



A MESSAGE FROM THE IASE PRESIDENT

Dr. Renáta Tichá



As we are beginning 2023, there are many places in the world where children, youth, and adults with disabilities and their families are experiencing heightened hardship, due to war (Ukraine), natural disasters

(Turkey and Syria), or human rights violations (Iran). These places and situations in which people with disabilities and their family members are living and working under additional stress physically, emotionally, mentally, and economically, need our special attention.

The mission of IASE has always been to provide support as well as a space for an exchange of ideas and expertise at the grassroots level, in schools, vocational programs, orphanages, etc. One of the hallmarks of IASE is the Volunteer Service Projects (VSPs) currently in seven countries, Guatemala, Colombia, India, Malawi, Tanzania, Uganda, and Vietnam (<https://iase.org/service-projects>). The sites in each country are funded by IASE, according to their specific needs, including for training of teachers or parents, and purchasing curricula or assessment kits. As important is a need for volunteers at each of these international projects for the length of time you want to and can spend there. These volunteering opportunities have not only benefited children and youth with disabilities in these countries but have also enriched the careers and lives of each volunteer.

We are in the process of reconnecting with IASE National Chairs. An IASE National Chair is an IASE member in each country who is the main point of

contact for IASE to assist with membership and dissemination of IASE opportunities and events. We encourage you to become involved in IASE as a National Chair, as a volunteer, a contributor to the IASE newsletter *Annuntiatius* or to the *Journal of IASE (JIASE)*, a participant in IASE events, and in general an ambassador for the improvement of education and life in the community of children, youth, and adults with disabilities.

We are beginning to plan the 18th Biennial IASE conference at the University of West Bohemia in Pilsen, Czech Republic (Plzeň in the Czech language) on June 27-July 1, 2024. The conference theme will be *Supporting Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities across the Lifespan*. With this theme, we would like to draw attention to the need for the inclusion of individuals with disabilities and those who support them from early childhood to adulthood. Watch out for updates for proposal submissions on the website and in the upcoming newsletters.

On behalf of IASE, let us work together to support the education, development, and productive life in the community for children, youth, and adults with disabilities worldwide, especially in countries affected by additional hardships.

Enjoy this issue of *Annuntiatius* and stay updated with upcoming IASE happenings at <https://iase.org/>.

With warm wishes to all corners of the world,
Renáta

Renáta Tichá, PhD, IASE President
University of Minnesota, USA

A JOURNEY OF ENDURING PARTNERSHIPS

Dr. Iris Drower

The Volunteer Service Project (VSP) of the International Association of Special Education (IASE) was created 17 years ago as an altruistic venture. Dr. Marg Csapo, IASE Founding Member, and Mary Gale Budzisz collectively developed the concept and with IASE Board approval the VSP was implemented in a variety of sites worldwide. The success of the project has been based on partnerships with local participants and agencies. In December of 2022, Mary Gale and I journeyed to our three present sites in India to witness and experience the progress in each one.

In preparation for our travel to VSP sites in India, Mary Gale contacted Sanjay Bhasin the owner and CEO of Culture Holidays located in New Delhi, and Rajesh Thomas the CEO of Globes Travel in Cochin. With their travel expertise, they arranged internal flights, local drivers, and lodging. The friendships that Mary Gale developed over a 20-year span of time have been instrumental for volunteers to access the VSP sites and share in the warm Indian hospitality. All financial costs are borne by the volunteers.



Our first full day was at our VSP site entitled SANKALP. The name is derived from the meaning of determination

and it truly proved to be that much more. Dr. Anupriya Chadha, Founder and the managing Trustee, a long-standing member of IASE and serving as the IASE National Chair of India, greeted us with open arms. (Photo to the right is a welcome ceremony and the one to the right show Dr.



Anu Chadha and her students). The philosophy of Sankalp relates to healthcare, poverty, unemployment, and/or human rights, and there is

no better place to start than with the “joy of learning.” Since its inception in 2006, SANKALP has evolved and transformed itself to respond to the changing needs of children and young adults from the disadvantaged and marginalized sectors. When a project site becomes sustainable, then another place will be developed. We witnessed first-hand a variety of interventions ranging from how teachers work with students, presentations by students, the display of student work, and the observation of a resource center. The inclusion of community members from the local environment was truly evident when visiting the small school settings. The young women in the skill training classes located in the urban slums were eager to show us their fashion designs which were absolutely lovely. We received a very warm reception everywhere.

(Below from left to right: Mary Gale is working with the young children on basic literacy skills; a student giving a presentation)





Our next VSP site visit was at SPJ Sadhana School located within Sophia College in Mumbai. After a flight and a taxi ride from the airport, we arrived at the school and were greeted by our IASE VSP point person, Teacher Tejal Kothari. A meeting with Principal Fionika Sanghvi and Administrator Sister Prabatha Pinto provided some updated background on the current activities of the school. We were gifted with lovely items made by the students. Tejal took us on a visit to the facility and classrooms. (Below is a classroom, a hospitality suite, and a wood shop class). This year IASE has provided funding for needed filing cabinets for the student office class, a music system to enhance their extensive music therapy classes, and also sports equipment. The use of sports and recreational items is very important at SPJ Sadhana as students really love the training and participation in Special Olympics.



(Above from top to bottom: students listened to some of our stories; young women displayed their fashion designs.)

While attending various SANKALP Centres and classrooms we were able to get a flavor of all of the components of this comprehensive program. The classes provide basic literacy skills for children from 6-11 years of age. Vocational training skills are taught to girls from 11-14 years of age. And the older young women receive sewing skills to be able to make their own clothes and sell items to support themselves. (Below are small samples of thank-you gifts bestowed upon us from the children).





Our final VSP site visit was at Don Bosco in Cochin. We arrived at the airport late in the evening and were greeted by a driver and travel agent Rajesh Thomas whom Mary Gale has known for 20+ years. The new Cochin International Airport is nearly a one-hour drive from the city center so having a dependable driver is truly a positive perk of this travel.

Father Thomas (pictured above) welcomed us warmly and provided us with lodging for our stay. We were served home-cooked meals that were amazing...vegetarian and so tasty! While dining with the Fathers and Brothers, you could hear the older boys practicing singing skills for an upcoming contest.

The main campus lodges older young men. Throughout the years IASE has provided shower and bathroom construction items, recreational supplies, and materials for the new Counseling Center library at this location. Father Thomas took us on visits to other centers for girls, young women, and younger boys. We did not need to visit any adventure park because just driving in this area is a "true adventure." The challenge of driving becomes a navigational feat. Indian road rules appear to operate within the domain of karma where you do your best and stay out of the way of cows and motorbikes. Basically driving starts on the left, unless that lane is occupied. In that case, you go to the right, unless that is also occupied. Then you proceed by occupying the next available gap. It appears to be like a chess game and an overall adventure.

We enjoyed the overview and teachable moments at our first visit with Father Abi at his temporary shelter home for run-away boys which opened in 2020. He reviewed the intake process, provided us with a brief tour and then we taught the boys our standard USA song with movements. Yes, "Head, Shoulders, Knees and Toes" made everyone sing and move (The next column from top to bottom highlights our group participants).



Our next stop was a local sweet shop (photo to the left) to purchase treats for the

girl's homes. The new homes for the girls are beautiful compared to what they had 15 years ago. We were greeted by big smiles from the younger girls (see photo to the right) who shared some of their local songs with us. Next, we drove to the



new house which lodges the older girls. They performed some hatha yoga with a twist of martial arts which is a part of their school activity program (see photo below). Then they demonstrated some of their dances and songs for us. Finally we had a small group discussion on the importance of



ASSOCIATION FOR SHARED LEARNING ELA

Sofia, Bulgaria

Iva Boneva, PhD, CEO



The Association for Shared Learning ELA is a Bulgarian registered public benefit organization that does not make a profit. The association is based in Sofia and has been working with children and young people for more than 20 years, helping them to find their way in life and/or to overcome a difficult stage they are going through. We also work with schools, parents, and teachers to consciously support children in building their social and emotional skills.

As the Centre for Inclusive Education (2007-2019) we have affirmed the inclusive environment as a value and a shared responsibility in Bulgarian schools. As Save the Children UK - Bulgaria Program (1997 - 2006) we sought alternatives to the institutional care of children and urged the government to take action to close so-called “care homes for children” and “auxiliary schools”.

We started as a team of two, grew to become twenty employees and we are now just three people again. We were funded by various EU funds, the Danish Velux Foundation, the OAK Foundation, America for Bulgaria Foundation, and private donations of many supporters and friends.

Today we continue to adapt to the needs of children and focus our work on three areas.

- We are establishing a Green Educational Centre in the village of Styrigel, where we continue to encourage children in their

menstrual health education and care. We shared some “Days for Girls” packets prepared and donated by Karen Nave, an IASE member, and her local church group from Harve, Montana, USA. We reviewed the steps needed to make the packets so that they could sew their own. The girls were excited about our visit and they bombarded us with more questions that we had to answer.

The final destination in a very full day was the smaller boys’ center. There were over 40 boys working on their homework when we arrived. On schedule, each boy retrieved his plate and prepared for dinner. This night was a special occasion because a local young boy was celebrating his birthday and he and his family were hosting the dinner for all that evening. A local custom of sharing with those less fortunate is a common practice. It is an appreciated teaching tool by all involved.



The people involved with our Indian VSP sites are appreciative of our

contributions to their sites. Yearly “wish lists” are submitted to the VSP Committee and then Board approved. Our long-term partnerships with VSP site personnel and travel agency connections within India made our visit enjoyable and productive.

On a personal note, being a volunteer provided me with the sense that my life is good, not because I have a lot of pleasure, but because life is meaningful. Participating in an altruistic venture helps me to strive for a higher purpose in life. And, yes, those teachable moments are always good, too! To find out more about VSP volunteering, please contact me at: dririsdoug@gmail.com

growth by implementing our "School Makes Sense" and "Exploring the World of Others" programs.

- We work with children from vulnerable groups and refugee children in our office in Sofia, where we provide them with educational support.
- We run outreach camps where children from different ethnic groups and nationalities learn about themselves and overcome their prejudices against others through play and working together.

We believe that every child should be accepted, valued, and deserves to be supported to grow up to be responsible to themselves, to others, and to the world around us. We know that education changes lives for the better and we are proud to be part of that change because the start of a child's journey should not determine how far they will go.



18th BIENNIAL CONFERENCE Pilsen, Czech Republic



SAVE THE DATE!

The 18th Biennial Conference will be held at the University of West Bohemia, Pilsen, Czech Republic

June 27 (optional site visits)

Conference begins on June 28-July 1, 2024

Mark your calendar!

Explore this amazing city by going to:

<https://www.visitpilsen.eu>



IASE MEMBER HIGHLIGHTS

Dr. Rachael González

Spring represents a new day, a joyful time with hopeful, excited energy



As we embrace the spring season, the membership committee invites you to join IASE to facilitate our work of international professional collaboration and advocacy for positive and lasting change in the lives of individuals with disabilities including those with gifts and talents.

IASE is a vibrant community of members from over 20 countries who are using their *VOICE* to advocate for the educational, civil, legal and community rights of individuals with disabilities so that they can be fully included in educational and community facilities and programs.

IASE Highlights

Conference – The 18th Biennial Conference will be held at the University of West Bohemia, Pilsen, Czech Republic. June 28-July 1, 2024.

Virtual Dialogues – participatory online sessions, designed for connection and peer-learning, where participants are invited to share their experiences on key themes.

IASE Newsletter – the Annuntiatius is published 4 times a year – spring, summer, fall and winter reporting on the different work members have participated in.

IASE Journal – The Journal of the International Association of Special Education is a peer reviewed journal published annually in the spring. Members are encouraged to submit articles on research and practical strategies.

Member Spotlights – individual members are recognized for their dedicated work with children, youth and families in their community.

Volunteer Service Project –members can volunteer in one of these seven sites (India, Malawi, Columbia, Guatemala, Vietnam, Uganda, Tanzania) to share their professional expertise with teachers, agencies and organizations.

IASE membership is a great way to share your experience, training and professional and personal interest with other members from different countries and models of educational delivery.

Join this excited team by going to the website <https://iase.org/membership>

Any questions please reach out to me Dr. Rachael González at IASEMembership@gmail.com

TREASURER'S REPORT

Dr. Iris Drower
as of February 8, 2023

Account	Amount
Checking	\$4,399.49
VSP/Giving	\$18,054.47
Marg Csapo Scholarship	\$7,505.02
Operational Savings	\$139,664.77
Total	\$169,623.75



Renew and Join IASE Today!

To join IASE, contact Rachael Gonzales, email: IASEMembership@gmail.com

Please print information clearly:

Surname: _____ First Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____

State / Province: _____ Postal Code: _____

Country: _____

E-mail: _____

Membership Dues:

Regular: \$US 50 _____ Regular/Sponsor: \$US 70 _____ Student Membership: \$US 20 _____

Developing Country: \$US 20 _____ Institution: \$US 70 _____

Name of person sponsored: _____ E-mail of person sponsored: _____

Address of person sponsored: _____

Donation to Marg Csapo Scholarship: \$US _____ Total Enclosed: \$US _____

Payment Information: _____ VISA _____ Master Card _____ Discover _____

Online Payment Authorized.net (Please follow link on the website @ www.iase.org)

Credit Card Number: _____ Exp. Date: _____

Name of Cardholder (print): _____ Date: _____

Billing Address: _____

Cheque (Payable to IASE, US funds)

Please send your membership form to:

IASE Treasurer

PO Box 2159

Mesa, AZ 85214

USA

E-mail: irisdoug@cox.net

IASE operates on a rolling membership year; you will be invited to renew your membership one year after joining. All other membership inquiries contact: iasemembership@gmail.com