

## **ADAPT MUMBAI : INTERIM REPORT, 2020**

### **An update on CII-2020 activities during the National Lockdown due to COVID-19**

The COVID 19 pandemic has transformed all our lives and brought in new learnings. The Nation went into a lockdown and travel and social gatherings were prohibited. Even before the news of the situation becoming grave reached us, long before the lock down was announced, Dr. Mithu Alur, *Founder Chairperson, ADAPT and Course Director, CII*, shut services and instructed staff to continue working from home. Emails, conference calls, zoom video calls and whatsapp calls became the 'new normal'

#### **Safety Measures Taken**

The safety of all the participants and staff residing at the Bandra Centre was Dr. Alur's priority. She asked for an emergency administration meeting and immediately put in measures to protect all at the Centre. Some of these were:

- No external personnel were to be allowed in. Our staff living on the premises (watchman, peon and CII helper) took on the duties of the watchman in eight-hour shifts.
- Sanitizers, masks, gloves and additional cleaning material was procured and provided to all. Sanitizers are kept at the watchman's station and used whenever anyone went down, supplies are delivered. They are also available in the kitchen, in the classroom, in the office, in the rooms.
- The kitchen, lounge areas, canteen, rooms, corridors are cleaned thoroughly every day.
- Rations are stocked. Meat, vegetables and fruit are being delivered as and when needed and cleaned with potassium permanganate.
- Self hygiene and cleanliness is being emphasized constantly.
- Since there are no cooks or cleaners, all the participants and staff at the Bandra centre have divided the responsibility of the chores and cooking among themselves and a rota is being followed with everyone contributing.

There is constant guidance and supervision by Dr. Alur. Mrs. Hooja and Mrs. Bose Verma follow up regularly. Leisure is not neglected. Board games, card games, music, films, yoga sessions are being organized. Technology has helped everyone remain connected. .

Our warriors in these trying times have been Babaji, Sujata Verma, Catherine Ameno, Leena Gomes, Bijoy Thapa, Atula Jamir, Tsewang Chozom, Anuj Sharma, Mrs. Thapa (Bijoy's wife), Mrs. Gomes (Leena's mother), Manoj (peon), Inder (watchman) and Amar (kitchen helper) who have worked tirelessly and ceaselessly, twenty four hours a day, right through these trying times. Gardening is a new activity that has been introduced. Leena has been in charge of the kitchen, ensuring that regular supplies are maintained, that menus are created and that all are well fed. Bijoy has taken control of the cleaning and has maintained the sanitization of the building. Everyone has come together as a family.

## A glimpse of life at ADAPT during the lockdown:

**Cooking:** All the participants and staff are divided into groups and cook according to a rota system, preparing breakfast, lunch, evening tea and dinner. The CII participants are very pro-active and take great initiative in preparing new dishes from their own countries. They enjoy cooking together and sharing the recipe with others. This has also lead to interesting healthy snacks with available ingredients and has been an enriching experience and learnings for all.



**Cleaning:** In the absence of cleaning personnel, the participants are taking the lead in cleaning with in house staff. They have supported ADAPT staff in maintaining good hygienic around the kitchen area, play- ground, gym, the lounge area and their own rooms. Groups have been created to clean on different days. This is viewed a workout, exercise or therapy session. Through all these activities they are learning to build strong connections with everyone around and of with nature. This activity has been carried out with great enthusiasm, enjoyment and zeal. As one of the participants has said, “ADAPT is our house and we can clean our house”.



**Yoga fitness time:** Yoga sessions have been an integral part of the CII curriculum and continued. The participants now carry this on themselves in their rooms for an hour every morning, following what they have learned during the course. They do regular yoga for one hour every morning. Anuj is available and willing to continue sessions.



## Gardening

The participants have decided to work in the garden as our gardeners are unable to come to the centre. One participant said that she had forgotten the touch of mother earth and it was a pleasure to work in the garden. It is a new experience for some as they step into the garden after 4 pm. They have removed grass, loosened the mud, watered the garden, planted new saplings, using spades and pickaxes. They have also cleaned the back yard. Mr. Inder Thapa's family and Catherine also join this group.

It has been hard labour and our garden is now clean and looks beautiful. These activities have helped keep boredom and home sickness at bay and created new learning about plants from the different countries.



**Working on projects:** Fortunately, the CII 2020 course lectures and visits had been completed before the lockdown. The course does not have a formal evaluation process; however, the CII participants develop a “*Context and Culture Specific Project*” under the guidance of Dr. Alur. As in the previous years, Dr Alur had guided and supervised the Action Plans of the participants, beginning with the identification of their objectives at three levels i.e. Individual level, Community level and Policy level.



Following precautions advised by the government and health professionals, meetings and traveling was stopped and Dr Alur guided and gave feedback to all the participants on video and conference calls from mid- March onwards. In addition, she emailed specific suggestions to each of them. This year, Dr Ragini Sen, Ph.D, who has joined ADAPT as Head, Policy and Research, also contributed to the feedback and suggestions.

The participants continued working on refining their projects in March and the first half of April.

Dr. Alur discussed the objectives of the course with the participants and they reported that all the objectives had been met.

They all appreciated the inputs and modified their projects based on the guidance from Dr. Alur and Dr. Sen. Following this, Babaji, Mrs. Varsha Hooja, Ms. Sujata Verma electronically guided and helped with the changes needed, in particular with the modules, time tables, pre & post questionnaires and sources and references. Babaji and Ms. Verma have been available round the clock for advice, motivation, solace and companionship.



**Leisure Time:** Apart from cooking, cleaning, gardening yoga, the participants are also engaging in leisure activities like playing games such as Ludo and Snake and Ladders, playing cards, table tennis, and badminton and even arm wrestling. After dinner, they also spend time in watching movies. They have been using the library to explore new books. We can see that they get along very well, helping, caring and supporting one another.

They are in touch with their families and are talking with them through social media. Wifi has been provided to them. Earlier there were apprehensions, fear and confusion as they were worried about returning to their respective countries. Initially some found it difficult to focus to their project due to their worries. However, they have now adjusted and are supporting one another.



## Returning home

Intense coordination between our team, the travel agent, the Consulates of the various countries, participants and their families has been an ongoing process since the lock down began. Domestic and International flights were suspended in stages and constant networking led to five of the participants being able to return just before the lockdown was imposed and travel suspended:

- Sripalee Bandaranayake from Sri Lanka on 18th March,
- Laila Parvin from Bangladesh on 19th March,
- Zangmo Dorji from Bhutan on 21st March
- Poonam Pradhan from Siliguri- (India) on 21st March 2020.

Laila and Zangmo were placed in quarantine for 14 days. The participants from Sripalee and Poona were checked by doctors and allowed to go home after a few hours.

Dilrukshi Lilani left India on 25<sup>th</sup> April 2020, on a special chartered flight by the Sri Lankan Government. This was after repeated requests to the Sri Lankan Consulate in Mumbai. She is at present in quarantine for 14 days.

The CII participants who have returned have worked on their project from their homes as have the Mumbai participants. There have been challenges such as quarantines, laptop and internet issues, which has delayed the completion of a few.

**FRRO formalities:** The Visas of the participants had been granted till mid- April 2020. Six of our participants (One from Sri Lanka three from Tajikistan and two from Mongolia) have had to re-apply for visa extension permits. This has been an extensive process with documents having to be re-submitted online. This has required inputs and guidance from



the ADAPT team. Sujata Verma has provided valuable inputs with both technical challenges as well as the process. The participants from Tajikistan have been in contact with the Tajik embassy in New Delhi. Sujata has also connected with the Tajik consulate on the extension of their visas. The consulate is also trying to help with this.

**A sad moment for everyone:** As the participants were adjusting to the new situation, we received very sad news. Dilrukshi from Sri Lanka lost her mother on 6<sup>th</sup> April 2020. This was a painful emotional experience for every one of us. She broke down as she could not travel back to her country and be there for the ceremonies.

Dr Alur organized a prayer service at the centre and personally lit a lamp and prayed from her home. Babaji was always there for spiritual support. The staff at the Bandra center and the CII participants listened to Buddhist hymns and lit lamps. The ADAPT team and CII participants came together and helped her deal with this personal tragedy. Other ADAPT staff lit lamps from their homes and prayed for the departed soul.

Dilrukshi was very keen to prepare and distribute food to the poor on the day of her mother's funeral, however this was not safe. No one was permitted to go out of the building. Mrs. Bhavana Mukherjee, CEO, ADAPT, organized her car and driver with a travel pass to take the food prepared by Leena, Sujata and Dilrukshi with the help of others and distribute the packets to people on the streets.

In the midst of her grief and sorrow, Dilrukshi was grateful to all the ADAPT staff and other CII participants and said *"In Sri Lanka, my mother would have got prayers only from Sri Lankan people, but since I am in India with the people from other nations, my mother got prayers from all, she might had some connection from India"*.



### **Thank you ADAPT in COVID-19**

"My blooming at ADAPT, will be a great help for working in Nagaland. I have gained knowledge and better understanding in policies, different types of disabilities, Inclusion, to focus on community, practical work and case study. All the resources were enriching and resource person shared their waste knowledge on all the topics. All field visits added flavour for our learning and empowered me with confidence. I was able to understand parents feeling when they shared with us about their child with disabilities and the sacrifices, they make to make their child independent.

Covid -19 disturbed us and some of us were unable to go back due to lockdown. It is a crucial time for everyone, thinking about the families and the situation that is before us. I believe in God's providence and our positive attitude will make us strong.

The faculty at ADAPT were of great help and support at all time. They saw for our wellbeing. I thank Dr. Mithu Alur, Babaji, Sujata, Catherine and all others for their constant support and help." *Sr Riya Dias (Nagaland CII-2020)*

We are at present looking after the eleven participants who remain with us and will be able to give an estimate of the additional costs when they have safely departed for their countries.