



Discovering Deaf Worlds and World Federation of the Deaf launches Three-Year Social Inclusion of the Deaf in the Dominican Republic Program

ROCHESTER, N.Y., 1 August 2017 — Discovering Deaf Worlds (DDW) and the World Federation of the Deaf (WFD) are entering the first of six phases in a three-year program in collaboration with the National Deaf Association of the Dominican Republic (ANSORDO). This program, supported by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), will improve ANSORDO's sustainability through organisational development, process consultation and human rights training from DDW and WFD.

Under this cooperative agreement with USAID, DDW will be the lead organisation to implement the program, "Social Inclusion of the Deaf in the Dominican Republic," in partnership with ANSORDO to advance the rights of the Dominican Deaf Community through local capacity building.

ANSORDO President, Liliana Mariotti expressed, "We want to improve our Deaf Community's quality of life, development, and deaf identity and we need laws and regulations to support those efforts." Mariotti has high aspirations for the program and as a result of this collaboration with the DDW and WFD, she feels she will be better prepared to support, lead, and empower the Deaf Community.

"The need for access to education, accessibility, and equality is evident within the Dominican Deaf Community. With the support from this program, ANSORDO will be better equipped to self-advocate as well as engage in crucial discussions with the Dominican public and policy makers that will lead to the advancement of the community", said History Estill-Varner, Program Director of DDW.

DDW's leadership, Executive Director Davin Searls and Estill-Varner will travel to the Dominican Republic in August to implement phase one of the program. This phase begins with a comprehensive survey to determine the precise community/organisational issues faced by deaf people in the Dominican Republic. Based on this needs assessment, a series of interventions and priority training topics will be identified and developed, addressing the most pressing needs of the Dominican Deaf Community as a whole.

Trainings may encompass topics such as data collection, strategic planning, disability law, leadership succession, financial management, fund development, and so forth. By year three, ANSORDO's core team of leaders trained throughout the program will host a national forum on deaf leadership for deaf people living throughout the country.

"This program is in line with the goals of the WFD which are to enhance the capacity and human rights knowledge of the global Deaf Communities so that they are empowered to engage and exert influence, and effect changes in their countries. Human rights of deaf people starts with recognising the cultural and linguistic aspects of the Deaf Community through sign language.

As a deaf-led organisation with strong and relevant experience, DDW is ideally positioned to operationalise this program, ensuring that the trainings are fully accessible to the Deaf Community. This is truly 'Nothing About Us, Without Us' in practice," stated the WFD President, Colin Allen.

According to the Deaf People and Human Rights Report published by the WFD in 2009, at least 90 percent of deaf people in developing countries receive no formal education. The Social Inclusion for the deaf program strives to provide deaf Dominicans with the training they need to reduce this statistic, and strengthen the capacity of the Deaf Community throughout the Dominican Republic's 32 provinces.

For more information about this program, please contact Discovering Deaf Worlds Program Director History Estill-Varner at hvarner@discoveringdeafworlds.org, or visit www.discoveringdeafworlds.org.

About the United States Agency for International Development (USAID)

USAID is the lead U.S. Government agency that works to end extreme global poverty and enable resilient, democratic societies to realise their potential. For more information please visit www.usaid.gov.

About Discovering Deaf Worlds (DDW)

Discovering Deaf Worlds is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organisation dedicated to advancing the self-determination of signing deaf communities through local capacity building in developing countries; due to limited access and communication, Deaf people have little to no exposure to formal organisational management training, limiting the impact of their advocacy efforts. DDW is a facilitator, working with local leaders and Deaf advocacy organisations to assess their community's needs and available resources, then providing organisational development and training to match. DDW recently completed a program in collaboration with the Philippine Federation of the Deaf, strengthening the organization and training more than 1,700 Deaf Filipinos throughout the country.

About the World Federation of the Deaf (WFD)

The World Federation of the Deaf (WFD) is an international non-governmental organisation representing and promoting approximately 70 million deaf people's human rights worldwide. The WFD is a federation of deaf organisations from 134 nations; its mission is to promote the human rights of deaf people and full, quality and equal access to all spheres of life, including self-determination, sign language, education, employment and community life. WFD has a consultative status in the United Nations and is a founding member of International Disability Alliance (IDA). <http://www.wfdeaf.org>

About the National Deaf Association of the Dominican Republic (ANSORDO)

ANSORDO was established in 2000 and is recognised by the Dominican government as the national body representing Deaf people. It has 70 individual members, all of whom are Deaf. ANSORDO recently elected their first female president, Liliana Mariotti. Their overarching goals are to: encourage the Deaf community in social and cultural development; motivate Deaf people in educational development, life styles and sport; and teach Deaf people about responsibilities and rights of members of society.

###