

THE FIRST STEP...



Dear Readers,

In this issue of the newsletter, I would like to announce CABSS's participation in the Deaf Indonesian Project, where Dr. Fadda was involved in various initiatives related to deafness, deafblindness and mental health. Some of the areas of focus of the project included counseling and training of deaf people, raising awareness among local services and drafting guidelines for the definition of effective intervention policies.

The collaboration that CABSS has established with the Fulbright Commission for US-Italy exchange has given us the opportunity to host Madison McNair, an American winner of the "Fulbright Scholarship" for a period of 3 months. In this edition, you will find an article about Madison's experience at CABSS in collaboration with the Istituto Statale di Istruzione Specializzata per Sordi (ISIS) in Rome.

On the events front, CABSS is always engaged in wonderful fundraising activities that have enabled us in carrying out our early intervention programs. One of these events included a splendid evening spent on the terrace of Hotel Hasler at the "CABSS Under the Stars" event: a celebration of good food, music and solidarity.

I would like to thank our friends at the Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia and send out a special thank you to Dr. Michele dall'Ongaro and Dr. Mauro Bucarelli, who have always supported CABSS each year at its beautiful concerts dedicated to Beethoven, an extraordinary deaf musician and composer.

Before leaving you to read the newsletter, I would like to thank two very special little friends of CABSS: Matilde and Alessio who decided to ask their friends to make donations to CABSS on their birthdays. It was such an admirable gesture and an example to all of us as to how we can make birthday celebrations even more meaningful!

Kindest Regards!



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CABSS participation in the Deaf Indonesian Project

Among the activities carried out by CABSS during 2024, the participation in the Deaf Indonesian Project from November 14th to 20th stands out. Thanks to the involvement of Director Stefania Fadda who made her experience in the mental health of deaf people of all ages available to the project, consolidated internationally by her role as President of the European Society for Mental Health and Deafness (ESMHD) and her recent entry into the Expert Group on Mental Health of the World Federation of the Deaf (WFD).

Project coordination

The project was coordinated by Dr. Herbert Klein, an independent Deaf consultant, specialized in mental health and disaster risk reduction (DRR), and was carried out in collaboration with professionals - psychologists, psychiatrists and sign language interpreters - of Gerkatin (Indonesian Deaf Association), Pusbisindo (Indonesian Sign Language) and PLJ (Sign Language Interpreter Agency). These organizations aim to create a "Deaf Mental Health Group" in Indonesia and raise awareness among institutions about the importance of guaranteeing the right to mental health for deaf people.

Challenges for the Deaf Community in Indonesia

Although Indonesia ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2011 and enacted a disability law in 2016 to promote a more inclusive society, the path to equality is still long.

This is evidenced by the approximately 4 million deaf people living in the islands of the Indonesian archipelago, who are often victims of discrimination and obstacles to accessibility in many areas. Most of them do not have access to essential services or adequate education.

A critical problem is the severe shortage of sign language interpreters in public offices, health facilities and places of worship, significantly limiting the possibility of communicating and participating in social life. Even in education, the difficulties are profound: few equipped schools, a shortage of specialized

teachers and limited access to assistive technologies aggravate the educational and social gap (Katalis IA, 2023).

Mental health services and risk management

Regarding mental health services, the heart of the Deaf Indonesian Project, most deaf people do not have access to them and do not have the tools to deal with the suffering caused by anxiety and trauma following natural disasters, abuse and educational deficiencies, problems that are widespread in the country.

Natural disaster risk

Indonesia is particularly vulnerable to natural disasters due to its geographical position and geological characteristics. Its 17,000 islands are located in the Pacific Ring of Fire, an area in the Pacific Ocean where there are many active volcanoes, which cause frequent earthquakes. Furthermore, the natural disaster risk index due to tsunamis, floods, landslides, droughts and forest fires is relatively high compared to other countries (CFE-DM, 2021).

The workshop poster at "Atma Jaya" Catholic University



Doctor Fadda and the workshop participants at "Gadjah Mada" University



Abuse risk

Regarding abuse, over the years violations of civil and political rights have been perpetrated for religious, ethnic and social reasons, as well as for reasons related to gender and sexual orientation. A particular case of abuse is represented by deaf and hearing people with mental disorders. There are more than 57.000 Indonesians who, at least once in their lives, due to ignorance, poverty or abandonment by institutions, have suffered a practice called "pasung", which consists of confining patients or family members with mental disorders in unhygienic places exposing them to all sorts of mistreatment (Human Rights Watch, 2023). Although this practice was banned in 1977, cases of "pasung" are still found today that the Indonesian Ministry of Health recognizes as inhuman and discriminatory.

Educational deficiencies risk

Only a small percentage of deaf children have access to education. Specialized schools are few and concentrated in urban areas, difficult to reach for many of them. Furthermore, most public schools are not equipped to accommodate students with sensory disabilities, due to the shortage of specialized teachers and linguistic and communication barriers. This negatively affects the literacy level and the academic and professional future of deaf children, making them more vulnerable to abuse and discrimination (Arnawa et al., 2022).

Objectives of the Deaf Indonesian Project

Faced with such a situation, which severely tests the mental health of deaf people, the reduction and management of the aforementioned risks play a crucial role in the empowerment of the Indonesian Deaf Community.

In this regard, the Deaf Indonesian Project aims to: provide counseling and training to deaf people; raise awareness among local services about the needs of deaf people; con-

duct research, collect data and write reports to be submitted to institutions; provide guidelines for the definition of effective intervention policies; create an accessible help-line for deaf people, called Signline.

Institutional collaboration and CABSS commitment

The project has gained the attention of the University of Jakarta, the Department of Health, the National Commission on Disability, the Disability Advocacy Team and the Social Welfare Institution for Persons with Disabilities.

Dr. Fadda contributed to the initiative by shining a spotlight on deaf and deafblind children, their specialized needs and the right to receive the necessary support in the various areas of development, with particular attention to psycho-physical well-being.

In particular, our Director held two workshops for deaf university students with the aim of training future professionals in the field of mental health. During the first workshop at the "Atma Jaya" Catholic University, she presented a paper entitled "Breaking Barriers of Disability and Mental Health: learning from Indo-

nesian" (Fadda S., Klein H.). During the second workshop, at the Center for Indigenous and Cultural Psychology of the Faculty of Psychology of the "Gadjah Mada" University, she presented a paper entitled "The Right to Mental Health and Well-being Services for Deaf Individuals" (Fadda S.).

Furthermore, Dr. Fadda met with various local organizations and was welcomed by the Ministers of Health and Communication, with whom she was able to discuss, sharing good practices and guidelines inspired by the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the Belfast Statement (2014), a key document for the right to mental health of deaf, hard of hearing and deaf-blind people.

An unforgettable experience

For Dr. Fadda this was a valuable experience, which left a deep mark thanks to the wonderful people she met and the all the sharing of stories and experiences. The project represented an important step forward for the recognition of the rights of the deaf community in Indonesia, with the hope of a more inclusive and accessible future.



Doctor Fadda at the National Agency of Risk and Disaster Management

- Katalis IA (2023), *Limited access to assistive technology costs the economy up to 7% annually*, <https://iacepa-katalis.org/en/home>

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ACTIVITIES AND PROJECTS

Fulbright scholar Madison McNair's inclusive journalism project

Madison McNair is the 2024-2025 American Fulbright scholarship winner in Deafness Studies. CABSS hosted Madison in partnership with the Istituto Statale di Istruzione Specializzata per Sordi's (ISIS) elementary school. Fulbright is a prestigious cultural exchange program where professionals conduct research, study or teach abroad. In this article Madison shares her experience as a Fulbright scholar.

Madison McNair's Fulbright deafness studies project

As a proud Fulbrighter, I had the pleasure of working with CABSS as my host institution. For three months, I embarked on a fulfilling journey focused on teaching Italian students American Sign Language (ASL) and fundamental journalism skills. As a Fulbright grantee, I was tasked with a project that aimed to enhance the lives of deaf children or individuals through research, teaching, or a collaborative project.

As part of my project, I taught elementary students ASL and journalism. The purpose of my project was to 1) expose students to a new language that could allow them to communicate with other people and 2) introduce deaf students to other career options, like journalism, that they might not have known existed.

Introducing journalism and ASL

Before Fulbright, I worked at Sign1News, a news station in the U.S. that creates news in ASL for the deaf community. My time at CABSS granted me the unique opportunity to introduce students to the intersection of ASL and journalism.

In January, students had the chance to meet deaf anchors at Sign1News virtually. The deaf anchors shared with the students the importance of deaf representation in the news field. They also had the opportunity to exercise their interviewing and sign language skills by asking the anchors questions in ASL. The virtual event was an exciting experience for the students that exposed them to a potential career opportunity.



Madison McNair - Fulbright scholar



Madison McNair during a lesson



Madison McNair during a lesson



Teaching American Sign Language: a collaborative effort

For the teaching aspect of my project, I worked with a diverse group of students who were deaf, hard-of-hearing and hearing. The hearing students were fluent in Italian, while the deaf students mostly communicated in Italian Sign Language (LIS). The students also had exposure to LIS, creating a rich multilingual environment.

To facilitate effective communication in the classroom, a unique blend of languages was involved. While I am studying Italian, I was fortunate to have a teaching assistant who helped translate my lessons from English to Italian and LIS. This collaborative effort, not only benefited the students by strengthening their language skills, but also contributed to my Italian and LIS language learning. My assistant teacher also mentioned to me that the students' English skills had grown since they started learning ASL.

Teaching methodologies in the classroom

As an ASL teacher and native English speaker, I utilized several methodologies to create a dynamic learning experience for my students. My approach focused on visual learning, worksheets, games and constructing sentences.

- **Visual Learning:** I designed weekly PowerPoint presentations that showed the signs being taught and paired them with relevant images. This visual aid helped students understand the meanings of the signs while also introducing them to the English words.
- **Hands-On Worksheets:** to reinforce the signs, I often paired lessons with engaging worksheets. For example, when I taught the students family signs, I would sign the word to the class. The students would then guess the word and color it.

- **Engaging Games:** one of my favorite activities was a game called "Floor to Door", which the second graders played. In this game, I would sign a color and the students would touch an object in the room that matched the color. If I signed "floor", or "door", they would touch the floor or door. The game was a great way to keep the students engaged during class and reinforce what they learned!
- **Constructing Sentences:** the third to fifth graders learned how to construct sentences. The older students learned about ASL's topic-comment grammar structure which taught them how to sign and write in ASL. By the end of the year, the older students were able to form sentences on topics such as greetings, their favorite activities and journalism.

I had the wonderful privilege of being able to witness students embrace language learning wholeheartedly and share with them my love for ASL. The students were inquisitive, engaging and fast learners. My experience working with CABSS and ISSS was life-changing and rewarding. I am grateful I had the opportunity to share my world as an American with the staff and students, while also embracing Italian culture and opening my eyes to a different way of living.



The ISSS children involved in tMadison McNair's project during an online connection with a newspaper editorial team in the United States

FUNDRAISING

CABSS Under the Stars

On September 19th the splendid panoramic terrace of the Hotel Hassler, an oasis of elegance and tranquility suspended between the Roman domes, hosted the enchanting "CABSS Under the Stars" charity event, which allowed us to raise funds to support early intervention programs designed for deaf and deafblind children.



President Veruschka Wirth

On the top floor of the Hotel Hassler, you find yourself immersed in a magical atmosphere, actually under the stars of a breathtaking sky, where the infinite view of the eternal city invokes an array of emotions. The fresh September air helped to sweeten an evening dedicated to music, beauty and solidarity.

The guests were welcomed by President Wirth, Director Fadda and the historic staff of CABSS, and they were able to dance, chat amiably while sipping on wine and enjoying extraordinary dishes carefully designed by Marcello Romano, a Campania chef who, for over 20 years, has been the head chef of Salone Eva and responsible for all catering services of the Hotel Hassler.

Chef Romano proposed a menu that recalled family lunches and Italian traditions, without forgetting to put an international touch to the dishes that made them even more special. Moreover, for cocktail lovers, Alessio Giovanessi, well known for his mixology skills, offered guests an array of cocktails to choose from that were inspired by the celebrities who stayed at the

hotel.

"At CABSS - says Veruschka Wirth - we want to guarantee that deaf and deafblind children have everything they need to become active protagonists of their lives. Today, together with the director Stefania Fadda and all the staff, we are committed to ensuring that these children have the opportunity to benefit from activities designed specifically for them within a positive, pleasant and rewarding environment".

The support of our donors is fundamental for us and we will continually express our deepest gratitude to all those who participate and attend our events. During the "CABSS Under the Stars" event we welcomed donors who have continually supported CABSS for years but also many new donors who have taken the mission of CABSS to heart and have made the decision to start supporting deaf and deafblind children.



One of the dishes prepared by chef Marcello Romano

The funds raised during the evening were donated to CABSS to create multisensory early intervention programs aimed at strengthening and making the most of all the senses of deaf and deafblind children. One of the objectives is to support children in reaching out and developing curiosity towards their surrounding environment. Furthermore, with the use of specific tools and techniques, children learn to integrate, process and understand information coming from the outside world, develop cognitive skills, communicate their needs, learn to make choices and express their personality.



A sunset seen from Hotel Hassler's terrace



Beethoven, the Deaf Genius with Music in his Heart

Last November we were guests of the Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia, which gave us the opportunity to attend a wonderful concert in support of CABSS. Everyone enjoyed listening to Beethoven's Concerto for Piano No. 5, "Emperor", Widmann's Con Brio concert overture and Haydn's Symphony No. 103 in E flat major "Drumroll". The concert was conducted by Maxim Emelyanychev and on the piano was one of the greatest pianists of our time, Leif Ove Andsnes. A great admirer of Beethoven, Andsnes is the promoter of the "Beethoven Journey" project, in which he performed and recorded, with the Mahler Chamber Orchestra, all five of Beethoven's piano concertos.

The three pieces are linked by their energy and rhythm. Beethoven's "Emperor" Concerto, with its alternation of solemn moments and the wavering responses of the piano awakens the soul, Widmann's Con Brio overture is inspired by and filled with Beethovenian riffs and Haydn's "Drumroll" and his more than one hundred symphonies have

been infused with similar rhythmic and high energy instrumentation.

The choice of this concert was not accidental, in fact the great German composer Beethoven became deaf around the age of 40, starting to have hearing problems before the age of thirty. Being deaf, however, did not stop his infinite genius, in fact some of his greatest compositions were composed in his later years. His deep devotion to music and great will power has accomplished the magic that we hear in his music.

Before attending the concert, our Vice President Roberto Wirth and the Director Stefania Fadda, had the pleasure of offering a cocktail to the many supporters who came to the event. We thank the Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia for being by our side and we would like to say a special thank you to Dr. Michele dall'Ongaro and Dr. Mauro Bucarelli.



Director Stefania Fadda and Vice President Roberto Wirth

Birthday celebrations

Matilde and Alessio are two very sweet children who have decided to ask their friends to make donations to CABSS instead of receiving material gifts for their birthdays.

When we were contacted by their mothers we couldn't believe our ears, what a beautiful act of kindness that meant even more coming from children!

Thanks to the funds raised from Matilde and Alessio's birthdays we were able to buy specialized games for deaf and deafblind children who attend our laboratory and a large storage cabinet to put materials, toys and learning tools in.

On behalf of the children and families who attend our center and the team at CABSS we would like to thank Matilde and Alessio and thank their parents who are doing such an incredible job at raising such kind and aware women and men of tomorrow.



FUNDRAISING

Support us!

Bank transfer made out to the Centro Assistenza per Bambini Sordi e Sordociechi Onlus, Piazza Trinità dei Monti 6 – 00187 Roma.

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Donate Online at our website: eng.cabss.it.

PLEASE NOTE

Your donation is tax deductible!

Support CABSS directly from the U.S.A.!

American citizens can support CABSS by making a tax - deductible donation through the **Myriad U.S.A. Charity** (former King Baudouin Foundation United States - KBFUS) in one of the following ways:

Online donation: on the <https://www.every.org/myriadusa> website search for the “Assistance Center for Deaf and Deafblind Children” in the “search by name or location” bar. This will take you to the page dedicated to CABSS from which you can make an online donation (Paypal, credit card, Google Pay, etc.).

Myriad U.S.A. and send it to Myriad U.S.A., 551 Fifth Avenue, Suite 2400, New York, NY 10176. Important: in the “Memo Section” of the check please write “Assistance Center for Deaf and Deafblind Children”.

Wire transfer: write to info@myriadusa.org or contact them by telephone (212) 713 7660.

For more information:

www.myriadusa.org



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Check: Write your check out to

Donate your 5X1000!

Supporting Centro Assistenza per Bambini Sordi e Sordociechi Onlus is easy; make the decision to donate your 5x1000. You can allocate a portion of your income to a non-profit organization.

All you have to do is write down **CABSS' tax code in the space provided and sign.**

Remember that the 5x1000 does not replace the 8x1000 and you can donate to both. In the case that you decide not to donate be aware that the portion originally designated in favor of nonprofit organizations will go directly to the government.

**Children need
your support!**

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Purchase your copy today!

A portion of the proceeds from the sales of the book will go to CABSS Onlus in favor of deaf and deafblind children

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