

FEBRUARY 2025

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FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK



Greetings to all!

After our recent AGM in Kuala Lumpur, there is so much ahead of us. We are excited to continue working on our initiatives, with regular Medical Committee meetings as part of our commitment to making progress on all fronts.

The first of our virtual Medical Committee Meeting of the year was organized on 21st of February from 1:00 P.M India time. 15 countries participated in this meeting which was chaired by Dr. Bhavani Sriram, Chair of the APDSF Medical Committee and moderated by our advisor, Mr. Paul Zanon. The meeting brought out the medical requirements of our self-advocates and each country was able to provide valuable inputs which will enable the committee to come out with concrete steps to support our self-advocates. More such meetings are in the offing to create a healthy interaction among members.

The plans for WSDS are in full swing, and we hope to see APDSF celebrations take center stage across the region, bringing our community together in even more meaningful ways. We are already looking ahead to next year's event at any one of the UN offices in the region! It's all part of the journey as we pursue our shared vision of inclusion for people with Down syndrome.

As a part of our plans to keep connected and help our self-advocates get fitter and healthier, there is a plan to have the APDSF Games in the beginning of 2026. We are in the process of finalizing details and will revert with a plan by mid-year.

Let's join forces, embrace new ideas, and continue working towards greater inclusion. Here's to a year of growth and positive change!

N. Ramachandran

President

APDSF

AUSTRALIA

Empowering Our Community in 2024

In 2024, the voices and rights of people with Down syndrome continued to be at the heart of our work. We empowered people to build confidence, leadership, knowledge and self-advocacy through both new and ongoing programs.

One great example is the Sherry Hogan Scholarship, which supported five people with Down syndrome to become leaders at the World Down Syndrome Congress in July. Watch the video below to hear from the scholarship recipients and learn more about the program's impact.

[Sherry Hogan Video link](#)



Other ways we empower our community

- [Health Ambassadors](#)
- [Down Syndrome Advisory Network](#)
- [Right to Work](#)
- [Pathways to Independence Project](#)
- [Educational Resource Hub](#)
- [Learn and Lead Group](#)
- [Representation On Our Board](#)
- [Attending CoSP 17 in New York](#)

For Down Syndrome Awareness Month in October, we launched the "**Down Syndrome: Let's Set the Record Straight**" video, where people with Down syndrome and their families shared their stories to challenge misconceptions and empower our community.

[Watch the video](#)





BHUTAN

Ability Bhutan Society's Initiative and Advocacy in Bhutan

World Down Syndrome Day (WDSO) is celebrated globally on March 21st each year, aiming to raise awareness about Down syndrome and promote inclusivity. In Bhutan, the observance of WDSO has been growing over the years, with various events and activities organized by Government and NGOs, including individuals with Down syndrome, and their families. In 2024 Ability Bhutan Society (ABS) joined rest of the world in observing World Down Syndrome Day with the theme "End the Stereotypes", which aims to increase public awareness of the difficulties and the challenges that individual with Down Syndrome encounter as a result of misconceptions and discrimination.

In 2024 the program included was importance of observance of Down syndrome day, sharing of experience by the parent of the child with Down syndrome and interactive game session.

ABS has been actively doing **Awareness campaigns** in Schools, communities, and social organizations to educate the public about Down syndrome and promote acceptance, raise awareness about Down syndrome within communities to foster understanding, reduce stigma, and encourage inclusive attitudes. **ABS also** advocates for the rights of individuals with Down syndrome, including access to education and employment. It also works on policies that promote social inclusion and accessibility.

Government and NGOs like ABS are conducting training and workshops to discuss the rights of people with Down syndrome, their needs, and the importance of creating a more inclusive society.

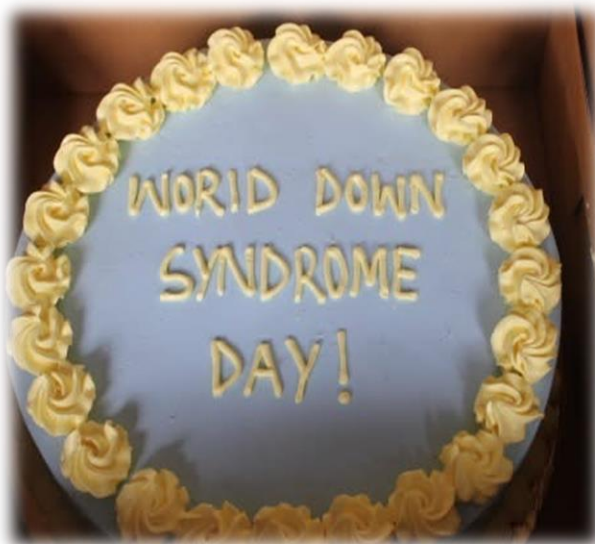


Fig:1:1 Cake to Mark the day
parents



Fig:1.2 Cake cutting by Children and



Fig.1.3 & fig.1.4 Wearing different pair of socks to create community awareness



Fig.1.5 Parent & children having fun activity



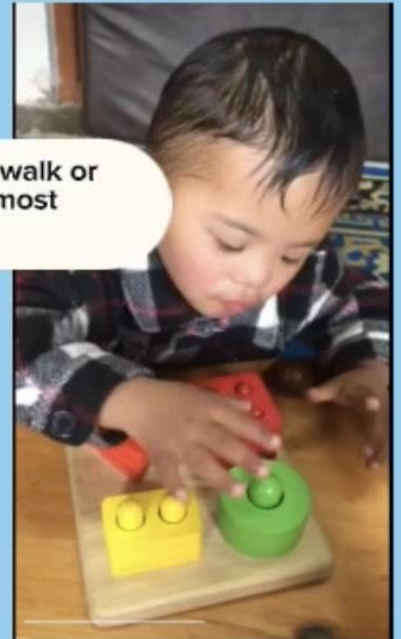
Fig.1.6 Children having fun with balloons game

Lhagyal Wangchuk's story



1) I am Lhagyal Wangchuk and I am 4 years old.

2) When I first joined ABS, I was unable to walk or eat independently, marking one of the most challenging phases of my life.



3) Now, I'm thrilled to say that I can walk and eat on my own!



4) Not only that, but I'm also excited to share that I can now solve puzzles too!

I'm ready to brighten your day with my big smile!



CHINA

2025.1.16 We had a supper party in the field and part of us discuss the plan for celebrating the 21th. March, it's first time for us talk about the plan equally. It's the result of self advocacy.

As a pioneer of self advocacy, Mr. Tang Yi Feng became the ambassador for China, we believe he will lead us in the future.

QiQi, visited the nursing home with big smile, this inspired us to establish an art troupe of UFD in near future. Not only support the people with DS but also develop their ability to bring love to the elders.



Our new Ambassador for China

We are delighted to welcome Ambassador Tang Yi Feng, who will represent China.

Tang Yi Feng (known as Jerry) is a self-advocate with Up For Down's China.

Jerry was chosen to represent the organisation and people with Down syndrome in China on our committee of [Ambassadors](#).

Jerry joins 15 other self-advocates who have Down syndrome on the committee.



INDIA

India's Contribution – Down Syndrome Federation of India

The Down Syndrome Federation of India (DSFI) had an active and impactful presence at the Asia Pacific Down Syndrome Federation (APDSF) Annual General Meeting (AGM) held in Kuala Lumpur. Dr. Surekha Ramachandran, representing DSFI, emphasized the importance of empowerment—not only for self-advocates but also for parents. She highlighted how strengthening families plays a crucial role in fostering an inclusive and supportive environment for individuals with Down syndrome.



Purple Jallos and DSFI's Special Camp

In January, DSFI organized a dedicated camp for Persons with Down syndrome in Pune, alongside the larger Purple Jallos event, which focused on multiple disabilities. This initiative was made possible through collaboration with Tickle Your Art (the organizers of Purple Jallos) and Pune Humsafar. Doctors and therapists engaged in one-on-one sessions with self-advocates, offering valuable medical and therapeutic guidance to support their development and well-being.



Awareness Program at Sri Balaji Dental College and Hospital, Chennai

An awareness session at Sri Balaji Dental College and Hospital in Chennai saw an impressive participation from self-advocates, who showcased their talents through performances. Dr. Surekha Ramachandran addressed the audience on Down syndrome and its impact, while a parent shared insights on the expectations from medical professionals. The event concluded on a positive note, with the institution announcing free therapy services for Persons with Down syndrome—a significant step towards accessible healthcare for the community.



Support for Parents and Self-advocates

DSFI and Dr. Surekha Ramachandran have supported various families through their difficult times. From surgery to providing medicines and any other essential items, DSFI has been seeking donors to support self-advocates with Down syndrome and many have benefitted from these campaigns.



Harvest Festival Celebrations Across India

Celebrations for the harvest festival were held across the country, from Punjab to Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh, embracing the cultural diversity of India while promoting inclusion and community engagement.





Down Syndrome National Games 2025

The 3rd Down Syndrome National Games (DSNG) 2025, held in Kochi on February 8th and 9th, celebrated athleticism, inclusion, and sportsmanship, with over 150 participants from across the country. The event began with a heartwarming performance by a local special school band and a precision drill by self-advocates, setting an inspiring tone. Kochi's Mayor, Shri Anil Kumar, officially opened the games.

Organized by the Down Syndrome Federation of India (DSFI), Down Syndrome Trust Kerala, and Special Olympics Bharat Kerala, the event highlighted unity and camaraderie. Families, coaches, and participants cheered together, creating lasting memories.

A musical night on February 8th provided fun and relaxation for all. On February 9th, Dr. Surekha Ramachandran, DSFI President, presented medals to all participants, honouring their dedication and effort. The 3rd DSNG 2025 will be remembered for its spirit of togetherness and unforgettable moments.





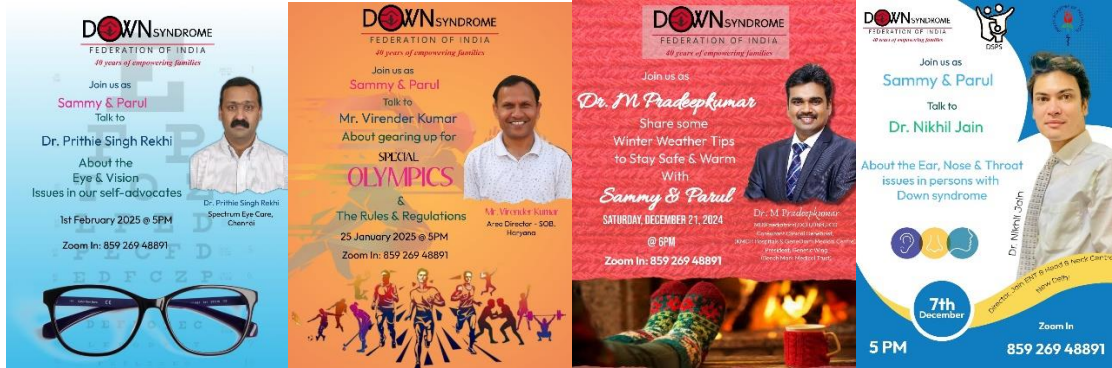
Humanitarian Award for Dr. Surekha Ramachandran, President, DSFI

On February 17, 2025, Dr. Surekha Ramachandran, President of the Down Syndrome Federation of India, received the prestigious Humanitarian Award at the Sheraton Grand in Chennai. Honored for her groundbreaking work in destigmatizing genetic disorders, Dr. Ramachandran has dedicated her life to advocating for the rights and inclusion of individuals with Down syndrome. The ceremony, attended by notable figures like actress Gautami, actor Kalidas Jayaram, and newscaster Palki Sharma, celebrated social change and empowerment. Dr. Ramachandran's leadership has made significant strides in education, healthcare, and inclusion, continuing to inspire and empower families across India and beyond.



Continuous Learning and Future Initiatives

DSFI continued its series of Zoom sessions featuring specialists, ensuring ongoing education and support for families and individuals with Down syndrome. As we move forward, we eagerly anticipate grand celebrations for World Down Syndrome Day, with the goal of creating a larger impact and raising greater awareness about Down syndrome in India and beyond.



DOWN SYNDROME
 FEDERATION OF INDIA
48 years of empowering families

Join us as
Sammy & Parul
 Talk to
Dr. Prithvi Singh Rekhi
 About the
 Eye & Vision
 Issues in our self-advocates
 1st February 2025 @ 5PM
 Zoom In: 859 269 48891

DOWN SYNDROME
 FEDERATION OF INDIA
48 years of empowering families

Join us as
Sammy & Parul
 Talk to
Mr. Virender Kumar
 About gearing up for
SPECIAL OLYMPICS
 &
 The Rules & Regulations
 25 January 2025 @ 5PM
 Zoom In: 859 269 48891

DOWN SYNDROME
 FEDERATION OF INDIA
48 years of empowering families

Join us as
Dr. M. Pradeep Kumar
 Share some
 Winter Weather Tips
 to Stay Safe & Warm
 With
Sammy & Parul
 SATURDAY, DECEMBER 21, 2024
 @ 5PM
 Zoom In: 859 269 48891

DOWN SYNDROME
 FEDERATION OF INDIA
48 years of empowering families

Join us as
Sammy & Parul
 Talk to
Dr. Nikhil Jain
 About the Ear, Nose & Throat
 issues in persons with
 Down syndrome
 7th
 December
 5 PM
 Zoom In
 859 269 48891

Through these initiatives, DSFI remains committed to advocacy, awareness, and empowerment, striving to build a more inclusive society for individuals with Down syndrome.

INDONESIA

POTADS (Association of Parents of Children with Down Syndrome) is a nonprofit organization founded by three mothers of individuals with Down syndrome. With a vision to become the most comprehensive center for information and consultation on Down syndrome in Indonesia, POTADS was established on July 28, 2003. Headquartered in Jakarta, POTADS now has branches in 10 provinces across Indonesia and a membership of approximately 3,000 parents. Our goal is to provide guidance, empowerment, and raise public awareness of the incredible potential of individuals with Down syndrome.

As a family-based organization, we understand that receiving a Down syndrome diagnosis for a child can be a challenging moment. Therefore, we offer dedicated support for new parents through various programs, such as welcoming new parents, workshops, seminars, webinars, and regular meetings. These programs aim to provide information on parenting, education, and the development of the child's potential. We want to ensure that parents feel supported and have a community to help them on this journey.



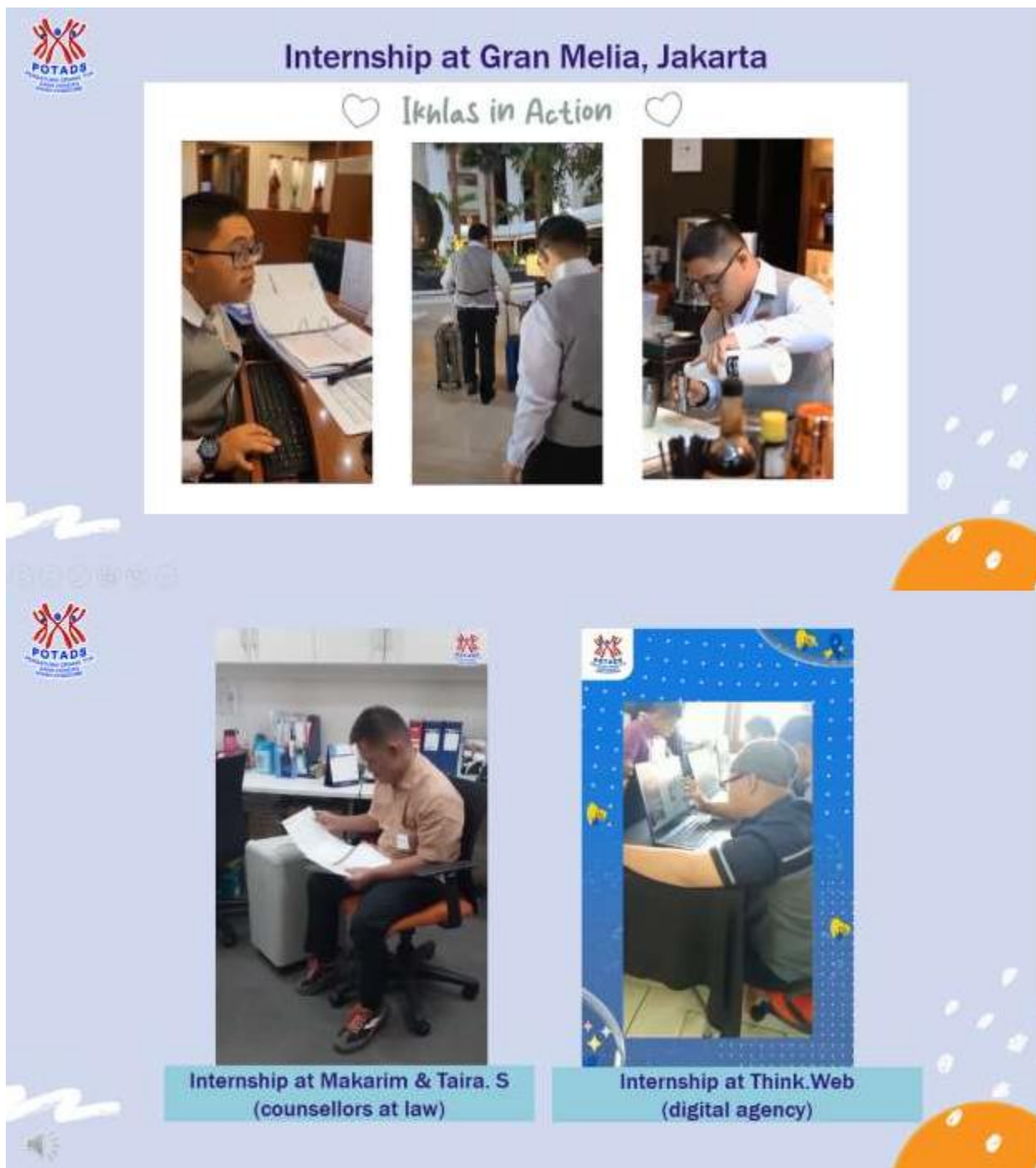



One of POTADS' key initiatives is the establishment of Rumah Ceria Down Syndrome, an activity center for individuals with Down syndrome. At this center, they can participate in various classes in sports, arts, and skills development, allowing them to hone their talents and interests.






POTADS also runs several empowerment programs, including training and internships in various professional fields. One of our notable successes is the professional involvement of individuals with Down syndrome as baristas at the coffee shop Kopi Kamu and workers at Enpos Restaurant.



These programs not only provide hands-on training but also create opportunities for them to work professionally. The participation of baristas with Down syndrome at Kopi Kamu has received extensive coverage from various national and international media outlets, as it is the first initiative of its kind in Indonesia.





 **Internship at Gran Melia, Jakarta**

♡ Ikhlās in Action ♡

Internship at Makarim & Taira. S
(counsellors at law)

Internship at Think.Web
(digital agency)



In addition to empowerment, POTADS regularly conducts awareness campaigns to promote greater understanding and acceptance of individuals with Down syndrome. Some of the widely covered activities include serving as player escorts in national football league matches and camping events involving individuals with Down syndrome and public figures. Both activities garnered significant attention and high appreciation from the public.

Player Escourts



CAMPING



CAMPING



CAMPING



Through these various activities, POTADS hopes to continue advocating for the potential and rights of individuals with Down syndrome, creating a more inclusive world, and providing more opportunities for them to thrive.

JAPAN

In June 2024, we conducted an online discussion group focused on health equity for individuals with Down syndrome, with a goal to better understand their lived experiences and perspectives on accessing quality healthcare where they feel supported, heard, and respected.

Health equity is not only treating everyone fairly, but it means to ensure that everyone has access to the recourses and information that meets their specific needs. This is very important for individuals with disabilities, as they often encounter additional barriers and challenges in the healthcare system, such as high costs of care, the complexity of medical information, the logistics of transportation to the healthcare facilities, and so on.

Before the discussion, we asked the parents and guardians about their perspectives and experiences of health equity. Their perspectives gave a deeper understanding and insight into the areas that needed improvement and change.

During the discussion, we were able to listen to the participants share their personal stories about communication and attitudinal barriers they have faced in the healthcare system, and also the positive experiences they have had. It was truly eye opening and inspiring to hear the individuals be vulnerable and honest about their own experiences and well-formed opinions. It also made me realize the importance of creating space and time to actively listen to those individuals so they can express their thoughts and experiences, because that is the first step towards building a more equitable society and healthcare system that respects and listens to their voices.

The photo below was captured during the discussion.



MONGOLIA

1. We are proud to introduce Munkh-Erdene Batsukh, a talented 16-year-old athlete from Mongolia. Munkh-Erdene excels in various sports, including fitness, bocce, dance, table tennis, and wall climbing. He has earned gold medals in bocce, basketball, table tennis, and more, showcasing his exceptional athletic abilities. this year, Munkh-Erdene will make history as the first Special Olympics dancer from Mongolia to compete in the Winter Special Olympics in Turin, Italy, from March 8 to 15, 2025. He will represent Mongolia in the dance competition, and we couldn't be prouder of his dedication, achievements, and the trail he is paving for future athletes.



2. We are excited to share the story of Nomiun Ganbold, a 32-year-old woman who has demonstrated remarkable dedication and determination. In 2015, she began working part-time at Shangri-La Ulaanbaatar during its grand opening, and since 2018, she has been a full-time staff member at the restaurant. We are incredibly proud of Namuunaa for becoming the first individual with Down syndrome to be a full-time employee at a globally recognized company for nearly 10 years. Her continued success and sustainability in the workplace are truly inspiring.



MYANMAR



Myanmar Down Syndrome Association(MDSA) implements a comprehensive training programs to foster independent living for people with Down syndrome (PWDS).



Key activities include:

- Skill-building: Regular Saturday Development Trainings enhance skills through dance, art, physical exercises, and yoga.
- Family support: Programs such as Gender Awareness and Domestic Violence Awareness Sessions for Guardians promote inclusivity. Art & Clay Therapies support mental well-being.
- Community engagement: Volunteering Workshops, Parental Awareness Workshops, and Community Engagement Trips foster social interaction and well-being.
- Vocational development: The "Yes, We Can" team creates job opportunities by offering table service, catering, and handmade goods.
- MDSA strives to create a society where every person with Down syndrome has the right to a fulfilling and inclusive life.

PAKISTAN

Hussain Jarwar, CEO of Indus Consortium, visited the PDSA Rehabilitation Center in Gulistan-e-Johar, Karachi, where he was briefed by Abid Lashari, CEO of Pakistan Down Syndrome Association (PDSA), on the center's free services for children with intellectual disabilities, including physiotherapy, speech therapy, and more. Supported by the Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (DEPD), Government of Sindh, PDSA offers vital rehabilitation in Karachi and rural Sindh. Jarwar praised PDSA's efforts and emphasized the importance of support from international organizations and philanthropists. He assured continued support and potential technical assistance to further strengthen PDSA's initiatives.



Sameena Nazir, Executive Director of PODA Pakistan, visited the PDSA Rehabilitation Center in Gulistan-e-Johar, Karachi, where she was welcomed by Abid Lashari, President of PDSA Pakistan. She was briefed on the center's ongoing rehabilitation services for children with disabilities, in collaboration with the Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (DEPD), Government of Sindh. Impressed by the center's work, Nazir expressed interest in establishing a similar unit in Chakwal, Punjab. She also proposed a collaboration with PDSA to expand rehabilitation services to Punjab. In response, Mr. Lashari offered technical support to help launch the initiative in Chakwal.





PDSA Pakistan participated in the 1st Agro Livestock and Handicrafts Expo 2025 in Matiari, showcasing its rehabilitation services for persons with disabilities. The event, attended by dignitaries including Deputy Commissioner Matiari, Muhammad Yousif Shaikh, highlighted local growers and livestock breeders. PDSA and NDF Pakistan set up a stall to promote disability certificates, CNICs, and essential therapies like physiotherapy and speech therapy. Mr. Abid Lashari, CEO of PDSA Pakistan, was honored with an honorary shield for his contributions to rehabilitating children with intellectual disabilities in Sindh.



Mr. Liaqat Ali, Chairman of Duaba Foundation, visited the DEPD-PDSA Rehabilitation Center in Gulshan-e-Hadeed, Karachi, to observe the free rehabilitation services for children with intellectual

disabilities, particularly Down Syndrome. He emphasized the need to expand such facilities across Pakistan, citing the country's 9.64% disability ratio. He also stressed preventive measures to reduce disabilities. Mr. Jamshed Fareed praised PDSA and NDF's efforts, while Hussain Jarwar, CEO of Indus Consortium, expressed support for their impactful initiatives. The visit highlighted the importance of accessible rehabilitation services nationwide.



SRI LANKA

Address one of the main issues “AGED PEOPLE WITH DOWN SYNDROME”

New projects to address the Aged People with Down Syndrome. Our parents in Sri Lanka were asking us to give a solution for their issue. They are worried about their aged children with Down Syndrome.

The following projects were some solutions for the issue.

1. Motivating new Entrepreneurs to start Homes for the aged, Elderly care homes and to accommodate aged people with Down Syndrome.

We need to educate and continuously train the care takers or the workers in the Homes. There are 349 registered homes for the aged scattered all over Sri Lanka. Most of them are with us. It's a new challenge as it is a never-ending project.

The following are photos of the first Home.



2. Educating the siblings of people with Down Syndrome.

The second strategy is to guide the siblings of the child with Down Syndrome. The Scholarship receiver has to come to an agreement that she or he will be looking after the sibling with Down syndrome. Already two have been selected. the donor is a UK women association to fund for two girls for three years .2026 January the two girls received the funds for the first year.

We are in the process of expanding this program.



3. We have written to the Government to increase the monthly allowance given to disabled children in the country.

4. The most positive news is that the new government has appointed a Disabled person from the national list to represent the parliament. This is news for the whole world.

5. We have organized a get together to award a participation certificate for the Art works contributed by children with DS to APDSF held in Malaysia. (5th 8th December 2024)





TAIWAN

Corporate Volunteering: A Bridge of Love and Support

Each year, TDSF partners with over 40 companies, including Coca-Cola, Microsoft, 7-Eleven, Standard Chartered Bank, and UBS Group, to promote corporate volunteering. These volunteers enrich TDSF's services, spreading love and support while fostering inclusion.

Corporate volunteer participation not only demonstrates social responsibility but also provides individuals with Down syndrome opportunities to feel valued by society. These activities challenge stereotypes and nurture understanding. One volunteer shared, "Interacting with individuals with Down syndrome, I was deeply moved by their sincerity and effort. It was an inspiring journey."

TDSF believes corporate volunteers bring warmth to individuals with Down syndrome while instilling gratitude and purpose in employees. Together, businesses and TDSF are building a more inclusive and compassionate society.



Faith and Cultural Integration: A Beautiful Expression of Diversity

Temples and religious beliefs are a cornerstone of Taiwan's culture, promoting community unity and preserving traditional values. Through temple rituals and celebrations, people from all walks of life connect and build a harmonious and respectful social atmosphere.

The integration of religion and disabilities highlights the strength of societal inclusion. By participating in folk traditions and local events, individuals with Down syndrome and other disabilities enrich their social experiences while enhancing their adaptability and self-confidence. This year, one of Taiwan's most renowned temples marked its 330th anniversary by inviting TDSF to join its faith-based activities. These participants not only experienced the rich cultural heritage but also found opportunities to integrate into the community, embodying the spirit of diversity and inclusion.

This collaboration is more than a celebration of faith—it's a practice of love and acceptance. With the support of all sectors, such initiatives showcase the potential of individuals with Down syndrome, fostering a more inclusive and harmonious society.

