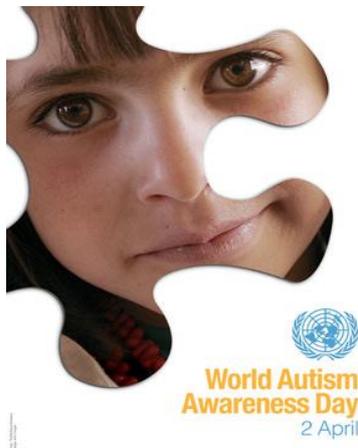


AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER

Produced as part of the *Toolkit for Disability-Inclusive Education - Fiji*

Issued Sept 2015



Every person has the right to early childhood education, primary and secondary education and further education (Fiji Constitution)

All children should be given the opportunity to learn together wherever possible, regardless of difficulties, disabilities or differences (Fiji Ministry of Education Policy on Special and Inclusive Education)

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is a group of complex disorders of brain development, characterized by difficulties in social interaction, verbal and nonverbal communication and repetitive behaviors. The extent to which ASD impacts a person's behaviour, intelligence and ability varies from mild to severe. Asperger's syndrome is a high functioning form of autism; symptoms are milder and there is no language delay.

ASD is more common amongst boys than girls and research is increasingly finding a range of genetic and environmental factors that contribute to a child's risk of ASD. It is not due to poor parenting. Children with ASD benefit from support in learning and practising social skills and understanding emotions and relationships.

People with autism are increasingly being recognized as bringing strengths to workplaces for attributes such as: attention to detail, detailed knowledge and skills in certain areas, tendency to be logical in decision making, less concern for what others think of them, loyalty, honesty, non-judgmental thinking, and intelligence.

Who can help? Community Rehabilitation Assistants, child psychologists, teachers in regular schools who have learnt about inclusion of children with disabilities, special schools.

Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder will show some of these signs:

- Failure to make eye contact.
- Not responding to his or her name.
- Playing in unusual, repetitive ways; often with limited types of play.
- Difficulty understanding how others feel.
- Difficulty making new friends, taking turns, interacting with others or playing within a group.
- Strongly sticks to routines and may react negatively if he or she is required to do something outside of the routine.
- Especially high or especially low reaction to sensory stimulation such as sounds, touch, movement.
- Seeking additional sensory input such as touching or rubbing an interesting textured cloth, or crinkling plastic, or rocking body.

Many children with ASD will have average or above average intelligence, but some have intellectual disability.

The United Nations has named the 2nd April as World Autism Day.