

Newsletter ASDWT

April to June 2025

Hello everyone!

This quarter has been a very volatile period with lots of international crises culminating with an attack on Iran by Israel and its consequent reprisal by Iran. It appears that the entire western world is in the throes of moral and material collapse. While we are witnessing the demise of an exploitative neo-colonial capitalist culture, we are also going to be victims of this turmoil because of our own lack of political, economic and social stability.

Having said that, it is also apparent that our government is not going to pay attention to public policy matters that are directed at the welfare of the people of Pakistan. This means that for the time being, parents and caregivers will have to rely on themselves only.

The burden of responsibility and caring for children and adults with

Autism and other Neurodiverse conditions is onerous indeed: 84% of American mothers suffer from PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder). In Pakistan, the figure would be similar, if not higher because of lack of community and state support.

The stressful conditions of the last two years in Pakistan have led to a jump in mental health problems as well. Informal studies have shown that 54% of Pakistanis suffer from some kind or other of mental disorders.

Nevertheless, ASDWT continues doggedly to carry on its work for awareness and empowerment of parents of persons with Autism and other Neurodiverse conditions. Do go through our efforts in the following pages and join hands with us.

Cheers!



ASDWT 4th Annual Conference

ASDWT 4th Annual Conference on Vocational Training and Employment for Adults with Autism and Neurodiverse Conditions was held on 26th April, 2025 in Lahore at the Avari Hotel. It brought together professionals, educators, employers and parents to discuss inclusive employment strategies and vocational training opportunities for Neurodiverse individuals. The event aimed to raise awareness, share best practices, and foster collaboration for enhancing the employment landscape for persons with Autism and related conditions. The conference began with an introduction by Ms. Rukhsana Shah, CEO, ASDWT, who emphasized the importance of shifting the narrative from disability to capability, so that Neurodiverse adults could be included in mainstream economic activities.

Ms. Nabila Chaudhary, CEO Rising Sun, Ms. Noorulain Syed, Regional representative, NOWPDP, Mr. G.M Tabassum, representative of the Employers Federation of Pakistan (EFP), Ms. Tania Hussain CEO, Turning Point, Dr. Izhar ul Haq Hashmi, Director Punjab Welfare Trust for the Disabled (PWTD), and Mr. Bu Ali Shah, CEO LABARD, highlighted the contributions of their organizations for the support of Neurodiverse persons and job placements of their students after completing their vocational training programmes.



ASDWT 4th Annual Conference...

Dr Abdul Hameed from UMT, Dr. Amina Moazzam (LCWU), Mr. Mansoor Arfeen, (ICEPAC Limited), Ms. Amber Afzal, (TEVTA), Mr. Asghar Hayat, (PVTC), Mr. Sheikh Pervaiz (Rotary Club), Mr. Bu Ali Shah, (LABARD), and Mr. Ali Hassan (Hum Mashal-e-Rah) participated in a vibrant Panel Discussion, suggesting different initiatives for vocational training programmes and employment for Neurodiverse persons. Calls were made for stronger legislation and public policy for their inclusion and support in mainstream economic activities.

The Conference concluded with a renewed commitment to advancing the rights and opportunities of Neurodiverse persons in the workforce. Stakeholders agreed to take initiatives, share resources, and maintain the momentum through dialogue and collaborations.



Conference at CJIP Mental Hospital Hyderabad

ASD Welfare Trust Karachi celebrated World Autism Awareness Month in collaboration with Sir Cowas Jee Institute of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences in Hyderabad on 19th April, 2025. The event was graced by Dr. Karim Ahmed, Chairman, Sindh Mental Health Authority, as Guest of Honour.

Dr. Salma Khalil, COO of ASDWT, made a presentation on "Autism and its Challenges," while Dr. Muniza Malik, Professor of Psychology, and Dr. Marvi Panwhar, Clinical Psychologist, Sindh University, Jamshoro, discussed various aspects of Autism. Dr. Nisar Ahmed Sohoo, Head of CJIP, highlighted the Institute's contributions to mental health and neurodevelopmental disorders. Mr. Jhamandas Rathi from the Directorate of Education, Sindh, emphasized the importance of awareness-centred initiatives.

A Panel Discussion featuring experts from various fields, including Psychiatry, Psychology, Paediatrics and Special Education provided valuable insights and answered questions from the audience. The panelists included Dr. Irfana Shah, Dr. Hanif Kashtiwal, Dr. S. Qalb-I-Hyder, Dr. Fozia Baloch, Dr. Mahnoor Samoo, and Ms. Alliya Batool Haidery. The Conference also featured stalls from different schools and organizations.



Webinars and Workshops

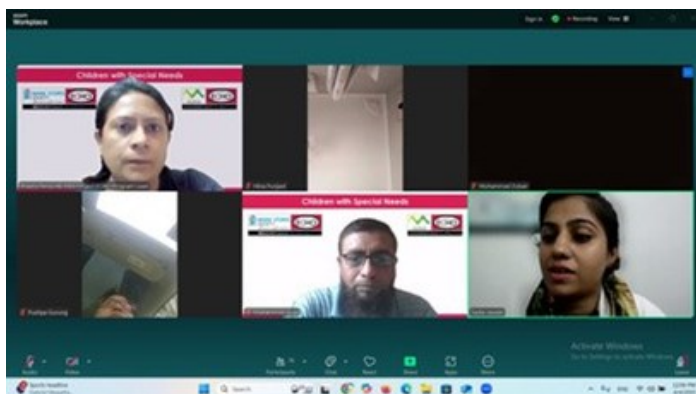
Bait-ul-Yatama, Peshawar, Awareness Session

On April 09, 2025 ASDWT conducted an online Zoom session with Bait- ul- Yatama Peshawar on "Understanding Neurodevelopmental disorders". Team ASDWT explained Autism, ADHD and Learning Difficulties on Zoom. The session was aimed to help educators and caregivers about children with a range of special needs.



Session with ECHO

On 4th April, 2025 Ms. Sadia Jawaid, ASDWT Karachi gave a presentation on "Effective Communication Strategies for Puberty Challenges" via Zoom, on the platform of Marie Stopes Society for the ECHO Project. ASDWT is pleased to contribute to Marie Stopes Society's efforts.



PAF BASE Awareness Workshop

On April 23, 2025 Ms. Sadia Jawaid ASDWT Karachi, conducted an Autism awareness session parents and teachers in collaboration with Special Olympics Pakistan (SOP) at PAF BASE Faisal Karachi. The session was held to mark Autism Awareness Month 2025. The session ended with a Q/A session.



C-ARTS Awareness Workshop

On May 6th, 2025 Ms. Sadia Jawaid, Ass. Clinical Psychologist at ASDWT Karachi, conducted an Autism awareness session with the collaboration of Special Olympics Pakistan (SOP) at C-Arts Adult and ADHD Center, Korangi, Karachi. The session was held to mark Autism awareness month 2025. The topic Autism and its Management was covered for the parents of special need children which was appreciated. The session ended with an Q/A session with the parents. ASDWT is grateful to Ms. Farah, Coordinator SOP, for arranging the session.



Awareness Workshop at Qurban & Surraya Educational Trust School, Lahore

ASDWT held a workshop on "Understanding Neurodevelopmental disorders" at Qurban & Surraya Educational Trust School for their teachers on May 16, 2025. Ms. Sunehra Zaidi, health psychologist, described signs, symptoms and management of Autism and ADHD. Mr. Muhammad Akhtar, special educationist, provided insight as how to empower students with learning difficulties. The purpose of this workshop was to raise awareness and give educators useful information so they may better assist children with special needs.



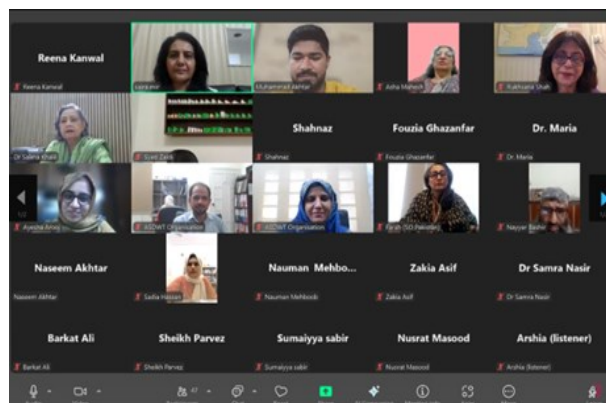
Ghazali Foundation School Chak 78 JB, Faisalabad on Neurodevelopmental Disorders

On May 20, 2025 ASDWT Lahore held an Awareness Workshop on Neurodevelopmental Disorders at Ghazali School in Faisalabad. Presentations were made on Autism and Learning Disabilities along with classroom management.



Session with ECHO on Puberty in Males with Neurodiversity

On 13th June, 2025 Mr. Moazzaz Ali of ASDWT Karachi gave a presentation on "Health Transition: Puberty in Males with Neurodiversity" for Marie Stopes Society for the ECHO Project. The session focused on fostering awareness and understanding of the unique challenges faced by Neurodiverse and differently-abled males during puberty. It aimed to equip caregivers, educators, and health professionals with essential strategies to support a healthy transition through this critical developmental phase. ASDWT is pleased to contribute towards promotion of health education and support.



Session on Transition Services for Neurodiverse Adolescents

On 19th June ASDWT conducted a zoom session on "Transition Services in Special Education for Neurodiverse Adolescents". Mr. Muhammad Akhtar, Special Educationist ASDWT talked about the significance of transition planning for adulthood and the employment, and also shared helpful resources with the parents.

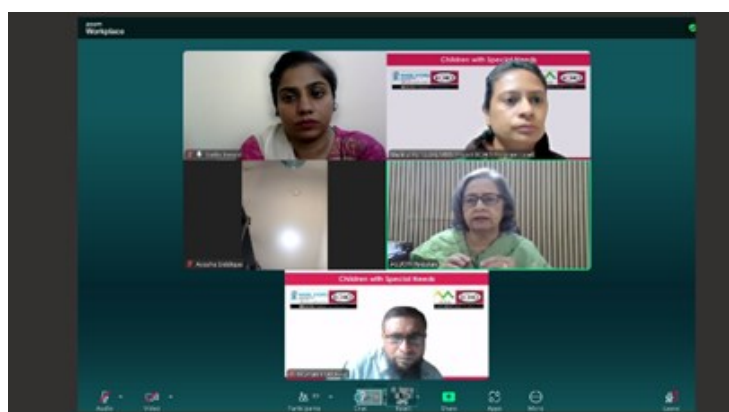


Awareness Session at Qurban & Surraya Educational Trust School, Lahore

The second Awareness Zoom session on Neurodevelopmental Disorders was held on June 20, 2025 for the teachers of Qurban & Surraya Educational Trust School, Lahore. Diagnosis, symptoms, prognosis, and treatment of Autism, ADHD, and learning disabilities were covered in presentations by Ms. Ayesha Arooj, clinical psychologist, Mr. Muhammad Akhtar, Special educationist and Ms. Sunehra Zaidi, Health Psychologist ASDWT.

Session with ECHO on Puberty in Females with Neurodiversity

On 20th June, 2025 Ms. Sadia Jawaid, ASDWT Karachi made a presentation via Zoom on the important topic "Healthy Transitions: Puberty in Females with Neurodiversity and Differently Abled", on the platform of Marie Stopes Society for the ECHO Project. The session focused on fostering awareness and understanding of the unique challenges faced by Neurodiverse and differently-abled females during puberty. It aimed to equip caregivers, educators, and health professionals with essential strategies to support a healthy transition through this critical developmental phase.



Collaborations, Visits and Meetings

MCB Bank Limited

On 14th April'25 MCB team led by Mr. Sauood Sadiq, Head of Learning & Development, HRMG, visited ASDWT to discuss their ongoing work about financial awareness among special needs persons. ASDWT CEO, Mrs. Rukhsana Shah gave the team a presentation on "Financial Inclusion" and shared a list of organizations where programme would be beneficial for the individuals with special needs.

MOU Signing with ECHO

On 12th May 2025, the Autism Spectrum Welfare Trust (ASDWT), Karachi and Marie Stopes Society (MSS) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), marking the beginning of a strategic partnership. The collaboration reflects a shared commitment to enhance awareness of neurodevelopmental disorders, empower healthcare providers and educators through training in inclusive service delivery, and promote reproductive health rights for persons with disabilities. Together, we aim to create a more inclusive environment for all.



PAHCHAAN (Protection and Help of Children Against Abuse and Neglect), Lahore

On 29th May'25, Dr. Naeem Zafar, CEO of PAHCHAAN visited ASDWT in Lahore for a detailed meeting about common goals and future collaboration. Dr. Zafar discussed their organization's work in detail and explained how they work in tandem with Child Protection Bureau and other organisations. It was decided that PAHCHAAN will use ASDWT team to create Awareness of Autism among caregivers.



Allied Bank Limited

ASDWT team visited Allied Bank Limited, Head office, Lahore on 2nd June, 2025. Mr. Shahid Raza, Unit Head- Employee Medical Benefits and his team took keen interest in ASDWT work. It was decided that ASDWT will conduct an awareness session for Allied Bank employees in near future as there the ABL has identified more than 40 parents who are employed in Lahore alone with Neurodiverse children.

Climate Festival at Art Council

On June 12, 2025, Dr. Salma Khalil, Mr. Moazzaz Ali and Mr. Attaullah participated in the 4th Karachi Climate Festival at the Arts Council Karachi organized by Feroza Magazine working on environmental and climate change in Karachi. The event featured a compelling debate on the pressing issue of the climate crisis affecting Karachi.



Kohi Goth Women University

On June 12, 2025, team ASDWT Karachi, Dr Salma Khalil, Mr. Moazzaz Ali, visited Kohi Goth Women's University. Meeting with the esteemed Dr. Shershah Syed, President of PNFWH and Consultant Obstetrician and Gynecologist was very fruitful. The discussion primarily focused on potential future collaborations, including the organization of training sessions for their medical staff comprising students, midwives, technicians, and other healthcare professionals at the University as well as at the Kohi Goth Women's Hospital in Karachi.



Postgraduate Nursing College Punjab, Lahore

On 16th June'25 ASDWT team visited Post Graduate Nursing College Punjab. Ms. Rukhsana Shah, CEO, ASDWT discussed the necessity of creating Autism awareness among nurses and doctors. Ms. Razia Bano, Principal PGNC Punjab expressed her keen interest in having sessions for their post-graduate students. It was decided that ASDWT will conduct sessions in the College in July, 2025.



Bloom Care for Autism, Lahore

On 17th June'25 Ms. Rukhsana Shah CEO ASDWT, Ms. Mobashshrah Bajwa, COO and Ms. Saira Mir, Marketing Coordinator visited Bloom Care Centre for Autism. Prof. Dr. Nazish Imran, Clinical Director and Dr. Arslan Asif, Director operations welcomed ASDWT team. Dr. Nazish explained that Bloom Care is committed to empowering children with Autism and other neurodevelopmental disorders. They also gave a tour of the facility to ASDWT team. Dr. Nazish also said that they are working for a respite facility for adolescents and young adults in the future.



Seminar at Bahria University, Karachi

On June 25, 2025, Team ASDWT team comprising Mr. Moazzaz Virk, Mr. Attaullah, and Ms. Sadia Hassan attended a seminar held at the Bahria University on the invitation of Sindh Mental Health Authority, Karachi. The seminar was on Drug Addiction and Rehabilitation aligned with the observances of World Drug Day 2025.



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Home Page