

Message from the Director

I am presenting the annual report and audited statements of accounts of the All India Institute of Speech and Hearing for the year 2020-21. This is the 56th annual report of the Institute.

Like other organizations and people across the country and world, COVID-19 pandemic made the year 2020-21 extraordinary and challenging for the Institute. However, we responded swiftly and effectively in dealing with the situation. We suspended all the face-to-face engagements and harnessed online platforms to perform our activities. A Covid-19 Day Care Centre was set up in the campus to provide emergency support for corona positive cases among the staff and students. An Institutional committee was constituted to formulate standard operating procedures in adherence to the Government guidelines from time to time. The Committee carefully monitored and took proper steps, enabling other staff members to focus on delivering their assigned job responsibilities. It was a matter of gratification that we could get all our staff and students vaccinated against coronavirus in the early days of vaccine availability in the country. I congratulate our ENT Department in taking a lead role in the vaccination drive at the Institute.

The Executive Council of the Institute met after four years gap on 22nd July 2020 in virtual mode. Dr. Harsh Vardhan, Hon'ble Minister of Health and Family Welfare, Govt. of India, chaired the meeting, which deliberated various policy matters related to the Institute. The Standing Finance Committee also met during the reporting year under the chairpersonship of Mrs. Vandana Gurnani, I.A.S., Additional Secretary (Health), Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Govt. of India on 14th December 2020 in virtual mode.

The Institute secured a membership in the prestigious World Health Forum, an organ of the World Health Organization, in recognition of its contribution to the promotion of the World Hearing Day 2021 through various programmes and activities over a span of one month.

We could shift quickly to electronic mode during the lockdown period and deliver all our academic programmes online without any time delay. Also, the students were extended with emotional and mental health support, especially for those who continued to live on campus. As in the previous year, we offered 18 long-term academic programmes on communication disorders and allied fields, and 257 students were admitted. Unlike previous years, in 2020-21, National Level Entrance Examinations were conducted in online mode in nine centres across the country to admit the students.

Even with the pandemic restrictions, the Institute faculty, research staff, and students managed to publish 97 articles in reputed scientific journals, 86 papers in in-house journals, and 16 books/ book chapters. Also, 19 scientific papers were presented in seminars and conferences. In addition to the Govt. of India research funding agencies like the Department of Science and Technology, we successfully got an international research fund from the United Nation's Global Partnership for Assistive Technology during the reporting year.

The clinical assessment and rehabilitation of communication disorders were provided in both physical and virtual mode. Seventeen WhatsApp groups were formed to ensure hurdle-free access to our clinical services during the pandemic. We received a lot of appreciation and positive feedback from our clinical clients for the same. Totally, 13,432 clients were registered newly for availing clinical services during the reporting year.

Our ambition to reach out and serve the people with communication disorders in the country was further strengthened with the establishment of seven more Outreach Service Centres (OSC) across the country. Of these, one OSC was inaugurated at the Kodagu Institute of Medical Sciences, Madikeri by Shri. V. Somanna, Hon'ble Housing Minister, Govt. of Karnataka on 3rd October 2020 and Dr. Harsh Vardhan, Hon'ble Minister of Health and Family Welfare, Govt. of India, inaugurated six OSCs on 3rd March 2021 in virtual mode. In addition to the services provided at the

OSCs, the Institute continued to provide school screening, industrial screening, and elderly screening. I am proud to report that we organized 70 communication disorder screening camps and assessed more than five thousand people for communication disorders during the reporting year. The camps include the ones conducted at Gujarat in commemoration of the historic Dandi March.

We broadened our public education activities by organizing various programmes and activities over several media and platforms, reaching millions of people across the country and world. The World Hearing Day celebrations of the Institute attracted international attention consecutively for the second time in 2021. Under AIISH AISIRI, a radio programme initiated in collaboration with the All India Radio for creating public awareness on communication disorders, the experts of the Institute delivered 23 talks in 2020-21. In addition, several awareness programmes were conducted through other radio and television channels, including Doordarshan. We enhanced our social media activities by creating accounts on Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn, and YouTube, and improved our social media reach and engagements considerably. The faculty and staff made hundreds of live and animated videos during the lockdown period and disseminated them over social media platforms. Our routine public education activities like Monthly Public Lectures, sensitization programmes, publication of newspaper and magazine articles etc. were also continued during the reporting year.

The new Centre of Excellence building with a functional area of 1,22,200 sq. ft. is getting ready to be opened in 2022. The civil work at the new Varuna campus, construction of therapy park, and up-gradation of IT infrastructure are progressing. The Institute issued a Letter of Indent for Project Management Consultancy to M/s. National Projects Construction Corporation Ltd., for setting-up of infrastructure required for establishing an AIISH-like institute at Kanpur, U.P. Also, land acquisition is in progress to develop another AIISH-like institute at Agarthala, Tripura.

Despite the challenges posed by the pandemic, the Institute managed to perform above expectations in 2020-21, as demonstrated by this report, and I am grateful to

our parent Ministry, Executive Council, Academic and Financial Sub-committees for supporting us in all our endeavors. I must also acknowledge that nothing would have been achieved without the dedication and commitment of the staff and students of the Institute. Many thanks to them all.

Even at the time of writing this report, the pandemic is continuing, and uncertainty prevails all over the world. I hope we will soon overcome all the challenges posed by the virus and have a happy future ahead.

Dr. M. Pushpavathi, Director