Building Deaf-Led Bilingual Education Systems in Southeast Asia: Lessons and Experiences

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The Nippon Foundation
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Overview

1. Why TNF is engaged in deaf education

2. Bilingual deaf education in Southeast Asia

A) The Philippines

B) The Lao People's Democratic Republic

C) The Republic of Indonesia

3. Lessons and experiences

THE NIPPON FOUNDATION

1. Why TNF is engaged in deaf education

The problem:

The problem at hand is many deaf people in Southeast Asia do not get the chance to acquire accessible language.

The solution:

- In alignment with CRPD, The Nippon Foundation is engaged the spread and use of sign languages as a medium of communication and education.
- We support acquisition of sign languages to expand opportunities for deaf people.

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1. Why TNF is engaged in deaf education

The meaning of quality inclusive education for deaf learners:

“Inclusion is the learner’s right to participate and reach their potential in public institutions such as schools. In other words, inclusion is an experience, not a placement.”

(WFD Position Paper on Inclusive Education, 2018)

The Nippon Foundation considers educational inclusion to mean that high-quality education is made accessible to everyone. To this end, we support building educational environments where deaf learners can be taught in accessible sign language.

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2. Bilingual deaf education in Southeast Asia: A)the case of the Philippines

Initiated: 2016

Implemented by: De La Salle College of Saint Benilde

Key Milestone:

- In 2018, a model junior high school was established in Manila.
- In 2026, the bilingual deaf education was replicated in a public junior high school in Muntinlupa, NCR.

Core activities: Teacher training, Student Assessment, Production of teaching &learning materials based on FSL linguistics.

2. Bilingual deaf education in Southeast Asia: A)the case of the Philippines



(An FSL remedial class lesson, September 2026)

"After the tutoring sessions, I noticed that, wow, they improved, they're confident, excited to learn FSL, different math solving, and appreciative. They can express themselves, can listen and understand, interact and communicate with others, and their parents also interact and notice that they've improved. I'm happy that they improved and they should continue learning FSL in different subjects."

(Observation by a math tutor at the Benilde Deaf School)

2. Bilingual deaf education in Southeast Asia: B) the case of the Lao PDR

Initiated: 2018

Implemented by: Asian Development with the Disabled Persons

Key Milestone:

- In 2023, a model high school was established in Vientiane.
- In 2026, four high school graduates entered university.

Core activities: Teacher training and Backline Support for the Office for Students with Disabilities at the National University of Teacher Education

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Vorlachit Kittavong(Nok)
From Laos

2. Bilingual deaf education in Southeast Asia: C) the case of Indonesia



- **Initiated:** 2025
- **Implemented by**: Pijar Foundation
- **In cooperation with:**
  - Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education
  - Jakarta Provincial Government
  - Center for Indonesia Sign Language, etc.
- **Key Milestone:**

The first model elementary school is scheduled to open in Jakarta in Spring 2027

- **Current Focus:** Teacher training underway
  (20 hearing teachers and 5 deaf teachers)

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3. Lessons and experiences

1/ Community-Led Initiatives

Local Deaf individuals are involved in all of our projects.

2/ Access to Accessible Language

Inclusive education begins with ensuring Deaf people have access to education in an accessible language.

3/ Developing Deaf Leaders & Educators

Our experience shows the necessity of training Deaf teachers and researchers.

Participants enter as beneficiaries and become vital leaders sustaining the Deaf community.

4/ True Inclusivity (Dual Perspective)

Inclusive education means inclusivity not only for learners, but also for educators.

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Thank you for listening!

Our latest research on bilingual deaf education:

Evidence-Based Research on Bilingual Deaf Education for Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing Children (2025)

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