inaugurated by Mrs Sonia Gandhi given the understanding and support that this cause has received.

I hope that this will be the first step in providing equal opportunities for people with autism, and act as a catalyst for further development in the sector. I hope that other facilities will subsequently open up so that persons with autism and their families receive the intervention and support they require.

It gives me immense pleasure to have been associated with this endeavour for many years.

On the occasion of the dedication of the National Centre for Autism by Mrs Sonia Gandhi on 8 September 2006 my good wishes to everyone who has contributed to make this possible.

Anand Sharma

Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment,
Government of India

MESSAGE

I am delighted to know that Action for Autism, the non-profit national parent organization, is going to establish a National Centre for Autism in its own building at Jasola, behind Apollo Hospital which will be inaugurated on 8th September, 2006 by Smt. Sonia Gandhi, President of Indian National Congress. I learnt that Action for Autism has pioneered the autism movement in South Asia and is viewed as a center for excellence for autism. Its activities are mainly focused on empowering persons with autism and their families and in spreading knowledge and information about autism. I wish all success to the organization in its endeavour for the cause of persons with autism.

Meira Kumar
Minister

Dr. Karan Singh
MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT
(RAJYA SABHA)



3, NYAYA MARG
CHANAKYAPURI
NEW DELHI - 110 021

MESSAGE

I am happy to know that Smt. Sonia Gandhi is inaugurating the National Centre for Autism which has been constructed as a result of prolonged and dedicated efforts by Merry Barua, Director, and members of Action for Autism. Autism is a little understood condition, and requires special attention and care. The opening of a National Centre will, I am sure, provide a significant impetus to our national commitment towards the welfare of handicapped people.

KARAN SINGH

New Delhi
25 August 2006



National Trust

For the Welfare of Persons with Autism, Cerebral Palsy
Mental Retardation and Multiple Disabilities



MESSAGE

My hearty Congratulations to all the members of Action for Autism and Mrs Merry Barua. What a proud day to share the completion of the National Centre of Autism, a product of hard work, dedication and love.

It is really thrilling to think back on the journey you all embarked on and it fruition today and the proud privilege to have Mrs Sonia Gandhi inaugurate the building.

I remember the early days, when no one even understood the word 'Autism'. Mrs. Merry Barua as a mother pioneered this in our country. She not only trained in the area, but was one of the first to set up services for Children with Autism. Through all the confusion and difficulties in diagnosis, she was able to throw light and show the way for intervention with children with autism. I remember, attending her three day workshop, many years gone by, to understand the condition better. Today, so much more is happening in our country and many children have been able to access excellent services. It is wonderful to see how your work has grown and today we can boast of a National Centre.

Many congratulations for having brought more clarity about the condition and a better understanding about the needs of the child with autism. I would like to wish you more strength and energy to take your work far and wide.

To all the students and families many good wishes and the National Trust hopes to join hands with you, so that each one can get what is truly theirs'.

I wish your function much success and all of you all the best in your new home.

Wish you a wonderful and joyous future.

Poonam Natarajan



Major General (Retd.)
Ian Cardozo, AVSM, SM.
Chairman

भारतीय पुनर्वास परिषद्

(सामाजिक न्याय और अधिकारिता मंत्रालय, भारत सरकार के अधीन एक संविधिक निकाय)

REHABILITATION COUNCIL OF INDIA

(A Statutory Body under the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment)

The National Center for Autism will fill a long standing need. I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate 'Action For Autism' for taking a meaningful step in the provision of services and securing the right of the autism community. May god bless all your endeavours.

Maj Gen (Retd.) Ian Cardozo, AVSM, SM
Chairman, Rehabilitation Council of India



THE UNIVERSITY of NORTH CAROLINA at CHAPEL HILL

MESSAGE

I was so pleased to learn that all of your very hard work and wonderful effort have culminated in the construction of a National Centre for Autism. What a wonderful accomplishment and a great contribution to the people of your country. Having worked with you and several exceptional members of your staff, I know how hard you have worked and the level of excellence you have achieved and I cannot think of anyone more worthy of this Centre. Certainly, India is fortunate in having such accomplished and dedicated professionals as yourself and your staff, and I am sure your Centre will be a beacon for families throughout India and all over the world. Congratulations on this wonderful milestone and I look forward to hearing about many more wonderful accomplishments.

Best regards,

Gary B. Mesibov, Ph.D.
Professor and Director, Division TEACCH
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

**NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR THE MENTALLY HANDICAPPED
MANOVIKAS NAGAR, SECUNDERABAD (AP)**

MESSAGE

I am very happy to learn that the National Centre for Autism will be inaugurated on 8th September, 2006 by Mrs Sonia Gandhi. The work of Action for Autism in the area of Autism is very significant. Smt. Merry Barua's contribution in developing service models, research and development and policy direction is noteworthy. She and her team have achieved many milestones, which include development of awareness material, Teaching and Learning Materials, promotion of programmes for strengthening the families, self- advocacy, activities related to human rights. These programmes culminated into a reckonable force in the field of Autism. Functioning of National Centre for Autism will enlarge the potential of this organization to shoulder more leadership responsibilities in the country. I wish Smt. Merry Barua to become a model for others in the area of Capacity Building of the organization.

I wish her team a grand success of the inaugural function.

**DR.L. GOVINDA RAO
DIRECTOR**

MESSAGE

On behalf of the Government and People of Ireland, I send warmest wishes to the Action for Autism community on this wonderful occasion when the long-held dream of a National Centre for Autism in India becomes a reality, thanks to the hard work and dedication of a very special group of people.

The Irish Government and its Embassy is very proud and privileged to have had the opportunity to support Action for Autism during recent years. Interacting with the AFA staff, the children and young adults living with autism and their parents and families has been an enriching and rewarding learning experience. We are proud also that Irish volunteers have played a significant part in the story which has led to this historic day.

I wish Action for Autism and those associated with this National Centre every success in their important work for the future, and assure you of the support of your friends in Ireland for all that you do.

Go n-eiri an bother libh

P. Bourne

Charge d'affaires a.i. Embassy of Ireland

Hearty congratulations on the stupendous achievement!

I feel privileged and proud to have been associated with Action for Autism for close to a decade. The hard labour put in by your institution has drawn attention to the problem of autism and has provided the much needed information about it not only to parents concerned and professionals but has also performed yeomen task of sensitizing members of society. Over the last several years I have been seeing the dedicated effort of each person of A for A in empowering family members of the autistic person, creating the suitable environment for a sustained growth and overall development of the individual so that we all can live together as contributing members of an inter-dependent society.

May the Almighty give you more and more strength to provide care to those very special gifts from Heaven- heaven's very special children! I end with a quote from Edna Massionilla that, 'with this child sent from above, comes stronger faith and richer love'.

Warm regards,

Yours sincerely

(Shovana Narayan)

NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF MENTAL HEALTH AND NEURO SCIENCES
BANGALORE - 560 029 [Deemed University] INDIA



DR SHOBA SRINATH DPM.MD(PSYCHIATRY)
PROFESSOR AND HEAD DEPARTMENT OF
PSYCHIATRY AND HEAD OF CHILD AND
ADOLESCENT PSYCHIATRY SERVICES 21ST
AUGUST 2006

PHONE NO: 080- 26995265 /26995550
FAX NO: 080-26564830/26562121
Grams : NIMHANS
Post Bag No: 2900
Email shobas@nimhans.kar.nic.in

MESSAGE

It gives me immense pleasure to be writing this small message in the commemorative souvenir on the occasion of the formal inauguration of the AFA Centre for Autism. People with Autism Spectrum Disorders need all the help they can get to improve their chances to realise their potential. AFA has been untiringly working to realise this aim. I am certain that under the leadership of Mrs Merry Barua and her dedicated team of staff and management this centre will go from strength to strength and be a beacon for all those in need.

With my very best wishes,

DR. SHOBA SRINATH

MESSAGE

I am absolutely delighted to hear that the National Centre for Autism is ready and will be inaugurated by Mrs. Sonia Gandhi. I have the greatest appreciation for the wonderful work you and your colleagues are doing, but unfortunately, I will not be in Delhi on September 8, 2006 and will therefore be unable to join you at the inauguration. Please do accept my good wishes and apologies for being unable to be present.

Regards

*Shubha Mudgal
New Delhi: 39B, MIG Flats, Motia Khan, Paharganj
New Delhi 110055 INDIA*

I am always humbled and inspired by the pioneering work done by parents of children with autism spectrum disorders (ASD) in establishing and developing services; Merry Barua is such an inspiring example in her work for individuals with ASD in India. She and her dedicated colleagues in Action for Autism have worked to establish schools, get the special needs associated with autism recognized in India, develop effective educational programmes, disseminate research and best practice principles, train and support parents, and develop specialized training programmes for professionals, which have received government recognition. All this has been incredibly successful and has now culminated in this new venture: a National Centre for Autism. This centre will be a focus for the research and development that is already undertaken and, through bringing together researchers, practitioners, parents and people with ASD themselves, will encourage and enable new developments. I am honoured to be asked to offer my congratulations on this latest achievement and to wish the centre well in its valuable work. If the future is any reflection of the past, I have every confidence that this centre will be widely recognized nationally and internationally and will contribute to much needed understanding and support for people with ASD and their families.

Love and best wishes

**Professor Rita Jordan
Autism Studies,
The University of Birmingham, UK**

DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHIATRY
POSTGRADUATE INSTITUTE OF MEDICAL EDUCATION AND RESEARCH CHANDIGARH - 160 012 (INDIA)
Ph. (O) 0172-2756801, 2744503 Fax: 0172-2744401, 2745078, Email: savita.pgi@gmail.com

Dr. SAVITA MALHOTRA
MD, Ph.D, FAMS
Professor



MESSAGE

I am delighted to know that a Centre for Autism has been established under Action for Autism. It is a great endeavour that will help children with autism and their families to learn to live with hope; and also to cope with the multifaceted difficulties and challenges posed by this condition cutting across the domains of medicine, neurology, psychiatry and behavioural sciences, special education, social welfare, law, and human rights. Autism is one of the most severe neuropsychiatric conditions known to mankind. Action for Autism through years of dedication and commitment to the cause of autism have acquired distinction in this field and by this new development their efforts and inputs will further advance. It was certainly the need of the hour and hope that this Centre for Autism will set standards in India for the care of autistic children and their families.

I wish the team success and good luck.

(SAVITA MALHOTRA)
17th August 2006



Congratulations! Thank you for sending the good news about the formal inauguration of the National Centre for Autism. I immediately looked at my agenda to find out whether I could come, but unfortunately I'm too busy during that period.

I'll think of you on the 8th of September and will send my best thoughts to you.

You know, for a professional it is such a luxury to have lectures and seminars in the presence of a motivated audience and realize then that they will turn your thoughts into deeds...

That is certainly the impression we had when we were together with you and that is also the reason why we love to come back. We hope to see you again as soon as possible

Again: all the best. You deserve it; all the persons with autism, their families, their professionals.

Theo Peeters
Antwerpen

MESSAGE

Ten years ago, very few people in the general public in India had heard of autism. Even those whose own children had been given the diagnosis were often unsure exactly what it meant. In the language of the law, autism did not exist.

Ten years ago, specialized treatment of autism was limited to just a few centers in only the largest cities of India. Many teachers had no training in how best to educate children with autism spectrum disorders, and schools often turned parents away. "We're sorry," they said, "but we don't know how to manage your child."

Ten years ago, diagnosis of autism was inconsistent; parents frequently received a label without any further advice. Some pediatricians, psychologists and psychiatrists admitted to feeling helpless, and either didn't recognize the symptoms correctly or chose to simply call the child 'mentally subnormal.' "What is the use of a diagnosis," they would ask, "if there is no place to send the child?"

Ten years ago, a hundred parents in India described the same series of events: the joyful birth of their child; the growing concern that something was not quite right; the frantic search for an answer; the sense of confusion and bewilderment following a diagnosis of something called 'autism'; the frustration of finding someplace—anyplace—that would take their child for even a few hours a day; the never-ending, gnawing fear of 'what will happen after us?' "The system must change," the parents said, "we cannot bear it otherwise."

Unknown to many of these parents, a monumental change was already underway through the efforts of Action For Autism. Newspapers were peppered with articles, and soon parents began to recognize their own children in the paper they held each morning. Through awareness films and concerts, an understanding of autism was brought to many more people and the disorder gained faces and names: Vrinda, Chinky, Suthirto. My son, your niece, our neighbor. A massive campaign among pediatricians meant that parents left their doctor's office with an answer, with a brochure, a referral; with hope. Parents and professionals were brought together for training, and returned to their towns and villages empowered to help their children and start services in their own area. Lobbying of the government meant that autism was finally recognized as something 'real,' something demanding attention. Collaboration with international researchers brought greater understanding of both the condition itself and of autism in India. Through the journal, *Autism Network*, thousands of parents across India were brought together and began to realize the most important thing of all: we are not alone.

Through the well coordinated and determined efforts of Action For Autism, India is now recognized as a leader in the field within Asia, and as a model for developing countries throughout the world. More remarkable still is that AFA has accomplished all of this with such limited resources. By saving pennies and investing wisely, accepting every offer of help and goodwill, they have been able to marshal extremely limited resources into this beautiful state-of-the-art facility.

It is with tremendous pleasure that I have observed and documented the growth of the autism movement in India over the past decade. It is with admiration that I write these words of congratulations to Action For Autism, for all that they have achieved for thousands of children with autism in India, and for their families. With immense optimism that I look forward to all that AFA will be able accomplish under the roof of the National Centre for Autism in the next decade and beyond.

Dr. Tamara Cohen Daley
University of North Carolina
Chapel Hill, U.S.A.

MESSAGE

To many of us, autism is merely a word, but to the dedicated team at AFA, it denotes several beautiful lives that are different from the conventional. Some of these differences are to be celebrated, some are to be mitigated, and all are to be better understood. On all of these fronts, AFA has played a pioneering role. Over the past several years, AFA has been impressively effective in raising awareness about autism in India and providing crucially important training and advice to families and educators. And now, as it enters its impressive new facilities, I am certain that AFA will have even more of a dramatic impact on autism support and research in India and abroad. I wish Merry and her exceptional colleagues at AFA all the best for the years to come and look forward to developing a fruitful research collaboration between our institutions.

Prof. Pawan Sinha

Department of Brain and Cognitive Sciences, MIT, Cambridge, MA 02139 USA

We are delighted to learn that AFA Centre for Autism will be inaugurated on 8 September 2006. This day will go down in the history of Autism as the beginning of a new era of organisational support for people with Autism. It is due to your sustained efforts that people in India realised that persons with Autism are not retarded, nor mentally ill. They are different, hence there was a need for a separate organisational support. We also remember your struggle to get a separate training programme for training of teachers. You have, with the support of your colleagues and friends, built this Centre literally 'Brick by Brick'. What is significant is that you have been able to construct these facilities in Delhi with soaring prices, where land is hard to get. We have regularly read the AFA periodical 'AUTISM NETWORK'. It is heartening to note that developments in India are as advanced as anywhere in the World. It will be our cherished dream to reach out to all people with disability in need of support. It is just the beginning. AFA has already attained National standing; it is our earnest desire that AFA should become a World Leader in Knowledge and Skills in the field of Autism.

Reeta and Keerti

Drs. Reeta Peshawaria and D.K Menon

19 Gable Close, Abbots Langley,

Watford, Herts WD5 0LD, UK

What wonderful news! Twenty years ago who could have guessed that a few determined people could have achieved so much? Now, with the opening of the National Centre for Autism, we can look forward to new opportunities for enriching the lives of children and adults with autism and the people who love them, and to many more years of productive action for autism.

These stilted words don't express our happiness and admiration. Love

Clara and David Park

MESSAGE

I am delighted to hear about the completion of the National Centre for Autism. Such a centre speaks for the right of the children of autism and represents a major contribution to the field of disability in general, but autism in particular. It fulfils a long felt need in the subcontinent. I feel any rehabilitation centre of autism is a voice for the children of autism, a cry to the needs and feelings, which they perceive as normal children but appear so abnormal to the environment because they cannot express themselves.

During my long association with Merry Barua I have been observing her arduous efforts on educating parents and professionals, empowering them to embrace the children of autism and I am so glad that her pioneering work on this neurodevelopmental disability has led to a centre of national significance.

I am sure that the Centre under the leadership of Mrs. Barua and her staff will fulfil the mission to bring about a difference in our society's outlook towards autism, sensitising professionals about it, motivating those in government to understand that autism is not a psychological or psychiatric problem, and that it cannot be equated with mental retardation.

I wish the Institute and the staff success in their endeavours of bringing forth the issues of autism.

Dr. Shabina Ahmed
Managing Trustee
Assam Autism Foundation
National Chairperson Growth, Development, and Behavioral Pediatrics Chapter of Indian Academy of Pediatrics

Greetings to all at Action for Autism!.

What an absolute joy it is to hear that the construction work for the National Centre for Autism is complete.

Over the years, we, as a school, have constantly been guided and encouraged by the path-breaking work that Action for Autism has been doing. If we have the confidence to admit children with the autism spectrum disorder into our regular classes today, it is only because of the handholding and mental conditioning that Action for Autism has done.

Annie Koshi
Principal, St. Mary's School
B-2, Safdarjung Enclave
New Delhi 110029

I have always equated AFA with grit and determination. May I take this opportunity to congratulate all of you. Action for Autism's new building complex is truly the culmination of a wonderful team effort and reflects the passion behind it.

I wish AFA a great future. May this mission to fight the battle with autism reach greater heights.

Dr. Anjali Joshi
Associate professor of Occupational therapy
K.E.M. Hospital, Mumbai

MESSAGE

Visiting Action For Autism in India has been one of my very best and good experiences: your warm welcome, your motivated professionals, your parents and children...all of you have left a very memorable impression.

I feel very happy for all of you that you can celebrate the formal inauguration of the National Centre for Autism. I feel very proud that I have been able to visit you and your staff. I have been in so many countries all over the world for lecturing, but I still remember the first time when I saw and heard you speak. You talked about your work with so much enthusiasm and tenderness that right from the beginning I knew that you and your staff were fighting for the rights and the wellbeing of people with autism and their families. Children and adults with autism clearly are not a 'hopeless' population in your philosophy, but human beings, citizens with a very special need for a very special qualitative different education. It was very clear to me when I visited your Centre that your people with autism were making progress, were respected in their differences, and were taught by using methods appropriate for their needs.

Not only are people with autism surrounded by loving people, of course love is necessary, but also the professionalism and the eagerness to learn has touched me very deeply. During our conferences in Delhi I met skilful and experienced professionals asking lots of interesting questions. Some of them wanted to learn more, others knew already the answers, but wanted to be sure they were on the right track. We all know that our knowledge about autism will never be complete, we always put ourselves into questions, and we certainly want to do better every day.

I still remember very vividly your starting point: 'the knowledge of the mothers'...this is why I like the expression 'mother-child-intervention' so much. It seems to be so obvious to start with this basic knowledge, but you clearly put this theory into practice. Even research indicates that family involvement in interventions and in the child's education is an essential element improving the situation for all family members. It is so nice to see how parents get empowered by learning that they know their child better than anyone else in the world and that they can learn how to help their child to make progress. Your emphasis is not on the possible behaviour of the child but on the explanation of the WHY of the behaviour. So, if mother understands why the child reacts in a certain way, she gets tools to handle the behaviour and to get along with similar behaviour in the future.

Being and sharing with other families, learning from one another, not having over-expectations of the child, learning to enjoy again, sharing joys and sorrows, leaning to understand autism from the inside of the child...all this gives parents as well as professionals perspectives, and last but not least will help the person with autism to live a life full of dignity.

I'd like to add that I have a lot of respect for all the professionals, for all the parent-professionals and especially for all these mothers coming from far away... who are involved in your Mother Child Programme. I do hope that I will be able to visit all of you again in the future, and I wish all your children, adolescents and adults with autism and their families a life full of progress, dignity and happiness.

Only the very deep love for our children with autism can give us the courage to continue.

Lots of love to All of you

Hilde De Clercq
Director of the Opleidingscentrum Autisme Theo Peeters
Antwerp, Belgium

MESSAGE

I would like to congratulate Ms. Merry Barua for her foresight and her commitment, to cater to the needs of children with Autism and their families, in the Indian context. It is very comforting for parents in need, to be able to turn to an organization for help, support and counseling. In India where there is so little help available, this is a much needed service.

As an organization, Action For Autism is to be commended for forging ahead to innovate new ideas and implementing them with the main focus, to unfold the hidden potential of children with Autism.

All my best wishes are with you, and I hope your noble work reaches out to many more.

Gowri Ishwaran
Principal
Sanskriti School
Dr S Radhakrishnan Marg.
Chanakyapuri New Delhi 110 021

For families who have children diagnosed with an Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), this is HOME! Of course Action For Autism (AFA) has always been that for many families around the country, even when they were in the cramped premises of Chirag Delhi. But The National Center provides a solid focus: a place where for many parents there is understanding, and for their children acceptance. We congratulate Action For Autism on this new beginning of continuous service to the many families and persons with ASD. We know that Action For Autism, from The National Center, will continue to be a catalyst in the creation of similar organizations and together we hope to change attitudes not only towards ASD but also towards disability in India.

Indrani Basu
Director Autism Society West Bengal

Do not follow where the path may lead.
Go instead where there is no path and leave a trail.

I hope the new building becomes a home and that it gives you the space and freedom to fulfil some of your many visions and, most importantly, for the children to flourish. I remember how much work and perseverance this project took, at every stage – how we chased every lakh and grappled with the red tape, and then some more. As you look to the future, it must all seem a distant memory! So here's to the future and your new home!

Much love

Aran Corrigan
Communications & Organisational Systems Advisor
Voluntary Services Overseas

Congratulations !!!! To YOU ALL!!! For such a BIG & WONDERFUL achievement!!!!.

You always had been a source of inspiration to ALL of US ! We really appreciate your effort & hard work put in this field.

Regards,
Rajendra S Kshirsagar
Forum For Autism, Mumbai

MESSAGE

It is an eloquent testimony to your tireless efforts, arising from the deepest commitment to the cause of Autistic children and their parents, their needs, their future and relentless work to strengthen a national platform to address these issues which has culminated in the creation of this center.

My good wishes and congratulations to you as a friend and fellow worker.

Of all developmental problems which afflict the human condition, AUTISM represents a most challenging one both in terms of understanding it clinically and in providing support and services with empathy. In the years to come, the National Centre for Autism is sure to develop into a beacon of hope, providing such a harmony of knowledge and empathetic service to mentor and guide programmes on autism, meaningful in human terms. This is in the best traditions of our culture in harnessing all knowledge for service with love.

Rukmini Krishnaswamy,
Director
Spastics Society of Karnataka, Bangalore

How lovely to hear from you and to get the great news that the National Centre for Autism is going to be inaugurated soon - such an honor and proper reward for all of you who have toiled for so many years. I am honored too to be asked to give a message for the souvenir. here it is:

The National Centre for Autism is an important milestone on the arduous journey undertaken by innumerable determined and farsighted people, who have led the movement to create awareness and improve services for persons with autism with passion and dogged persistence. This centre will be a beacon of hope, inspiration and enlightenment to all of us who share the world of people with autism. My deepest thanks and ecstatic congratulations to all of you at Action for Autism. May faith, fortitude and fun fill your days always. Lots of love,

Dr. Nandita de Souza
Director
Developmental & Behavioral Pediatrician, Sethu Centre for Child Development & Family Guidance, GOA

Our heartiest congratulations to the National Centre for Autism on its inauguration.

All of us at Manovikas Kendra, Kolkata are delighted to know this development as we are aware that the population of autistic children has been increasing owing to the stress and strain of modern life. We also know that early intervention through therapy, education and training can definitely improve the quality of life of the autistic children and by that process they can be rehabilitated and included in the mainstream of society. We are sanguine that your centre will be able to illumine the lives of such children to a great extent so that they can grow into responsible citizens of society.

We are confident that the National Centre for Autism will function as a Nodal Centre for networking with various NGOs who are also engaged in similar work. May the Lord bless you on your mission.

Dr Sharada Fatehpuria.
Director-Secretary, Manovikas Kendra

MESSAGE

Congratulations and all our warmest and most deeply felt good wishes for the future for the centre.

Tove Røsvoll and I from the Danish voluntary group under the Danish Autism Organization want to express our respect and good wishes for the future and to say: "Thank all of you for the very fine co-operation through many years."

Years when we have seen how AFA has developed – a wonderful work with much knowledge is what AFA is known for! And very much respect we have encountered around the world for this work and development.

All of us who have been at the school / centre and have seen the work and met the parents and the staff and of course Merry Barua – " a soul of fire," can see that everybody is so filled with engagement and belief; we can only admire this place and the persons very much!!!!

I has been working in many countries as a supervisor and teacher for autism, and will tell that in my opinion this centre is very qualified and of such a high standard of knowledge level, that I have ever experienced through 15 years working within the autism spectrum outside Europe.

All the very best for all of you and for the autistic children in India!

Bente Johansen
Educational Consultant, Denmark

AFA **has** been a pioneer in providing services for autism not only in India, but also in South Asia. It has been a source of information and help for so many parents and organisations from the time when there was not much known about autism in India.

AFA has been our inspiration and role-model. Congratulations! I'm sure it has been an effort, but an effort well worth it!

All of us at We CAN would like to join AFA in celebrating this joyous occasion!

We CAN
Chennai

On the occasion of the formal inauguration of the National Centre for Autism I am delighted to send my good wishes to the Children, Staff and Management. This project would not have happened but for the total dedication of a small group of people who have given their time, commitment and on many occasions their money to ensure success.

With the continued support of these people, and hopefully others, I feel confident that the National Centre will go from strength to strength in the coming years.

Best wishes
Colin Rogers, ex VSO

MESSAGE

It is my privilege as a friend and well wisher to congratulate the founder, Ms Merry Barua and other office bearers of Action for Autism for having created this National Center for Autism. Knowing Merry since before the AFA was founded, I can say first hand, that the evolution of this organization under her dynamic leadership has been simply phenomenal. AFA has put Autism on the map in India and it is no mean feat.

In return for all the hardships, hard times, refusals, denials, postponements, difficulties, trauma, tears, long waits, times that you all wondered if you would ever come through and make it, I offer you one word. BRAVO!!!!

God bless you and make you a blessing to many.

YOU HAVE OVERCOME!!

Arun C. Rao
President, National Association of the Deaf

Saw the wonderful pictures of the stunning building!!!! And this is all caused by your energy and magic maneuvers. Congratulations!!! This benefits all the five to ten million people with autism in the long run in India. It is just so wonderful what you have achieved in that special world of India. I send the best regards to the opening.

Dr Hans Wullfsberg
The Danish Council of Organizations of Disabled People (DSI)

Undoubtedly the credit for putting Autism on the Indian map goes to one person. Ms. Merry Barua a parent, and a champion for the rights movement for Autism in India. Autism is still not very well understood in our country, parents have to deal with the condition as it is manifested by their child and also fight for services for their rights. While they are stuck in the troubled waters, Merry understands like a beacon for them giving hope, reassurance and direction. She is a source of inspiration and courage for one and all. It gives me great pleasure to wish Action for Autism all the very best on the occasion of the inauguration of the Centre for Autism. I have no doubt that this is only a first step and that Merry and her team of dedicated staff would reach more meaningful milestones in their journey.

Sincerely,

Mythili Chari
Institute For Remedial Intervention Services, Hyderabad.

Heartfelt Congratulations to AFA on the inauguration of the 'National Center for Autism'. This is an important milestone in the history of Autism in India. I am sure that the Center will provide quality services to several children/adults who have ASD, thus, enriching their lives and the lives of their family members.

Kamini A. Lakhani, BCABA,
Director, Support for Autistic Individuals (SAI)
Mumbai

MESSAGE

I am happy to know that the National Centre for Autism is being inaugurated in the national capital on 8th September by Smt. Sonia Gandhi. The establishment of the national centre is the culmination of the movement launched by 'Action for Autism' (AFA) for self empowerment of the autism community.

This movement, which is of recent origin, has achieved many important milestones. It has brought together and created a dynamic partnership between the parents of persons with autism and the professionals working in the field.

As is well known the incidence of autism worldwide and in India is a thing of great concern and there is need to bring awareness among parents and the society in general.

AFA which has worked tirelessly since 1991 to achieve these objectives through awareness, education, training, research and advocacy activities always dreamt of having a National Centre for Autism which will create closer bonds between persons with Autism Spectrum Disorders, parents, professionals and researchers.

I am glad to know that the centre plans to expand and extend its activities throughout the length and breadth of the country and also establish linkages beyond the boundaries of India. Parivaar wishes AFA all success in achieving its objectives through the establishment of the National Centre for Autism.

J P Gadkari
President, PARIVAAR

Action – not imagination, not thinking not passive perception and hope – but action. This action will strengthen the ground under the feet of the autistic children – this action will protect them from external storm and strain – this action will help all of us to perceive the world of Disability with a new cognition. 'Cognition' – for the lack of which they are lagging behind.

Action for Autism will bring them new light- not of hope only – but of Action. I feel proud to write something about Action For Autism. I feel proud to be considered as a friend by the family of Action for Autism. I pray to all positive forces of human being 'A Best of Effort' – not 'Luck', for them.

Dr. Mallika Banerjee
Chairperson, Pradeep Centre for Autism
Kolkata

Heartiest Congratulations for completion of the work on the National Centre For Autism. It is certainly a gigantic task. I can imagine how wonderful the team work must have been in completing the job. I am sure, under your dynamic leadership the Centre for Autism will render qualitative services to all the beneficiaries.

I am delighted to know that Mrs. Sonia Gandhi is inaugurating the centre on Friday September 8, 2006. It is a great honour for me to be associated with you in carrying out the responsibility of attending to persons with disability.

I wish your institution great success in all your endeavors.

Warm Regards,

Aruna Dalmiya
Chairperson,
Akshay Pratishthan, Delhi.

MESSAGE

Congratulations to the National Centre Of Autism (Action For Autism) for being the first to Act On Autism in India.

A Neurological Condition that Challenges Everyone's Understanding of it's diagnosis & treatment, as Each Child with Autism is Unique.

*Smita Awasthi, BCBA
Board Certified Behavior Analyst & Autism Consultant*

Thank you once again for giving me an opportunity to express my thoughts on this platform. It is indeed a great feeling of pride that a resource center of this magnitude has come up for parents and teachers.

I honestly and sincerely believe that parents and teachers in the field of special education are people with great inner strength but all of us need a guiding light. As very rightly said by Joel Barker - " Vision without action is merely a dream. Action without vision just passes the time. Vision with action can change the world". This vision culminated into Action for Autism.

My concern has always been "How will my sons life be after me ?" because in the final analysis it is not what we do for our children but what we have taught them to do for themselves that will make them successful human beings. It would be my pleasure to visit the National Center at a later date according to your convenience.

Sunita Lele
Director
Pathways - The Home School
Secretary, Pune Support Group for Autism (PSGA)

Being the pioneering organisation for Autism in India, AFA, has helped scores of parents like me to understand Autism better, and has helped us help our children and others like them better.

Wishing you the very best in all you do, always.....

Indrani Basu, Bangalore

MESSAGE

Congratulations! I am very glad that the much awaited, Building for the National Centre for Autism is ready and being inaugurated on the 8th of September 2006.

The country's need for a comprehensive Centre for Autism was greatly felt all through. Autism has always been fairly less understood and not enough services existed in this area due to a dearth of professionals.

Your work in this area is most well known in the country and aptly enough you were able to finally launch this National Centre for Autism. I congratulate you for your dedicated effort to achieve this major milestone. A milestone, that would change the perspective of Autism in India.

I promise to extend my support to you and your organization in whatever small way, that I am capable of, at all times.

Wish you and the Centre all the success in the times to come. May, all Children and families of Children with Autism, benefit from this centre.

Warm Regards

Yours Sincerely
Sumit Roy

It is with great happiness that I send you this message on the inauguration of your new building in Jasola .You are one of the few who have willingly stepped on to the "road less traveled" and have overcome with determination, courage and perseverance the many problems that beset all such travelers.

Having been on this road myself I can well empathize with you and know the joys and sorrows that it brings.

I congratulate you on your very commendable achievements. My very best wishes to you ,all those who support you and to the staff of Action for Autism. May you go from success to success and may you turn every challenge into a celebration. God be with you in all your future plans.

With warm wishes,

Pramila Balasundaram
Founder-Director, Samadhan

MESSAGE

Heartiest Congratulations to National Centre Of Autism (Action For Autism) & It's team of Parents & Professionals Parents for their Courage - to Dream & take Bold Steps Professionals - to Stand by, Guide & Innovate

Mahatma Gandhi said "Be the change you want to see in the world" and AFA is a reflection of this change in the perception of Autism in India.

Autism Awareness And Action
8, Rabindra Palli, Lucknow, U.P - 226016,
E.Mail: AutismAwarenessAction@gmail.com

I am delighted to congratulate Merry Barua and her colleagues at Action For Autism on the inauguration of the National Centre for Autism in Delhi. It is a wonderful step forward, and I hope and pray for its success.

We in Pakistan have been aware of the immensely valuable work being done in the field of Autism in India. In December 2005 we organized the First Regional Conference on Autism in Lahore, and some of us from Delhi, Mumbai, Dhaka and Bhutan managed to get together for the first time to discuss future cooperation in the region through conferences, seminars and workshops.

I hope that the National Centre for Autism continues to develop services and support facilities in keeping with our region's cultural strengths and environment.

All the best

Rukhsana Shah,
Administrator Ramaq Centre for Awareness
& Social Responsibility, Lahore

It gives me immense pleasure to congratulate "Action for Autism" on the inaugural ceremony of the 'National Centre for Autism'.

It is a tremendous achievement and I believe AFA has set a new milestone for Autism in this region.

We are greatly inspired by AFA and hope in future we shall get considerable support and co-operation from them as a guide and leader.

Once again, our heartiest felicitations and best wishes to AFA from all at SWAC.

Engr. Anwar Hossain
Chairman
Society for the Welfare of Autistic Children
Dhaka, Bangladesh

MESSAGE

I will not be in the country but will be remembering you on september 8'06. Congratulation on a great and worthy milestone completed. The National Centre for Autism will fulfill the hopes/ dreams of many concerned. We in the field are very proud of you & from REACH wish you all the very best.

**Warm wishes,
Dr.Purobie Bose, REACH**

Congratulations to the National Centre For Autism. When I did my traineeship in Action For Autism it was a very great time. Everybody was very nice and I learned a lot. I hope that I will have the chance to come back to India and to AFA again. I wish AFA all the best for the future.

With a lot of love

Martina, Germany

We are delighted to know that the inauguration of the National Centre for Autism is taking place on September 08, 2006. We are confident that this Centre will contribute immensely to the cause of autism in the country. Words alone are a poor substitute to express our gratitude towards the efforts of 'Action For Autism' and all those who have contributed their might to ensure that the Centre has become a reality. Centre for Autism Therapy Counselling and Help (CATCH), Bhubaneswar extends its best wishes to the organizers of this memorable event and hopes the National Centre for Autism goes from strength to strength in the days to come.

We once again congratulate 'Action For Autism' for their efforts in this direction.

*Reeta Jena
Secretary*

CENTRE FOR AUTISM THERAPY COUNSELLING AND HELP (CATCH)

How fantastic for you to be having your inauguration of The National Centre for Autism. I have been singing your praises to everyone I've met ever since my visit to you on Republic day in January. As a centre for Autism you do a truly remarkable job. I was so impressed with the resources you have and your dedication to autistic spectrum disorder specific programmes. I keep track of your movements. Please send on my best regards and I hope you have an enjoyable day.

*Suzy Paylor
Specialist Teaching Service Manager
UK*

MESSAGE

I am delighted to know that the center of Action for Autism is getting formally inaugurated by Mrs. Sonia Gandhi on 8th September 2006. It is heartening to know that Tamana is not alone in Delhi in providing services to Individuals with autism. The paucity of services for the autistic in our country had always perturbed me. The opening of new premises of Action for Autism has opened doors for more and more individuals with autism to avail of rehabilitative services.

I wish Action for Autism success in its endeavors to seek and provide equal opportunities to all people of every ability.

With Best wishes

*Dr.(Mrs.) Shayama Chona
President, Tamana*

We are very happy to learn about the inauguration of the National Centre for Autism and offer our heartfelt congratulations to you. Your organization which is the pioneer organization in autism movement in the country has paved the way towards inclusion of autism in the National Trust. Action for Autism's efforts will enable and empower persons with autism to live as fully participating members of the community.

We assure you our full support and wish you all the luck for your future endeavours.

With warm regards

Mira Kagti
Executive Director
Shishu Sarothi,
Centre for Rehabilitation & Training for Multiple Disabilities
Guwahati

MESSAGE

Greetings on behalf of the Mothers Support Group (Autism) , Bangalore! We are delighted to hear about the inauguration of the National Centre for Autism. It is a great achievement, the result of years of your hard work and persistence.

Congratulations on making a dream come true for all of us. We wish you all the best and assure you of our support and cooperation at all times.

Sincerely

Veronica Mathias

Veronica Mathias, Ph.D.

Mothers Support Group - Autism, Bangalore

Course Director, DSE – Autism KPAMRC (Karnataka Parents Association for Mentally Retarded Citizens), Bangalore

Jt. Secretary, Autism Society of India

Autistic spectrum disorders are a devastating group of neurodevelopmental disorders that are often undiagnosed or diagnosed many years too late. They are variably diagnosed as mentally retarded, hyperactive, psychotic, etc. Early identification and intervention with intensive training, education and behavioral modifications are essential for improvement. At The Epilepsy Center, New Delhi my colleague Dr Madhav Suri, MD(USA) and I have been strongly advocating early detection programmes for autism since 1991. It was indeed a good fortune to develop an association with Action for Autism, Delhi. AFA has done pioneering service against heavy odds, handicapped by lack of funds and facilities at the onset. It has been a humbling experience observing the dedication that Mrs Merry Barua and her colleagues have demonstrated in helping children and families afflicted with autism. They have spread the message across the country, helped in starting centers in various cities, encouraging and training professionals and parents.

Their non-profit organization, I feel, is matter of pride for this country. This city requires at least 4 more centers to cope with the burden of children suffering from autism. I hope various institutions, governmental or others, extend full support to AFA in achieving this goal.

I am happy for the National Centre for Autism that is going to be inaugurated on 8th September 2006. I wish you all success. We are proud of you.

Dr R K Sabharwal

MD;DM;FICP

The Epilepsy Centre, New Delhi

Sir Ganga Ram Hospital, New Delhi

MESSAGE

Best wishes for a successful event, and congratulations on the inauguration of the National Centre for Autism.

All the best

Virginia Bovell

Associate Director

TreeHouse – the national charity for autism education

Woodside Avenue, London

Heartiest congratulations from Adharshila. We wish you all the best in your endeavours & congratulate you for success in the initiatives that you have always taken.

Regards

Neena Jolly

Trustee, Adharshila

It is with regret that I will not be able to attend the Inauguration of the National Centre for Autism. Everyone at Inscape House, would like to send you all our best wishes for the future success of the centre. We look forward to any future collaborations with the centre.

Peter M Adamson

Music Co-ordinator

Inscape House, Salford, England

Action for Autism has done pioneering work in an area which has become a matter of increasing concern for parents of children with Autism spectrum disorder and professionals working with them. On this occasion I send my greetings and best wishes to Mrs. Merry Barua and her dedicated staff.

Satya Gill

Step By Step

MESSAGE

I am extremely happy to know that "Action for Autism" has completed the work on the National Centre for Autism and to mark this auspicious occasion a commemorative souvenir is published.

I Congratulate the full dedicated team who ensured the successful completion of this major project to be inaugurated by our dynamic, warm hearted & sympathetic leader, Smt. Sonia Gandhi ji on 8th September 2006.

I wish the function a resounding success & pray to the Almighty to give strength to all of us in the noble task of service and welfare of Autistic children.

Pradeep Multani
Multani Pharmaceuticals

It is indeed heartening to note that the National Centre for Autism is being inaugurated on September 8, 2006. This signifies yet another landmark for Action for Autism. On behalf of St. Mary's School, Dwarka, I congratulate you on this creditable achievement. Our association with you and your esteemed institution has been an extremely rewarding one. The guidance and assistance you have rendered in setting up 'Aasman' our section for children with special needs has contributed greatly to the success of this venture. At present we have 30 students in the section with varying needs. Therefore your continued guidance and support in the area would be wholeheartedly appreciated. May I also use this opportunity to offer our participation in the future programmes you plan for the National Centre. The support and collaboration of like minded institutions would undoubtedly ensure the success of this noble cause. Wishing you all the best on this auspicious occasion.

Yours Sincerely,
Sheelu Mathew
Principal, St. Mary's School, Dwarka

"When the challenge is greatest the reform must be boldest" On the occasion of the inauguration of the Centre for Autism, I wish a change in the thinking and perception about the education of people who are differently abled. I believe in "Empowering the child to believe in his/her own strength, assume control over the future and anticipate a life of choices and fulfillment." Disability is just a matter of perception. If you can do just one thing well you are needed by someone. "look for skills not for deficits". Congratulations and warm wishes.

Dr Mrs Jyoti Bose
Prinicpal
Springdales School.

MESSAGE

ASSOCIATION FOR BEHAVIOR ANALYSIS - INDIA

(ABA-India)

Affiliated to ABA-International, U.S.A

CONGRATULATES
ACTION FOR AUTISM

For

Their Pioneering Work in Autism & Being A Truly National Body for the Cause of
Autism in India.

For Information Contact:

Central India - Smita Awasthi: smita.bcba@gmail.com,
Central India - Ann Varavukala: annjosevaravukala@hotmail.com
East India - Indrani Basu: indranibasus55@gmail.com
West India - Seema Sodani: seemamukesh@gmail.com
South India - Madhumathi Ramanujam: madrases@gmail.com

ABA-India aims to expand the scientific usage of Applied Behavior Analytic methods in India for teaching children with Autism and Other Developmental Disabilities as well as in the field of Education, Sports, Organizational Management, Human Resource etc

Great to hear from you! At times I can't believe that it is now, 2 years ago that I was with you. Time goes by so fast. I'm currently writing my thesis. It's a comparison of structured behavioral intervention and naturalistic behavioral intervention programs and their benefits to the development of communication in children with autism. Next to my studies I'm working parttime with 4 children in an ABA program. It's a lot of work, but I am enjoying it.

It's great to hear that the construction is finally done! You must be so proud. I want to let you know, that I am glad to have been a part of such a wonderful organization like AFA. I had a wonderful time working at the mother-child program and it was amazing to see the change in the children in only 3 months of time. It was also very interesting to observe the change in the mothers, gaining more self confidence and the belief that they can teach their children. The mother-child interaction program is a wonderful project and I truly hope that with the construction of the new center and better facilities more and more families will benefit. Again I am proud that I have been part of such a wonderful project and such an amazing organization! I wish you all the best for the future and a great time at the inauguration of the National Center! I will be with you in my thoughts!

All the Best and many greetings to everybody at AFA!

**Michaela Hinz
Germany**

MESSAGE

Congratulations Action for Autism!

Action for Autism (AFA) is exactly what the name says it is. The organization has worked with children, their families, professionals, schools, other organizations, the government.... and all manner of people taking action for bettering the lives of people affected by this disorder.

But to many of us in Forum for Autism (FFA), this is not just an organization but palpably real people with distinct personalities –

Merry, who has seen so many of us through the journey of realization about this disorder and who is a part of my life, as she is of many families with autistic children. (I have not met a more aptly named person!)

Indu and Ashwani, whose fortitude and good spirits one cannot admire enough, and the very mention of whose names brings to mind their ever-smiling faces.

The many other parent members of AFA, who have touched the lives of thousands like us in similar life situations through their unstinting work for families with autistic children

The many lovely children, whom we have come to know through AFA's video clippings at various talks, and whose blossoming we have witnessed over the years. (Some of us have been fortunate to meet some of the children personally and delight in their company.)

And, of course, all the many teachers and staff of AFA ... people who have given hundreds of parents like me from all over India an insight into this perplexing and fascinating disorder called autism.

Most parents of FFA including myself, had our first encounter with AFA, in a parent-training workshop, held about ten years ago. Although the workshop was aimed at initiating the newly diagnosed parent into the world of autism, what we learnt was much more than its characteristics and different methods and techniques of coping with the disorder. I, for one, got a glimpse of people who lead meaningful and enjoyable lives of which the autistic child is an integral part. The people at AFA believe in the right to dignity for all and they strive to impart self-respect to the differently abled and empower their families to do the same. That I echo the thoughts of many other parents and professionals when I say this is evident in the fact that it was this very workshop that spurred the parents in Mumbai to formally come together and form the support group – Forum for Autism.

In India, where facilities for special persons are few and far between, where the differently abled have little to no rights on paper and even fewer rights in practice, and where special people and their families are expected to feel obligated and eternally grateful for any small facilities that may come their way, it is easy for the best of organizations to shift their focus from being tools of empowerment to becoming mere service providers. AFA stands apart as one of the very few organizations whose primary priority is steadfastly aimed at parent empowerment in all their endeavours and activities.

Today, they move into a new premises and expand their horizons and take on new responsibilities. For this, so many parents like me and several organizations like Forum for Autism from all over India, rejoice and hold our heads high for Action for Autism and its entire people.

**Parul Kumtha, mother,
Forum for Autism, Mumbai**

MESSAGE

A world with no barriers, a world where each has a unique place....a path that is less travelled, a commitment that is rare.....

Such is the work that is epitomised in each activity undertaken by "Action for Autism". From bringing issues regarding people with autism to the forefront, to providing solutions for education, employment and training, AFA ably led by Merry Barua, has been on the centerstage, not only in India but across the world.

The team has done what most others just dream of - that of bringing hope into the lives of many.

I wish them good fortune in their work and pray that their mission be successful. The new building is the first step towards that end.

Madhumita Puri
Executive Director
Society for Child Development

Congratulations! My heart felt felicitations on the occasion of the Dedication of The National Centre for Autism

Such a tribute has been overdue for the wonderful work you have done in this field for the last 15 years. Your commitment to the cause of having Autism recognized as a separate disorder, causing profound disability, has been inspirational.

Your centre can certainly aspire to be the standard bearer for the management of Autistic Spectrum Disorder in the country. Your openness to involve families and professionals from all schools of thought, both nationally and internationally, has helped to develop a broad and holistic orientation. Your zeal and ability to weather adversities, in a climate of varied opinions and practices, has been exemplary.

I thank you for initiating a movement to create a forum and facilities for millions of children and families affected by Autism in our country.

Wishing you all the best on this big occasion and for all future endeavors.

Dr. Amit Sen
Senior Consultant Child and Adolescent Psychiatrist
Sitaram Bhartia Institute of Science and Research
New Delhi

MESSAGE

We received your invitation to the Dedication of the National Centre for Autism. We are so happy that long years of toil by you and your dedicated team, are finally bearing fruit. The inauguration of the centre is an event of far reaching significance. From a cursory "What is autism" you have now succeeded in creating an awareness of the disorder at a national level. No words will express our sense of gratitude in what you have achieved. The road has been tortuous and progress slow. But dawn is seen at last. A lot of struggle lies ahead but I am sure with a committed person like you at the helm, the centre will race ahead in achieving its goals. We pray to Almighty that you achieve bigger and bigger milestones in future and may all your dreams come true.

Beena and Yashwant Modak
Mumbai

Youthreach and Action for Autism have been partners for little over 5 years now. It has been a great pleasure being associated with AFA. They are very passionate about what they do and their commitment is truly commendable!

Thanks to AFA we have learnt so much about Autism, a disorder which exists so much in our environment yet we are not informed about it.

As partners we have placed volunteers with Action for Autism. They have been from all walks of life. At times people went with some degree of skepticism but the warmth and the energy of the staff helped them overcome all doubts and motivated them to just start contributing!

Last but not the least it was very heartening to see them construct and shift into their lovely new building. Many congratulations to all at the National Centre for Autism!!

Shveta Bakshi
YOUTH REACH

I applaud the initiative that is taken by the National Center for Autism – Despite global advances in Medical science - Autism continues to remain a social and scientific mystery and therefore calls for special attention. In a rapidly maturing society like India it is the marginalized that feel the brunt of quick change, and If we are to be a balanced, complete and compassionate society it is imperative that we ensure full community inclusion for the autistic, especially children.

It is inspiring to see the diligent initiative by Action for Autism in the battle for this disability. I am honoured to participate as a steadfast supporter to this movement and wish them all success.

Mrs. Vandana Luthra
VLCC Health Care Ltd.
S -22 / 6 DLF Phase -III
Gurgaon, Haryana - 122001

OUR PAGE

It is difficult for me to say anything about the new centre because I have not seen it yet. But I have a lot of ideas, for eg there should be a big CD player in Aadhar, the Work Skills Training Unit, which I hope is already there. In the new center there can also be another senior class and a Music Club. I have thought of a new senior class because more young adults with autism can then come to the new center in the new senior section. In the new senior class there can be another screen printing unit and a big CD player. There can be two different Jam Sessions where people with ASD can perform, socialize and have fun.

Can there be a Jam Session when I am in Delhi for the Inauguration?

Amitava Basu, Kolkata

I was at Open Door(Action for Autism) in the old premises at Chirag Delhi. The space was small. The facilities were much less. The center did wonders to me. The teachers were dedicated, considerate and motivated. I am happy that the centre has moved to a new spacious location. I hope it will benefit a lot more people like me.

Hemant Joshi, Gurgaon

I **wish** I could be with you but I am now trying to substitute for my deceased father in caring for mother, I must stay at home. I commend the National Centre for Autism to the care of Mary Mother of Jesus whose earthly birth is commemorated on 8 September in the Catholic Church . Good wishes also to Mrs Gandhi. Though I cannot be with you for this occasion I hope to see my Indian friend in Cape Town later this year on the occasion of my first visit to Africa for the World Autism Organisation Conference.

Love and best wishes

John Joyce, UK

Congratulations to the National Centre For Autism

Jessy Park USA

Congratulations on the opening of your center. Unfortunately, it is too long of a bicycle ride from Boston for me to get there for the festivities! However, please let me know if I can be of assistance in any way. Best wishes

Stephen Shore

Author of Beyond the Wall: Personal Experiences with Autism and Asperger Syndrome

Editor of Ask and Tell: Self-advocacy and Disclosure for People on the Autism Spectrum

Co-author of the forthcoming Understanding Autism for Dummies

Acknowledgements

*Our deepest gratitude and warmest wishes to all our supporters
for their faith in us over the years*

*A N Kaul ■ Aarti Rajaratnam ■ Aditya Vikram Birla Memorial Trust ■ Alexandra College
Alison Cornish Family and friends ■ Ambika Soni ■ American Women's Association
Anand Sharma ■ Anita Roy ■ Anjali & Sanjay Jain ■ Art Indus ■ Australian &
New Zealand Association ■ Ayushi ■ Colin Rogers ■ Deepak Diwan ■ Deirdre Corrigan
Delhi Achiever's Round Table 130 ■ Delhi Kalyan Samiti ■ Delhi Metro ■ Delhi Network
Development Corporation Ireland ■ Dr Indira Anand ■ Dr. Karan Singh ■ Estelle & Rajiv
Desai ■ Faringidon Community College ■ Ford Foundation ■ Fr Tony ■ GAIL (India) Ltd
Gujrat Ambuja Cements ■ Gupta Brothers ■ Hongkong & Shanghai Banking Corporation
Indeera & Ramesh D Chand ■ India Habitat Centre ■ Indo Asian Fusegea Ltd. ■ Interarch
Building Products Pvt. Ltd ■ IPAN ■ Ipswich and Norwich Co-operative Society ■ ITC Ltd
Juhi ■ Karam Veer Chhabra ■ Landsforeningen Autisme ■ Lathika Khaneja ■ Lion's
Club of Stanmore ■ Lioness Club ■ Mavis Rajpal ■ Multani Pharmaceuticals Pvt Ltd
Munish Verma & Associates ■ Naresh Kapuria ■ National Cooperative Union of India
Nera Anand ■ Nestle India Ltd ■ Oil & Natural Gas Corporation Ltd ■ Om Bir
P C Kothari ■ P M Kondaiah ■ Pasco Automobiles ■ Pepsi Foods Ltd ■ Perfetti Van
Melle India Pvt Ltd ■ Pradeep Agarwal ■ Pritha Mukherji ■ Puja & Manan Goenka
Rajesh Gupta ■ Ratan Lal Barua ■ Ratnagiri Tiles ■ Ravindra Singh ■ Rev Wesley &
Natalie Carr ■ Rotary Club Chanakya puri ■ Rotary Club Southend ■ Rotary International
Ruia Foundation ■ Rukmani Budhe ■ Sabyasachi Sen ■ Sahara Means Support ■ Sarita
& Vineet Seth ■ Service Masters ■ Shikha Singh ■ Shilpa Gupta ■ Sneh Singh ■ Spectra
Visual world ■ Sudhir Pillai ■ Sukhwinder Kaur ■ Suman Vashista ■ Sunfeast, ITC Ltd
S K Das ■ Supriya Juneja ■ Surinder Kanwar Foundation ■ The Haberdashers' Aske's Boys'
School ■ The Lotus Trust ■ The Search House ■ The Tata Iron & Steel Company Ltd
Vinita & Arun Singh ■ Vipin Puri ■ VLCC Healthcare Ltd ■ Wellspring Universal*

and...

*... We were able to realize this dream only with the help of all the people with autism
and their families who let us be a part of their world... they were our best teachers...
the amazing staff of AFA who held up their cheery dispositions and amazing energy
through easy times and tough, and our wonderful volunteers many of whom continued
to help us from afar even after they had moved on.*

*W*e take this opportunity to thank the members of the Governing Body of Action For Autism, especially Anand, Ashwini, Deepak and Merry, for putting their faith in me to carry forward our dream project: The National Centre for Autism.

This enormous project was completed with the inputs of various members of AFA and the wider autism community who have helped us in many ways: big and small.

Very special thanks are due to SK (Architect SK Das), for understanding the needs of our children and conceptualising the centre.

A big thank you to our executing architect, Sanjeev Wasan, our contractor Prabodh Gupta, Raunaq International, and of course Rajesh Sabharwal for his very valuable inputs during construction.

We will always be grateful to all of you for giving your dedicated time and energy but more importantly for understanding this cause and bearing with us through all our differences of opinions and lengthy discussions.

*Reeta Sabharwal
Trustee,
Action for Autism*