

SENSES CULTURAL

ANNUAL

REPORT

2018

SENSES CULTURAL
PROMOTES HOLISTIC
PROGRAMS TO RAISE
AWARENESS ABOUT
AUTISM AND
NEURODEVELOPMENTAL
DISORDERS THROUGH
CUTTING EDGE SCIENCE,
RESEARCH AND THE ARTS.



What an eventful and remarkable year! We held a fundraising event filled with fun and laughter, where we received the support of our community to expand our research programs on autism and its treatment in the Middle East. The event helped launch our International Autism Conference

held in Tehran, Iran. The conference marked our journey to link Sacramento to Tehran, and soon other cities across the Middle East, to promote the science and treatment of autism. This is work that matters because we aim to support the region's refugee, migrant and under-served communities. We have a long way to go, but this year was a fresh start to achieving our higher goals. We could not have achieved these goals without your help. Thank you for your support, and I look forward to more years of working together.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tata Monfared', written in a fluid, cursive style.

Tata Monfared
Founder and President,
SENSES CULTURAL

Key Milestones in 2018

Education

- Developed concept paper to launch pre-school curriculum programs for autistic children in Iran.
- Held scientific and community workshop in California on autism with a Middle East focus.

Health

- Became founding sponsor of the first international stem cell conference on autism and neurodevelopmental disorders, organized by the UC Davis Mind Institute.
- Held talks with World Health Organization (WHO) representatives in Iran to encourage joint supervision of projects.

Mission

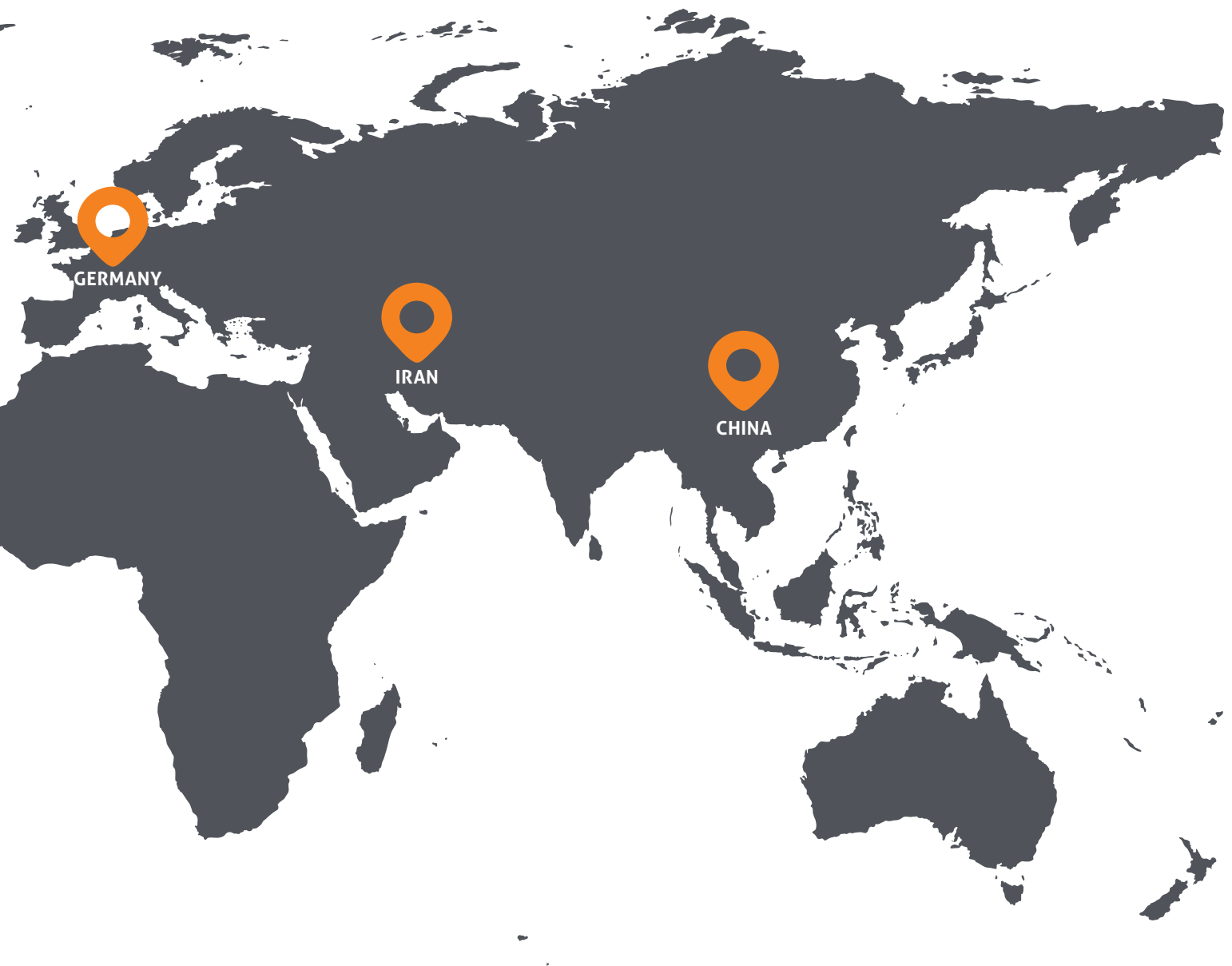
Established in 2012, **SENSES CULTURAL** is a non-profit organization based in Sacramento, California, dedicated to creating a peaceful and healthy world by fostering understanding about autism and neurodevelopment disorders. We cultivate relations with a national and international network of artists, scholars and cultural advocates who work in the field, and organize events for health experts and artists beyond their own geographic

and social borders. **Senses Cultural** offers partnership opportunities to interested organizations to collaborate, sponsor, host and promote projects that fulfill our common goals of serving communities dealing with autism and neurodevelopmental disorders. We encourage projects in which we can partner with others to build cross-cultural understanding and tolerance, and celebrate the diversity of the autistic community.



Where we work

Together with
communities,
scientists, researchers,
social workers, teachers
and psychologists,
SENSES CULTURAL
is slowly but surely
making a global impact.

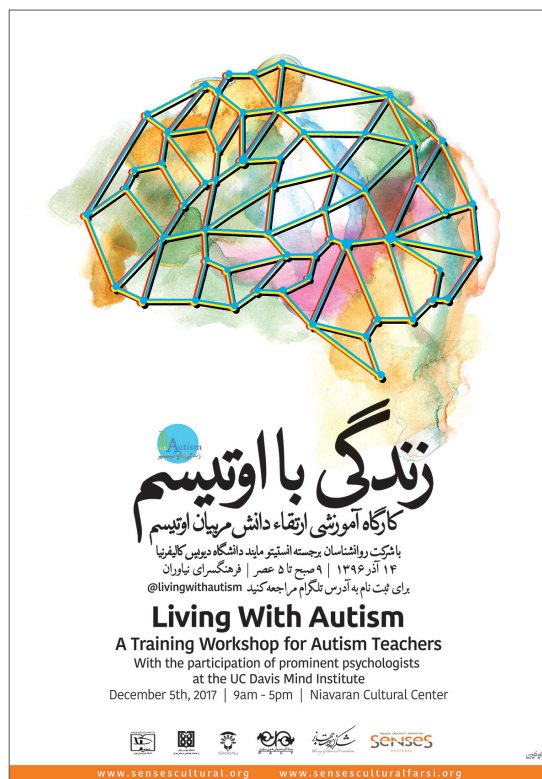




Our stories, Our impact

SPOTLIGHT ON EDUCATION

Early in May, **SENSES CULTURAL** co-hosted an autism workshop at Shiraz University, after signing a Memorandum of Understanding with the university. The workshop aimed to help families who have children with autism, and provide a space for experts in the field to meet and collaborate.



CONVENING THE INTERNATIONAL AUTISM CONFERENCE IN IRAN

In 2018, **SENSES CULTURAL** held the International Autism Conference in Tehran, Iran. The conference was part of our program's mission to promote the science and treatment of autism in Iran.

SENSES CULTURAL co-hosted two Living with Autism workshops in an autism school in Tehran in May. The workshops were held in collaboration with our sister organization Shokraneh Mavaddat Jahani, a civil organization group in Iran promoting the well-being of mothers, families and children with special needs. The two workshops



brought together the community with experts including Dr. Ismaili, Ms. Sharifi, and Mr. Ansari, who spoke on sensory stimulation and therapy, behavioral reform, and motivation for people with autism. In the second workshop, students and educators met with Shiraz University professor Dr. Nami, and Ms. Zakaria who spoke on sleep problems and art therapy for people living with autism.

On August 1, 2018, **SENSES CULTURAL** convened an event on to raise awareness on autism at the UC Davis Mind Institute for 50 parents and professionals from the Middle Eastern community of Sacramento, California.

In December, **SENSES CULTURAL** organized a workshop and presentation by Dr. Forghani on the issue of autism and the stigma associated with the diagnosis in some Middle Eastern cultures at the West Sacramento Washington School District. A clinical psychologist at Kaiser Permanente in the Autism Spectrum Disorder Center at Rancho Cordova, Dr. Forghani spoke about general outpatient therapy and early intervention in helping families cope with autism. The presentation included a detailed description of what stigma means for autistic individuals, and the differences between collectivist (Middle Eastern) and individualistic (American) cultural approaches to treating trauma in autistic communities.

SPOTLIGHT ON RESEARCH & FUNDRAISING

SPONSORING RESEARCH TO ADVANCE THE SCIENCE OF AUTISM AND NEURODEVELOPMENTAL DISORDERS

In May 2018, **SENSES CULTURAL** signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the UC Davis MIND Institute, a research center committed to the awareness, understanding, prevention, care, and cures of neurodevelopmental disorders such as autism. The MoU is for the purposes of:

1. Exchange of academic faculty
2. Exchange of students
3. Exchange of information and knowledge including articles within academic publications
4. Joint or cooperative organization of educational, scientific and cultural events

SENSES CULTURAL and the Department of Neuroscience at Shiraz University in Iran co-hosted their first autism research training event in early May 2018, after signing a Memorandum of Understanding. The event was held at the DANA Brain Health Institute, affiliated with Shiraz University. Over 50 parents with autistic children attended the



workshop to share experiences and gain practical advice on managing challenges. Speakers included our Advisory Board members Dr. Nami and Dr. Forghani.

SENSES CULTURAL raises community funds during Thanksgiving, Christmas and on World Autism Day each year, by bringing experts and professors from major universities to provide insights into the latest research and treatment of autism. This Thanksgiving, we were blessed to have Dr. Randi Hagerman, a lead researcher at the UC Davis MIND Institute, deliver our message to our community.

In October, **SENSES CULTURAL** held a fundraising event to support an upcoming International Autism Conference in Tehran. The conference is part of a journey we started years ago with great promise. From Sacramento to Tehran, and soon to other cities in Iran and the Middle East, **SENSES CULTURAL** is committed to helping those impacted by autism and related neurodevelopmental disorders, so they can live better lives.

SPOTLIGHT ON AUTISM BEYOND BORDERS

SENSES CULTURAL is the recipient of the U.S. Department of Treasury's sanctions exemptions license, which enables the organization to lead humanitarian projects in U.S. sanctioned countries including Iran.

SENSES CULTURAL builds on years of experience promoting the science, research and treatment of autism in Iran, and working collaboratively with Iranian experts in the field to develop culturally nuanced treatments.

To this end, **SENSES CULTURAL** successfully reached out to the Health and Treatment Commission of the Islamic Consultative Assembly and the Secretary General of the Majma Kheireen Salamat Keshvar (The Society of Charities for Country Health) to launch a collaborative project to develop a nationwide preschool program and curriculum for children with autism in Iran.

SENSES CULTURAL HOLDS WORKSHOP ON AUTISM WITH A MIDDLE EASTERN FOCUS

SENSES CULTURAL Family and Patient Advocacy Advisor Robert Miller moderated a workshop on Autism with a Middle Eastern Focus this year.

Mr. Miller tied his experience with the organization to his travels to the Middle East on behalf of **SENSES CULTURAL**, to discuss our work filling an important gap to make sure that families from a Middle Eastern background, whether they live in the region or in the US, have access to all the knowledge and services available to serve children with special needs including autism and other neurodevelopmental disorders.

The workshop brought together four prominent speakers from UC Davis and The Mind Institute, and the Sacramento health community, to offer evidence-based practice and research in the area. Themes covered in the workshop included migration-related trauma for autistic children, disability rights advocacy in California for migrant communities, Middle Eastern cultural barriers to treating autism, and the causes of autism.





photo credit: Sarah Silbiger/Getty Images

SPOTLIGHT ON ENVIRONMENTAL ADVOCACY AND AUTISM

SENSES CULTURAL MISSION TO SUPPORT CLIMATE STRIKERS

The coordinated action of cers to hold protests across some 150 countries has once more shed light on how important it is to preserve and protect our environment. Cutting edge research by **SENSES CULTURAL** demonstrates that environmental health directly impacts autism and other neurological disorders.

SENSES CULTURAL has promoted the work done by Greta Thunberg as an autistic activist fighting Climate Change. Our workshops brought together world medical experts, and shed light on the latest research in the field of autism and environmental pollution. Experts agreed that environmental pollution is a known cause of autism and other neurological disorders.

SENSES CULTURAL will continue its mission of raising awareness about the impact of the environment on autism. We proudly support the climate strikers and its leader Greta Thunberg who courageously turned the gift of being autistic into building a worldwide movement against environmental degradation.



CELEBRATING WORLD AUTISM DAY AND PROMOTING ART FOR AUTISM

SENSES CULTURAL celebrates World Autism Day each year in April, with a series of luncheons, community workshops, and fund-raising programs. This year, **SENSES CULTURAL** organized community lunches with Middle Eastern themes, and promoted art that demonstrates the intersections of culture and autism in different communities.

In 2018, **SENSES CULTURAL** founder Tata Monfared spoke at the Living with Autism event held on the sidelines of Art for Autism exhibition held at



Niavaran Institution of Art & Cultural Foundation in Tehran. In her talk, Tata raised awareness about the importance of arts and culture for families living with autism and other neurodevelopmental disorders, and enlisted the pro bono services and support of many local artists and actors who volunteered to support our mission.

Annual Financials

SENSES CULTURAL

receives the bulk of its funds from The Senses Cultural Foundation.

In 2018, major donors to the organization included community members in the Sacramento area.



CONTACT

3626 Fair Oaks Boulevard,
STE 100, Sacramento,
CA 95864

(916)-835-5666

tata@sensescultural.org
www.sensescultural.org
