2014 – The journey begins

- Press release announcing establishment of International Communication Project
- An ‘unprecedented effort’
- Vision and mission announced
- Syndicated across multiple publications

International Coalition Launches Unprecedented Effort to Raise Awareness of Communication Disorders

_Speech, Language and Hearing Organizations in Various Parts of the World Join Forces_
(Rockville, Maryland, USA - January 27, 2014)

For the first time in history, organizations in six countries that focus on speech, language, hearing, and swallowing issues have formed a coalition to raise international awareness of communication disorders and their treatment.

The International Communication Project 2014 (ICP) is a collaborative effort developed by the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, Canadian Association of Speech-Language Pathologists & Audiologists, Irish Association of Speech & Language Therapists, New Zealand Speech-language Therapists Association, Royal College of Speech Language Therapists, and Speech Pathology Australia.

The International Communication Project 2014 is built on the premise that although healthy communication is vital to the quality of life, communication disorders are largely overlooked as disabilities.
Google Hangouts discussion on February 20th 2014 titled ‘Raising Awareness of Communication Disorders as a Global Health Issue’

- Officially announced initiation of International Communication Project
- Framed as ‘historic’ collaboration between our organisations
- Vision and mission outlined
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0SBYUNAHggw
The Universal Declaration of Communication Rights

• Seminal document on Communication Rights
• Its value recognized by over 10,000 people
• Considered a key milestone in the development of communication rights
• Cited across multiple publications including Wikipedia
International Project Declares May "Month of Action" for Calling Attention to Communication Disorders

(Rockville, Maryland, USA - May 1, 2014)

The International Communication Project 2014 (ICP 2014), an initiative involving more than a dozen organizations, entities, and international bodies worldwide, has declared this May a “Month of Action” for bringing attention to communication disorders.

The Project’s founding organizations have organized a range of activities for May, including outreach to Houses of Parliament in England; an advocacy day on Parliament Hill in Canada; outreach in cities and towns across New Zealand; community and parliamentary outreach in Australia; and public events around Ireland. In the United States, a Google Hangout open to public participation will feature private and government experts discussing the importance of early identification and intervention in treating communication disorders.


Communication disorders are a potential leading cause of increased numbers of physician visits, hospital stays, and lost school days experienced by children with disabilities and may account for their poor academic performance. Meanwhile, the vast majority of persons with disabilities...
The Pledge

• As part of the ‘Month of Action’ partners undertook activities across each jurisdiction and through social media to raise awareness of the ICP brand and the Universal Declaration of Communication Rights through the ‘Pledge’

• Secured over 12,657 signatures and support from over 40 organizations
Many of these organizations made the undertaking that they would use the ICP logo and brand for regional awareness raising activities.

The logo is still being used by some of these organizations.
The International Communication Project: An Update

Due to the efforts of many around the world, the International Communication Project (ICP) has come a long way since it launched in February 2014.

To date, thousands of signatories have expressed support for the Universal Declaration of Communication Rights; millions have learned about the ICP through project press releases, online events like Google Hangouts, and regional and local activities; and dozens of organizations around the globe have become recognized and engaged as participants.

Currently, the ICP is preparing to focus on global advocacy with the following goals:

1. Increasing the understanding of communication disabilities amongst world health bodies and policymakers;
2. Ensuring that future global health policy recognises and addresses communication disabilities and the vital issue of access to care;
3. Strengthening advocacy that engages key individuals, organisations and events involved in world health policy;
4. Increasing funding for local professional capacity building/training, especially in developing countries, to strengthen access to speech-language pathologists/therapists, audiologists and communication health providers.

Here are just some of the ways you can show your support for the ICP’s advocacy:

- Sign the Universal Declaration of Communication Rights, if you haven’t already, and encourage others to do the same.
- Promote and share information about the ICP at conferences and regional and local events. Send us photos of your activities!
- Invite organizations to email the ICP about joining the Project as a participating member.
- Submit your stories, information, and photos about communication health subjects for posting on the ICP website.
- Email us your ideas for engaging policymakers, legislators, and other influencers, and increasing access to communication health services around the world, based on your own experiences.

2015 – Moving forward

- Project drift
- Update issued in September 2015
- Call made out to supporters to continue awareness raising activities, increase membership of ICP organizations and ideas to engage policymakers
- Regular newsletter also launched
2016 – A new approach

• Announced development of new plan for global advocacy

• Also began highlighting awareness days and intention to undertake social media awareness raising activities
2017 – Advocacy

- First substantive social media campaign on International Literacy Day 2017
- New call for stories to be featured in newsletter
- Interest in UN sustainable development goals and how they can align to ICP mission discussed by Strategic Advisory Committee
- Multiple domestic engagements planned
- ICP member organizations to meet
- Also began preparations for 70th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 2018
National Communication Project (ICP) Exhibited at the Consumer Electronics Show (CES)

Consumer Electronics Show is an annual event that brings together people from around the world, showcasing the latest technology. The International Communication Project (ICP) was represented at this event, showcasing the potential harmful effects of new technology on speech and language development.

The ICP is working closely with the International Organization for Standardization, seeking to disseminate information about the project. The organization has received interest from various countries, with some countries expressing keen interest in the project. The aim of the project is to raise awareness and help ensure that children and adults with speech and language disorders receive the communication services they need.

Many who have attended the show have expressed interest in the project, with several countries expressing interest in the ICP. The project aims to be a global resource for parents and professionals working with individuals with speech and language disorders.
2018 – ICP in action

- Multiple articles published in member organization journals highlighting communication rights as part of UDHR 70th anniversary celebrations
- Publication of video marking 70th Anniversary by ICP
- ICP Policy and Evidence group established to develop narrative on UN Sustainable Development Goals
- Attendance at the first Global Disability Summit
- Social media campaigns continued
December 2018 – special edition of newsletter published on anniversary of Universal Declaration of Human Rights Anniversary

Communications and UN Sustainable Development Goals

Communication is vital to life, yet it is largely ignored as a disability. The World Health Organization’s World Report on Disability estimates that roughly one billion people around the world are living with some form of disability. However, the authors of the report also acknowledge that people with communication disabilities may not be included in this estimate, despite the fact that they encounter significant difficulties in their daily lives.

Communication disabilities are significant and can affect every aspect of a person’s life.

The United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goals provide us with a unique opportunity to address this formidable reality. These 17 goals are set by the UN General Assembly as part of resolution 70/1 “Transforming our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.”

Some key sustainable development goals (SDGs) are:

Addressing Accessibility as a Human Rights Issue

Despite progress in creating more inclusive societies, people with communication disabilities and hearing loss still face significant accessibility barriers in their communities and workplaces.

Here in Canada, we know that one in five people aged 20 to 79 has some degree of hearing loss, with hearing loss prevalence rising sharply after age 40, to reach 65% at ages 70 to 79. Communication Disabilites Access Canada estimates that over 440,000 Canadians have significant speech, language, and communication disabilities.

As we approach the 70th anniversary of the United Nations’ (UN) Declaration of Human Rights, it is important for countries such as Canada to address accessibility, including communication access, as a human rights issue.

While Canada ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2010 and has long-standing pieces of legislation that ban disability as a form of discrimination, these pieces of legislation do not fully address issues surrounding accessibility. In recent years, the federal...
2019 – ICP at the United Nations

• ICP published ‘The Importance of Speech, Language and Communication to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals: A Summary of Evidence

• ICP member organisations gain accreditation for UN Conference of State Parties to the Convention for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (COSP)

• ICP leads delegation to COSP and holds first ever side event on communication rights
The event titled ‘People with Communication Disability Speak Up for Inclusion and Participation: How the Implementation of the CRPD and the SDGs can Support this Right’

- Streamed on UN Web TV and can still be watched here: https://media.un.org/en/asset/k1i/k1i2ru846
- Described as a ‘breakthrough event’
- Viewed Globally
- Promoted across multiple social media channels
- Press release issued syndicated across multiple publications
2020 to 2022 – The Pandemic

- Advocacy activities reduced
- Staff capacity impacted
- ICP made available resources for managing during the coronavirus pandemic to care providers and persons with communication disabilities
- ICP continued to raise awareness of Communication Disability in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic and the role played by Speech and Language Therapists / Speech Pathologists in the care and recovery of patients
Advocacy continued

• ICP partners continued to identify opportunities for engagement
• ICP made submissions to UN consultations including for access to work and economic opportunities for people with Communication Disability
• ICP partners also participated in the first virtual COSP roundtable meetings, which saw a substantial intervention from a teacher with a stammer
• Our last substantive advocacy activity was at COSP15 in 2022

• We were able to secure multiple interventions at the main debate (6th meeting) 15th Session of the Conference of States Parties to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (COSP15) | UN Web TV