Our Voices
Self Advocacy Newsletter: October 2012
This newsletter is a way for Self Advocates to keep connected and share news about issues and good things that are happening around the world.

The newsletter has been put together by the Self Advocacy Committee of Inclusion International. The Committee is made up of five self advocates who represent the five regions of the world.

On the cover is a photo of the Committee. In the front row, there is Haydee Beckles from Panama, Ciara Evans from England, and Mia Farah from Lebanon. In the back row, there is Quincy Mwiya from Zambia and David Corner from New Zealand.

Please share this newsletter with your networks.

If you have any ideas or feedback on the newsletter, or if you would like to give us an article for the next issue, please email David at: david.corner@ihc.org.nz
In November 2011, Inclusion International held an Asia Pacific Regional Forum in Nepal. There were a lot of people at it from the different regions of the world. We came together to talk about issues that are affecting people with intellectual disability in the Asia Pacific region. We also talked a lot about the Convention.

The night before the Forum started, we had a Self Advocacy Committee meeting to go over things and to get prepared for the next few days. Then we had a general meeting for self advocates at the forum. During this meeting we split up in to groups to talk about:

- Rights
- Making decisions for yourselves
- Living in the community
- Education
The next day we started the Regional forum and had presentations from Inclusion International members and guest speakers. We also did some workshops to talk about:

- Education
- Legal Capacity
- Community Living
- Families

During the Forum, members of the Self Advocacy Committee also did interviews for Inclusion International’s Global Report on Article 19.

The Forum was a great time to meet with other people, network and hear about issues and good work in the Asia Pacific region.
2012 VALID Conference and Launch of Inclusion Australia

by David Corner

In February 2012, a group of self advocates from New Zealand went to the VALID “Having A Say Conference” in Geelong, Australia.

The conference had over 1200 people attend from Australia and also from around the world. The theme of the conference was “My Life, My Way”. It was about people making decisions and having the ability to choose what they want to do and when they want to do it. I gave a keynote presentation about Inclusion International at the opening of the conference.

The evening before the conference started, I also gave a presentation about Inclusion International and encouraged Inclusion Australia to join us in our international work. A presentation was also made by three members from Inclusion Australia on their trip to the Inclusion International Asia Pacific Regional Forum in Nepal.
Self advocates in Zanzibar have told several interesting stories.

The following story is from Asha and is linked to Article 19 of UN CRPD

Asha is a self advocate and she is 15 years old. She lives in Mubeni area in Zanzibar. Both her parents passed away when she was very young.

Asha went up to Form 4 at school.

Lack of support from her step mother contributed to her not completing her education. However, Asha still has the intention of going back to school in near future if given correct support.

Her ambition was to start a business venture and become independent. Her first attempt was a laundry business. Her clients are able to contact her on phone when her services are required.

Asha always encourages her fellow self advocates to work hard and challenge the public to accept them as part of the community. However, the most challenging moments for Asha are when people in the community call her “Asha Epileptic”.

“My three brothers and I were adopted by our step mother who has since been looking after us along with her family”.

“I am a person with an intellectual disability and I also have epilepsy. But that doesn’t stop me from talking about my rights or achieving my goals in life”
Due to her determination, Asha was selected by Zanzibar Special Olympics to represent Zanzibar at the Special Olympics in Kenya and she came back with an award. In a bid to empower her, the Zanzibar Association of Persons with Developmental Disabilities (ZAPDD) has bought her a new sewing machine so that she can also learn how to sew clothes in addition to laundry activities.

Asha thanks the ZAPDD and her self advocacy peers. She especially considers Article 19 of CRPD as an important Article.

“I always tell them that Epileptic is not my family name, please address me the way you address my brothers and sisters. My full name is Asha Said Ali and anyone who has respect for me should call me as such”.

“It is wake up call for all of us that we should fight for our rights”
Musa’s Story

My name is Musa Haji Musa. I am a self advocate and am 19 years old. I live in Zanzibar at a place called Midai. I come from a family of eight; my parents, three sisters and two brothers. I still live with my parents. I am not stopped to do what I want to do by anyone; I am a free man.

I love my mother and my father, but my mother is concerned about me. Sometimes I do not like it as she wants to watch over me most of the time.

I have many friends. I meet my friends in town or in places such as this workshop. I have seen many of my friends being discriminated against in our communities and I ask for an end to such practices.

I only went up to Class 4 (Primary level). I would have loved to have continued with my education but I could not make it. At the moment I am not in any formal kind of employment. A lot of people in my community like me, and sometimes they support me financially.

My immediately plan is to get married to my fiancé. However, it has not been easy to convince my parents that we should get married. In my planning process, I wish to involve Zanzibar Association of Persons with Developmental Disabilities (ZAPDD) members to help me achieve my goal.

Another ambition is to work for a local bank here in Zanzibar in order to support my family. Once I start working and am able to support my family, I will be more independent. I would also like to become a powerful politician.
“If you make me your MP, I will see to it that our community is free from all forms of discrimination and create a community that will be inclusive. I would make sure that no self advocates would live in an Institution.”
A story and information from Lebanon

Self-advocacy training empowers self-advocates and helps families understand how to support their sons and daughters.

At the beginning of the training one mom said: “Don’t ask my daughter [Marianna] to speak, to participate, she cannot and if she talks no one can understand her.”

By the end of the training the mom and Marianna better understood self-advocacy and Marianna presented a picture and explained: “I cannot go to school because of all these barriers. I am in the middle and the barriers are in front of me.”

Three members of Lebanon Association of Self Advocates (LASA) went to Moldova to do training for self advocates. There were thirty self advocates, parents and media.

During four days we worked on the Convention, especially the important role of the family, education, and living in the community. We also explained the role of self advocates. A presentation was made in front of a representative of the government, international NGOs and representatives of various media.

With Handicap International, we have worked with organizations of persons with disabilities to form new self advocates. Later, we plan to work on the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) to allow the self advocates to express themselves when Lebanon will be reviewed.

We got some funds from Disability Rights Fund (DRF). We are reviewing the Lebanese Law and comparing it to the CRPD. We are doing this in order to present a proposal to the government about what needs to be changed in this law when Lebanon ratifies the Convention.
The Disability Rights Fund (DRF) gives funding to groups around the world who are advocating for the rights of people with disability. The DRF started as a way to support projects and initiatives that focus on the CRPD.

Last year, David Corner was elected on to the Global Advisory Panel of the Disability Rights Fund. The Global Advisory Panel is a panel made up of ten members. The members of the Panel come from the five regions of the world and reflect the disability community. David is looking forward to his involvement with the DRF.
Over the last two years, Inclusion International has been talking with families and self-advocates about Article 19 of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) and what living and being included in the community means to them. I wanted to know the challenges and opportunities for making Article 19 a reality and understand the policy and practical implications of fulfilling the promises of Article 19. The information and data we have collected through the Article 19 Campaign provided the basis for our Global Report, *Inclusive Communities = Stronger Communities*, on living and being included in the community.


1. What it means to live and be included in the community for people who have an intellectual disability and their families, and what their vision of this is.

2. What exists now and how it compares to our vision.

3. What needs to happen to achieve our vision.

The report is available on our website www.inclusion-international.org.

For more information on our Global Forum please visit www.thearc.org.