

**INDIAN ASSOCIATION FOR
SOCIAL SCIENCES AND HEALTH
(IASSSH)**

**IASSSH 2025
CONFERENCE
REPORT**



**In collaboration with:
Department of Anthropology
Sambalpur University, Odisha**

INDIAN ASSOCIATION FOR SOCIAL SCIENCES AND HEALTH (IASSH)

20th Annual Conference 2025

In collaboration with

Department of Anthropology

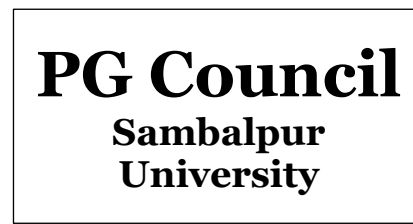
Sambalpur University, Odisha

Theme:

**Health and Wellbeing in India: Socio-economic and
Gender Implications**

5-7, March, 2025

Conference Supported by



About IASSH:

The primary objectives of IASSH are to bring together scientists, research scholars, practitioners, and policymakers from various disciplines in one forum to explore and work in the areas of social and cultural dimensions of illness, health and health care in the country. It attempts to strengthen the networking with similar organisations in India and abroad, linking social and health scientists, health activists and policymakers and initiating measures to evolve an equitable healthcare system in the country through appropriate and affordable health sector reforms. IASSH has more than 1300 life members who belong to different fields of social sciences and health studies.

Background of the Conference:

Given the issues concerning the health status, behaviour and health care system in India, there is a need to critically analyse various inter-connected issues pertaining to gender, health & sustainable development, with a view to developing useful perspectives and approaches. It is important for social scientists working in this field to debate and discuss the possibilities for evolving suitable mechanisms to interlink research, practice and policy. The conference provides a much-needed platform for researchers to present their views and ideas, making significant contributions towards a better understanding of the inter-relationship between health, gender, well-being and socio-economic development. A healthy population is an essential foundation of sustainable development, contributing to inclusive growth in the country.

Despite some progress in the last few decades, the country's human development index highlights the need for health promotion and disease prevention among different demographic segments of the population, especially among disadvantaged groups. Investments and interventions in health and health infrastructure are critical to accelerating progress towards achieving the SDG goals and breaking the inter-generational cycle of poverty in India. The IASSH conference is a leading forum for exchanging insights and experiences on different emerging health and social sciences issues to address the challenges of achieving adequate and affordable health care in India. Professionals from diverse backgrounds are coming together to advance the knowledge and understanding by debating health issues.

Inaugural Session



The 20th Annual Conference of the Indian Association for Social Sciences and Health (IASSH) was successfully conducted from [March 5-7, 2025](#), at Sambalpur University, Odisha. Organised in collaboration with the Department of Anthropology, Sambalpur University, the conference brought together leading scholars, researchers, practitioners, and policymakers to discuss the socio-economic and gender-related implications of health and well-being in India. The conference served as a dynamic platform for interdisciplinary discussions, showcasing research presentations, policy dialogues, and evidence-based insights on public health, gender equality, sustainability, and social justice.

The inaugural session of the 20th Annual Conference of the Indian Association for Social Sciences and Health (IASSH) commenced with a formal ceremony at the [Biju Patnaik Auditorium, Sambalpur University, on March 5, 2025, at 10:00 AM](#). The session began with the lighting of the ceremonial lamp, symbolising an auspicious start, followed by the University Anthem.



Inaugural Session of the IASSH Conference 2025 at Sambalpur University, Odisha

The session was opened with a warm welcome address by **Dr. Bharathi Karri**, local conference convenor at Sambalpur University, who acknowledged the presence of esteemed guests, scholars, and participants from various academic and research institutions. This was followed by the Address by **Prof. T.V. Sekher**, President of IASSH, who emphasised the significance of interdisciplinary collaboration in addressing public health challenges and advancing social science research.

The Chief Guest, **Prof. Bidhu Bhusan Mishra**, Vice-Chancellor of Sambalpur University, delivered an insightful speech on the role of academic institutions in shaping evidence-based policies and fostering research-driven solutions to socio-economic and health-related challenges. The Inaugural Address was delivered by **Dr Bijay Kumar Sahu**, Senior Regional Manager & Head of the National Research Development Corporation, Department of Scientific and Industrial Research, Government of India, who highlighted the intersection of scientific innovation, technology, and public health research, stressing the need for strategic collaborations between academia and industry to drive sustainable health initiatives.



Prof. Bidhu Bhusan Mishra
Vice Chancellor, Sambalpur
University



Prof. T.V. Sekher
President, IASSH



Dr Bijay Kumar Sahu,
Senior Regional Manager
DST, Government of India



Prof. Tushar Kanti Das
P.G. Council Chairman
Sambalpur University



Dr. Nruparaj Sahu
Registrar
Sambalpur University



Dr. Bharathi Karri
Conference Convenor
Sambalpur University

Further enriching the session, Prof. Tushar Kanti Das, P.G. Council Chairman, Sambalpur University, and Dr. Nruparaj Sahu, Registrar, Sambalpur University, addressed the audience as Guests of Honour. They emphasised the importance of bridging research with practice to create impactful health policies. They commended the efforts of IASSH and Sambalpur University in fostering meaningful discussions on the socio-economic and gender dimensions of health and well-being.



Prof. P. M. Sandhya Rani,
General Secretary, IASSH

The session also witnessed the Presentation of Best Publication Awards by the Chief Guest, recognising the outstanding contributions of young researchers in the field of health and social sciences. The ceremony concluded with a vote of thanks delivered by Prof. P.M. Sandhya Rani, General Secretary of IASSH, expressing gratitude to the esteemed guests, participants, and organisers for their collective efforts in making the conference a success.

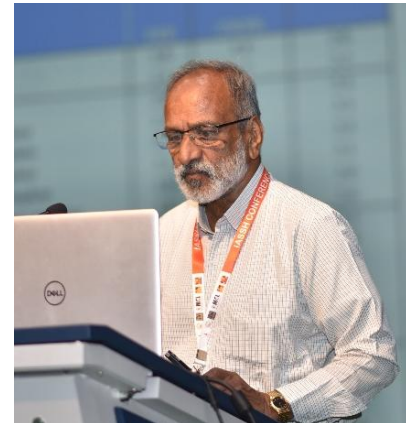
Following the inaugural session, attendees engaged in networking over high tea, marking the beginning of three days of intellectually enriching discussions and research exchanges.



Participants at the Inaugural Session at Biju Patnaik Auditorium

Eighth Prof. John Caldwell Memorial Lecture

The Eighth Prof. John Caldwell Memorial Lecture was held at the **Biju Patnaik Auditorium** of Sambalpur University at **12:00 PM** on **March 5, 2025**, as part of the 20th annual conference of IASSH. The session was chaired by **Prof. C. P. Prakasam** (Former President of IASSH) and co-chaired by **Prof. K. N. M. Raju**. The session began with an introduction by **Prof. T. V. Sekher** about the life and works of Prof. John Caldwell, a renowned demographer



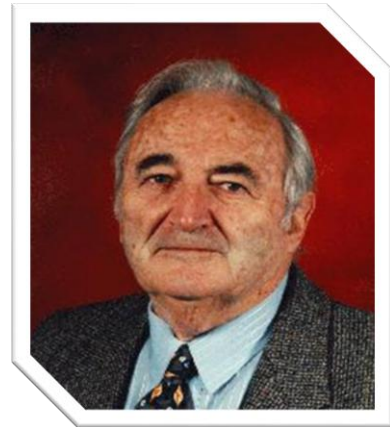
who contributed significantly to the field of demography. The guest speaker was **Prof. P. M. Kulkarni** (Former Professor, JNU, New Delhi), who delivered the Eighth Prof. John Caldwell Memorial Lecture on the theme - *“Fertility Decline in India: From an Alarming High Level to a Worryingly Low Level.”* Prof. Kulkarni is a distinguished Indian demographer who has contributed to our understanding of population changes in this vast and diverse country through his meticulous analysis and research publications. He is a consultant to various national bodies and international organisations, and is a mentor to many Indian demographers.

In the Eighth Prof. John Caldwell Memorial Lecture, Prof. P. M. Kulkarni discussed India’s fertility transition, highlighting its decline from alarmingly high levels in the 1950s (TFR of 5-6) to below-replacement levels (TFR ~2.0) by 2020. He emphasised that while fears of a population explosion have subsided, new concerns have emerged, including an ageing population, a shrinking workforce, and regional demographic imbalances. Prof. Kulkarni warned that persistent level of fertility could lead to long-term population decline, and stressed the need for balanced policies to support ageing populations, workforce sustainability, and family well-being. His lecture concluded with a call for rethinking India’s demographic policies in light of future socio-economic challenges.

At the conclusion of the lecture, **Prof. Arun Kumar Acharya**, Conference Convener from Sambalpur University, proposed the vote of thanks, expressing sincere appreciation to the guest speaker, chairpersons, and audience for their engagement and valuable contributions to the session. He acknowledged the insightful discourse on India’s fertility transition and its policy implications, emphasising how the lecture shed light on emerging demographic challenges and the need for strategic interventions. The session provided a comprehensive

understanding of fertility trends, socio-economic influences, and future population concerns, making it a significant addition to the conference's academic discussions.

The Doyen of Demography, **Prof. John Charles (Jack) Caldwell**, died on 12th March 2016 at the age of 87 in Canberra. He was associated with the Department of Demography of the Australian National University (ANU) for many decades. Caldwell's seminal work included documentation of the role of mother's education in fertility limitation and child mortality decline and the role of circumcision in inhibiting the spread of HIV/AIDS in Africa.



He is known for his “wealth flows” theory, which relates demographic transition theory to changes in intergenerational transfers within the family. He has encouraged and mentored many young scholars from India, and a good number of them received their Ph. Ds from ANU under his able guidance. His anthropological demographic work on South India, particularly on marriage, fertility and contraception, received much research attention. Prof. Caldwell was the President of IUSSP (1994-98). At Prof. K.N.M. Raju's initiative, Prof. Caldwell's former students, colleagues, and friends approached the Indian Association for Social Sciences and Health (IASSH) to institute a memorial lecture in his honour. Considering this request, the IASSH instituted the lecture series in memory of the most famous demographer of our times.



Release of the **Souvenir & Abstracts** on the occasion of the conference by Prof. P. M. Kulkarni, Prof. C. P. Prakasam, Prof. K.N.M. Raju, Prof. T. V. Sekher, Prof. P.M. Sandhya Rani, Prof. Arun Kumar Acharya, and Dr. Bharathi Karri

Tenth Prof. K. E. Vaidyanathan Memorial Lecture



The Tenth Dr. K. E. Vaidyanathan Memorial Lecture was held at the Biju Patnaik Auditorium on March 6, 2025, as part of the 20th Annual Conference of the Indian Association for Social Sciences and Health (IASSH). The session was chaired by **Prof. S. Siva Raju** (Former President, IASSH) and co-chaired by **Prof. U. S. Mishra** (IIPS Mumbai). The session commenced with a welcome address by **Prof. T. V. Sekher**, who reflected on the remarkable contributions of Dr. K. E. Vaidyanathan to the field of health and population studies. He

highlighted Dr. Vaidyanathan's pioneering work in the socioeconomic determinants of health and demography, which continues to shape academic discourse and policy research. The distinguished speaker for this year's memorial lecture was **Prof. Achin Chakraborty** (Former Director, Institute of Development Studies, Kolkata), who delivered an engaging talk on "*Normative Approaches to Measurement of Inequality in Health and Nutrition.*" Prof. Chakraborty is a well-known economist who has researched extensively on the economic dimensions of nutrition and health inequality in the Indian context.

In the Tenth Dr. K. E. Vaidyanathan Memorial Lecture, Prof. Achin Chakraborty explored normative approaches to measuring health and nutrition inequality, emphasizing the complexities of defining and assessing disparities. Drawing on Amartya Sen's work, he distinguished between statistical and normative measures, highlighting that equity, rather than absolute equality, is a more relevant concept in health assessments. He discussed the limitations of traditional indicators like the Gini coefficient, arguing that health and nutrition require a multidimensional approach beyond income-based measures. He addressed the socioeconomic determinants of health disparities, emphasizing that inequalities in health outcomes are often rooted in structural inequities beyond individual control.

Additionally, he critiqued self-reported morbidity data, showing how education and healthcare access influence health perceptions. The lecture underscored the importance of incorporating ethical considerations into health measurement to ensure more just and meaningful policy interventions, making a strong case for rethinking how inequality is assessed and addressed.

Overall, the Dr. K. E. Vaidyanathan Memorial Lecture provided valuable insights into the normative approaches to measuring health and nutrition inequality, emphasizing the need for equity-focused assessments and policy interventions. The session concluded with a formal vote of thanks by **Prof. R. Nagarajan**, who expressed his sincere gratitude to the guest speaker, chairpersons, and participants for their engagement and contributions. The lecture was widely appreciated for its theoretical depth, policy relevance, and its implications for future research on health inequality measurement and intervention strategies.

IASSH has instituted a memorial lecture in honour of **Prof. K.E. Vaidyanathan** since 2014. He was the President of the Indian Association for Social Sciences and Health (IASSH) from 2007 to 2011 and was mainly responsible for the expansion of the Association to its present form. Dr. Vaidyanathan was a distinguished demographer who served in various capacities in the United Nations and other organizations. He started his career as a faculty at the International Institute for Population Sciences in Mumbai. He later became the Head of the Department of Population Studies at the Institute of Rural Health and Family Planning in Gandhigram. He later joined the UN system and worked in various countries such as Egypt, Syria, Uganda, and Sudan, where he helped establish centers for population studies and research, advised planning commissions and conducted successful population surveys and censuses. In his later years, he also helped plan and implement the Living Standards Measurement Survey in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Dr. Vaidyanathan passed away in 2014 in Bangalore.



Participants at the Dr. K. E. Vaidyanathan Memorial Lecture.

Plenary Sessions

1. CINI Session: New-born Survival in Tribal Areas of India

The Plenary Session on "Newborn Survival in Tribal Areas of India," organised by the Child in Need Institute (CINI), Kolkata, focused on the challenges and solutions for improving neonatal health outcomes in tribal communities. Chaired by Prof. Jalandhar Pradhan (NIT Rourkela), the session featured expert discussions on community-based interventions and policy measures. Ms. Mitali Mohanty emphasised the integration of Indigenous knowledge with modern neonatal care, acknowledging both beneficial and harmful traditional practices. Mr. Rayhan Siddik shared insights from Jharkhand on home-based newborn care (HBNC), highlighting the role of ASHAs and traditional birth attendants in improving neonatal survival. Ms. Sweta Halder discussed a low-cost, community-driven approach for preterm and low-birth-weight babies. Dr. Priyamadhava Behera (AIIMS, Bhubaneswar) provided a policy perspective, emphasising the need to strengthen last-mile healthcare delivery and expand culturally sensitive health interventions.

Prof. Pradhan emphasised the need to integrate indigenous knowledge with modern neonatal health approaches to create sustainable and culturally sensitive healthcare solutions. In his closing remarks, Prof. Jalandhar Pradhan highlighted the importance of tailored interventions, community participation, and policy support to improve neonatal survival rates in tribal areas. The session reinforced the need for holistic, culturally adaptive healthcare strategies to address neonatal health disparities in underserved regions.



NSO Session: Data for Development

The Plenary Session on "Data for Development," organized by the National Statistics Office (NSO), was held at the Biju Patnaik Auditorium and chaired by Prof. R. Nagarajan (IIPS, Mumbai) and Prof. Pradeep Kumar Panda (AIPH-University, Bhubaneswar). The session featured a presentation by Mr. Rahul Kumar Patel (Deputy Director, NSO), who discussed the importance of data in shaping India's development policies.



Marking the 75th Anniversary of the National Sample Survey (NSS), the session highlighted the pivotal role of NSS data in evidence-based policymaking. Mr. Patel explained how scientifically designed sampling techniques and modern digital tools ensure the collection of high-quality socio-economic data across urban and rural India. He emphasised that public

cooperation is essential for maintaining data accuracy, which directly influences government decisions on health, education, employment, and economic growth.

The session also showcased various applications of NSS data, demonstrating how it supports policy formulation, resource allocation, and development planning. The discussion reinforced the importance of robust statistical systems in ensuring inclusive and sustainable progress. The session concluded with a call for enhanced public engagement and stronger institutional mechanisms to improve data collection and utilisation.

IASSH-Best Publication Awards for Young Researchers

To encourage academic excellence and quality research publications in the fields of social sciences and health studies, IASSH invited applications from young researchers for the Best Publication Awards. Following the announcement in August 2024, 30 applications were received. A screening committee first evaluated the applications based on eligibility criteria, including age (below 35 years), year of publication (2023), and authorship (single or first author). After initial scrutiny, 22 papers were shortlisted for a detailed review by the Selection Committee, comprising four senior experts in the field. The committee carefully assessed the scholarly merit, originality, and impact of the research and selected two outstanding young researchers for the award.

Despite the high quality of submissions, the final selection was made based on rigorous evaluation criteria. The winners were honoured with a Certificate and a cash prize of Rs. 25,000 each, which was presented to them during the conference.

The winners are:



Dr. Mayank Singh
International Institute
for Population
Sciences, Mumbai



Dr. Sucharita Maji
Indian Institute of
Technology, Dhanbad,
Jharkhand

Prof. K. Mahadevan Award for Best Publications - 2024

To encourage field-based research, academic scholarship, and scientific publications in social sciences and health studies, IASSH invited young researchers to submit their published journal articles for consideration for awards. Following the June 2024 announcement for the Prof. K. Mahadevan Award for Best Publications, we received 33 applications. A screening committee first scrutinized the applications for eligibility criteria such as age (below 35 years), year of publication (2023), focus on field-based research, and single/first author of the paper. 16 applications were shortlisted for final evaluation by a Selection Committee.

The Selection Committee, comprising four experts, reviewed the shortlisted papers and recommended two papers for the award this year. The winners received a certificate and a cash prize of Rs. 25,000.



Ms. Sampurna Das
Delhi School of
Economics (DSE),
University of Delhi



Dr. Prajwal Nagesh
Institute for Social and
Economic Change
(ISEC), Bengaluru

Technical and Poster Sessions

The 20th Annual Conference of IASSH received an overwhelming response to its call for abstracts across all three categories- Oral Presentations, Poster Presentations, and the Youth Best Paper Award Competition. A scientific committee carefully reviewed and selected the abstracts for presentation at the conference. Fourteen technical sessions were conducted, where researchers presented 61 papers covering diverse themes related to health, gender, social inequalities, and policy interventions. The poster presentation sessions showcased 39 research posters, held on March 5th and 6th, 2025, providing an interactive platform for researchers to engage with peers and experts.

The Best Youth Paper Award Competition was conducted on March 7th, 2025, with 18 young researchers competing for the recognition. The competition highlighted innovative research and emerging scholars, fostering academic excellence in social sciences and health studies. The enthusiastic participation and high-quality research presented at the conference reaffirmed IASSH's commitment to fostering young researchers and advancing interdisciplinary scholarship.



Technical and Poster Sessions in Progress.

Valedictory Session

The Valedictory Session of the 20th Annual Conference of the Indian Association for Social Sciences and Health (IASSH) was held at the Biju Patnaik Auditorium, Sambalpur University, on March 7, 2025. The session began with a welcome address by **Prof. Arun Kumar Acharya**, Conference Convener, Sambalpur University, who extended his gratitude to all participants and speakers for their contributions in making the conference a success.



Dr. Bharathi Karri, conference convenor and Head of the Department of Anthropology at Sambalpur University, provided a brief review of the conference, summarising the key discussions, technical sessions, and presentations that took place over the three-days. She highlighted the diverse range of topics covered, the engaging scholarly debates, and the valuable networking opportunities facilitated by the conference. In his remarks, **Prof. T. V. Sekher** (President, IASSH) expressed his appreciation for the enthusiastic participation of researchers and young scholars. He commended the efforts of Sambalpur University and the local organising team for their dedication to hosting the event successfully.

The Chief Guest, **Prof. Satya Narayana Ratha**, an eminent anthropologist, delivered an insightful speech on the emerging trends in social sciences and health research, stressing the need for context-driven policy solutions to address contemporary challenges in public health, gender equality, and economic sustainability. He encouraged young researchers to continue pursuing high-quality research that contributes to societal development. He also highlighted the contributions of anthropologists in understanding society and culture, which is crucial in studying well-being, based on his vast expertise in ethnographic research.



Prof. P. M. Kulkarni (former Professor, JNU, New Delhi), who was the Guest of Honour, emphasised the need for a multi-disciplinary approach in better understanding the determinants of health-seeking behaviours. He also highlighted the importance of combining quantitative and qualitative research methodologies to capture a more holistic picture of health disparities and socio-economic influences on healthcare utilisation.





Felicitations of the Chief Guest, Prof. Satya Narayana Ratha at the valedictory session.

Following the speeches, the Best Youth Paper and Best Poster Awards were presented jointly by **Prof S. N. Ratha** and **Prof. P. M. Kulkarni**, recognising the contributions by young researchers in social science and health research. The session concluded with a formal vote of thanks by **Dr Bharathi Karri**, who expressed sincere gratitude to the guests, speakers, organising team, student volunteers, and all participants for their efforts in making the conference a fruitful and memorable experience. The successful completion of the conference reaffirmed IASSH's commitment in promoting interdisciplinary research, academic excellence, and policy-driven discussions in social sciences and health studies.

The conference secretariat team included **Dr. P. Murugesan**, **Mr. Anjani Kumar Mishra**, **Mr. Jitender Prasad**, and **Mr. Pankaj Kumar Patel** of IASSH. Participants and convenors of the conference appreciated their efforts in successfully conducting the conference.



Audience at the Valedictory Session at the Biju Patnaik Auditorium

Announcement of the Awards

The Valedictory session's highlight was the announcement of the Best Youth Paper and Poster Awards. The winners were selected based on their research findings, methodology, and presentation skills. The President of IASSH, Prof. T.V. Sekher, announced the awards for best youth papers and best posters, which were selected by expert committees. The winners of the prestigious **Youth Best Paper Awards - 2025** were two young researchers **Ms. Sarika Rai** (IIPS, Mumbai) and **Ms. Silvia LV** (Vellore Institute of Technology, Vellore). They were each honoured with a certificate and cash prize.

Youth Best Paper Award Winners - 2025



Ms. Sarika Rai



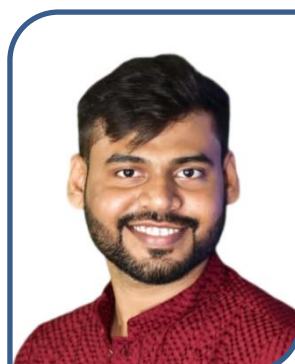
Ms. Silvia LV

The Best Poster Award Winners- 2025

The Best Poster Awards were given to four young scholars: **Ms Devu Rajeev** (IIT, Dhanbad), **Mr Veeresh Tahadal** (Indian Institute of Information Technology, Trichy), **Ms Sowmiya S** (Bharathiar University, Coimbatore), and **Mr Soumen Barik** (IIPS, Mumbai). They received the certificates and cash prizes. The audience applauded their achievements.



Ms. Devu Rajeev



Mr. Soumen Barik



Ms. Sowmiya S



Mr. Veeresh Tahadal

Cultural Evening

On the evening of March 5th, a cultural program was held at Biju Patnaik Auditorium, Sambalpur University, to showcase the rich traditional and cultural heritage of Odisha. The program featured various dance forms, including classical, folk, and contemporary dances. The dancers, dressed in colourful and traditional attire, presented a beautiful display of artistry and grace. The performances enthralled the audience. In addition to the dances, there were also several musical performances. The singers, accompanied by talented musicians, mesmerised the audience with their melodious voices and soulful renditions. The event was a testament to the fact that cultural programs like these are a great way to promote and preserve our cultural heritage. The event was well-attended and appreciated by all participants.



Felicitating of artists by conference organizers

Performance by Folk Artists



Dance performance by students

EC and General Body Meetings of IASSH

The Executive Committee (EC) of IASSH met on 5th March 2025 and deliberated on various activities of the Association, such as membership and fund mobilisation. The General Body (GB) meeting took place on 6th March 2025. The discussions in the GB meeting were on the membership drive, new collaborations and newsletters, fund mobilization for the conference, and planning for the next conference. The Audited Statement of Accounts of the Association for the year 2023-24 was presented and approved by the EC and General Body. The audited statement of accounts is placed on the IASSH website for the members' reference. 20th annual conference received financial support from the Indian Council for Social Science Research (ICSSR), CINI, NSO, MCL, Hindalco and PG Council of Sambalpur University. We are thankful to all these organisations for their contributions in successfully organising the conference, which was attended by around 200 delegates from various parts of the country.

New Office Bearers (2025-27)

The general body meeting held on 6th March 2025 unanimously elected the new office bearers of IASSH for the next two years (2025-27). Prof. R. Nagarajan is the new President. Prof. P. M. Sandhya Rani (Vice President), Dr. V. Selvaraju (General Secretary), Dr. Pragya Gupta (Joint Secretary) and Dr. Manas Pradhan (Treasurer) are office bearers. The Executive Committee members are- Prof. Jalandhar Pradhan, Prof C. Aruna, Prof Arun Kumar Acharya, Dr. Ramna Thakur, Dr. Benson Thomas, Dr. Md Juel Rana, Dr. Illias Kanchan and Dr. P. Murugesan. Prof. T. V. Sekher is the Ex-officio member in the Executive Committee. The Board of Trustees are Prof. C. P. Prakasam, Prof. S. Siva Raju, Prof. KNM Raju and Prof. N. Audinarayana.

In the General Body Meeting, the members appreciated the efforts of the outgoing President, Prof. T. V. Sekher and the entire EC for their valuable contributions to expanding the activities and enhancing the profile of the Association. IASSH has now emerged as a leading professional body in Social Sciences in India and is extremely popular among young researchers and PhD scholars.



Sambalpur University, Odisha

Conference Supported By:

