

World Federation of the Deaf (WFD)



An International
Non-Governmental
Organisation
in official liaison with
ECOSOC, UNESCO,
ILO and WHO

WFD



- Established in Rome, Italy, in 1951
- 127 Ordinary Members (National Associations of Deaf people) world-wide
- 6 Regional Secretariats,
1 Interim Regional Secretariat and
1 Regional Co-operating Partner
- Recognised by the United Nations (UN)
and its agencies as the international
spokes-organisation for Deaf people

Membership Categories

- Ordinary Members
- Associate Members
- International Members
- Honorary Members
- Sponsoring Members
- Individual Members





Ordinary Member

- National Organisation of Deaf people – only one per country
- Clear majority of Deaf voting members
- Governing Board with majority of Deaf people
- Must follow the same aims as WFD
- Has the right to send two delegates to the WFD General Assembly, with one vote



Associate Member

- Any Organisation which desires to support the aims of WFD – unlimited number per country
- Can be Deaf or hearing-run
- Must be approved by the Ordinary Member of that country
- Must support the aims of WFD
- Can observe WFD General Assembly, but has no voting rights

International Member

Any organisation with exclusively international objectives and goals which promote similar goals and objectives as those of WFD

Individual Member

Any individual person who desires to maintain and support WFD and its activities.

Honorary Member

An individual who has rendered important and outstanding international services to WFD

Sponsoring Member

An organisation or individual who shows support for the aims of WFD with a sum of money beyond a normal membership fee





Regional Secretariats

- WFD Regional Secretariat for South America (Venezuela)
- WFD Regional Secretariat for Central America and the Caribbean (Costa Rica)
- WFD Regional Secretariat for Asia and the Pacific (Japan)
- WFD Regional Secretariat for Eastern and Southern Africa (Kenya)
- Eastern Europe and Middle Asia Regional Secretariat of the WFD (Russian Federation)
- Central European Regional Secretariat of the WFD (Czech Republic)
- Interim Regional Secretariat for the Arab Region (Syria)
- ***Regional Co-operating Partner:*** European Union of the Deaf (Belgium)



Statutes of the WFD

Article 2 . AIMS

Section 1 - Aims

In accordance with the principles and objectives of the United Nations (UN) Charter, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other general acts and recommendations of the UN and its specialised agencies, WFD develops its activities towards the goal of equalisation of opportunities and full participation in society by Deaf individuals. WFD shall, when necessary, use special, legal or administrative measures to ensure that Deaf people in every country have the right to preserve their own sign languages, organisations, and cultural and other activities.

Why is it so hard to improve the status of Sign Languages?

- “Sign Languages are not real languages”
- “The Deaf community is not a cultural minority”
- Pressure to ‘fit in’ with the majority
- Parents and others do not have information
- Educators do not know sign language/do not sign fluently, and do not understand Deaf culture
- Some countries do not have ‘official languages’

Why is it important?

👉 Basic human right

👉 Basis for human development

👉 Communication

👉 Interaction

👉 Education

👉 Employment

👉 Gives status to the group/individuals

👉 Recognition of language = recognition of cultural status

👉 Freedom of expression

👉 Right to an identity

👉 Access to information

👉 Interpreters

👉 Sign Language TV

👉 News

👉 Entertainment

👉 Culture

👉 Participation in all aspects of society

👉 Protection from abuse, neglect, exploitation

The UN Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities

United Nations, 1994

- Rule 5.7: Consideration should be given to the use of sign language in the education of deaf children, in their families and communities. Sign language interpretation services should also be provided to facilitate the communication between deaf persons and others.
- Rule 6.9: Owing to the particular communication needs of deaf and deaf/blind persons, their education may be more suitably provided in schools for such persons or special classes and units in mainstream schools. At the initial stage, in particular, special attention needs to be focused on culturally sensitive instruction that will result in effective communication skills and maximum independence for people who are deaf or deaf/blind.

The Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education UNESCO, 1994

- Point 21

Educational policies should take full account of individual differences and situations. The importance of sign language as the medium of communication among the deaf, for example, should be recognized and provision made to ensure that all deaf persons have access to education in their national sign language. Owing to the particular communication needs of deaf and deaf/blind persons, their education may be more suitably provided in special schools or special classes and units in mainstream schools.

But are these treaties enough??

NO!

- Depend on country ratification
- Not always legally binding documents
- Don't always include monitoring
- Rarely (if at all) have specific plans of action, with deadlines for implementation
- Do not always outline responsibility for implementation

UNESCO Education For All (EFA)

The goal is to achieve education for all by the year 2015

- ❖ **This goal will only be achieved when all nations recognise that the universal right to education extends to individuals with disabilities, and when all nations act upon their obligation to establish or reform public education systems that are accessible to, and meet the needs of, individuals with disabilities.**

Flagship on Education for All and the Rights of Persons with Disabilities: Towards Inclusion

- **Established to act as a catalyst to ensure that the right to education is realised for individuals with disabilities.**
- **Formed by an alliance of diverse organisations, including global disability organisations, international development agencies, agencies of the United Nations, intergovernmental agencies, and experts in the field of education from developed and developing nations.**

UN Convention



Rights of People with Disabilities



With

Rights

Comes

Responsibility