



WORLD FEDERATION
OF THE DEAF

ANNUAL ✓REPORT

2024





2024 was a successful year for our organisation, the World Federation of the Deaf (WFD), as we increased our presence and visibility at the United Nations, advocating for the rights of deaf people worldwide, expanded our network of partners, conducted successful projects in Global South countries, and continued our extensive support to our Ordinary Members for the recognition of their national sign languages.

The WFD made considerable progress in the completion of the Action Plan 2023-2027, adopted by the General Assembly in July 2023 in South Korea. The Action Plan is divided into five main objectives, and for each objective, the WFD achieved the following results:

Objective 1: Building Capacity Across the Globe

Objective 2: Putting Deaf People on the Agenda

Objective 3: Realising Nothing About Us Without Us

Objective 4: Achieving Sign Language Rights for All

Objective 5: Investing in a Strong and Sustainable Organisation



In 2024, we have grown and utilised our global network, made considerable progress in advocating for the rights of deaf people, and promoted the recognition of national sign languages in all areas of life.



Dr Joseph Murray
WFD President

Objective 1

Building Capacity Across the Globe

25 Trainings

The WFD contributed to the capacity building of deaf people and their representative organisations, national associations of deaf people, through training sessions and presentations on the human rights of deaf people in different areas such as sign language rights, right to sign language for children and their families, deaf women's economic, social, cultural and environmental rights, as well as, sexual and reproductive rights, among others.

Countries: Australia, Austria, Bolivia, Brazil, Cambodia, Canada, Finland, Indonesia, Italy, Laos, Malaysia, Mexico, Montenegro, Singapore, Thailand, The Netherlands, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom, United States of America, Vietnam and New Zealand.



137 Ordinary Members

We expanded our membership to 137 Ordinary Members by welcoming a new Ordinary Member from Vanuatu as well as six new Associate Members from France, Iran, Kosovo, Pakistan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan, reaching a total of 52 Associate Members, over 200 Individual Members, and four International Members.

Objective 2

Putting Deaf People on the Agenda

The WFD advanced the inclusion of deaf people in human rights and development agendas through research, advocacy, and citizen data projects.

In collaboration with CBM Global Disability Inclusion, we conducted a pilot study on 20 deaf Indigenous Bolivian women's health experiences and trained 33 deaf Indigenous women in sexual and reproductive health rights.



International Day on Sign Languages

Through initiatives like the International Day on Sign Languages and the International Week of Deaf People, the WFD raised global awareness. Our Shine a Blue Light campaign and Global Leaders Challenge saw national landmarks lit in blue and commitments from leaders worldwide to support national sign languages and the rights of deaf people.



As part of the Leave No One Behind Global Partnership, the WFD supported the Copenhagen Framework on Citizen Data, integrating deaf perspectives into data collection efforts.



39 experts in 6 Expert Groups

The WFD also established 39 experts in six Expert Groups to develop resources and further our work:

- Accessibility
- Health
- Disaster Risk Reduction
- Education
- Human Rights
- Sign Language

Objective 3 Realising Nothing About Us Without Us



A deaf expert elected at the CRPD Committee

The WFD successfully advocated for the election of a deaf expert, Mr. Hiroshi Tamon, to the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2024-2027). He has been elected by 157 State Parties. Collaborating with the Ordinary Member Japan, the WFD coordinated a collective Letter of Support to 187 States Parties and provided guidance to our members.



5 written contributions to UN bodies

The WFD submitted five written contributions to UN bodies on key issues affecting deaf people: indigenous deaf persons, cyberbullying, minority rights, participation in sports, and involvement in the 2030 Agenda and Post-2030 discussions. Additionally, we released the Position Paper on the Right to Sign Language for Families of Deaf Children.

The WFD increased visibility through active participation in the most relevant International events:

- **17th session of the Conference of States Parties to the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities:** meeting with 4 UN representatives, and 20 government and INGOs representatives, 5 official statements, 1 panel co-chaired and 2 side-events as panelist and/or chair.
- **2024 UN Civil Society Conference:** delivering a speech on the rights of deaf people.
- **G7 (Group of Seven) Ministerial Meeting on Inclusion and Disability:** the WFD took advantage of this rare opportunity to meet with Ministers from the G7 countries to advance our members' advocacy objectives in their countries and our vision.
- **World Health Summit's First Global Expert Consultation on Health Equity for Persons with Disabilities.**
- **5th UN World Data Forum:** 4 interventions addressing the importance of including deaf people in data collection and presenting the results of the Bolivia pilot study.
- **55th session of the UN Statistics Committee:** 1 plenary speech promoting the development of data on deaf people and sign languages before government officials in charge of statistics offices.
- **77th World Health Assembly:** 1 side event as panelist.
- **Summit of the Future:** two side events highlighting deaf-led research on deaf women's access to health.



Disaster Risk Reduction

The WFD contributed to the inclusion of deaf people's human rights in UN policies and instruments by means of submissions to UN bodies, participation in and intervention at UN major events, and advocacy work in the field of disaster risk reduction.

Addressing one of our newest priorities, Disaster Risk Reduction, the WFD has been proactive in providing support to Ordinary Members whose countries are faced by disasters and armed conflicts, including Palestine, and held strategic meetings with UN agencies such as United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA), and United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR). We are actively working to ensure that deaf people are not left behind in crises, along with their representative organisations.

The WFD conducted actions to address the human rights violations faced by deaf people in Gaza, Palestine, through fundraising and partnerships with the Palestinian Union of the Deaf (supporting deaf people in Gaza with funds), Falaah Projects (providing assistance to 28 deaf refugees in Egypt), Disability Justice for Palestine, International Deaf Emergencies (preparing the evacuation of deaf children from Gaza to a deaf school in West Bank) as well as regular contacts with the State of Palestine (Ministry of Social Development) and the US Department of State.



The WFD participated in the Disability Reference Group to promote disability-inclusive humanitarian responses and collaborates with CBM Global and our Ordinary Members in Nepal and the Philippines on climate change advocacy. Plans for 2025 include creating an e-learning platform on climate advocacy for deaf people, funded by the Global Greengrants Fund.

Objective 4

Achieving Sign Language Rights for All



Translation of the WFD Guidelines

After the launch of the WFD Guidelines on Achieving Sign Language Rights in English in 2023, the Guidelines were translated into the five other official UN languages, Russian, Chinese, Spanish, French, and Arabic and disseminated in 2024. These translations reached a broader range of national associations of deaf people in their advocacy work toward the recognition of their national sign languages. The WFD continued to provide closer guidance and support to Ordinary Members sign language recognition work.



Sign Language Rights project

As part of the Sign Language Rights project funded by the Nippon Foundation, the WFD conducted a capacity building and follow-up and evaluation workshop for each of the six countries who received training on human rights and sign language rights in 2022 and 2023. We continued our advocacy work for sign language rights along with the representatives in this region by meeting Ms Lin Yang, Deputy Executive Secretary of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP), Ms Saowalak Thongkuay, CRPD Committee member and the ASEAN Disability Forum.



Inscription in the UNESCO Memory of the World

The WFD launched an online event to celebrate the recent inscription of the historical documents of the 1880 Milan Congress Resolutions and the 2010 Vancouver Resolutions in the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Memory of the World, marking a historic step in the defence of the recognition of sign languages and inclusive education. At the occasion of the 30th Anniversary of the Salamanca Statement, the WFD submitted a thinkpiece on inclusive education and deaf children. During the International Week of Deaf People, the Declaration on the Rights of Deaf Children was further disseminated and signed by 4000 people worldwide.

Objective 5 Investing in a Strong and Sustainable Organisation



14 meetings with its Regional Secretariats

The WFD held 14 meetings with its Regional Secretariats (Arab Region, Asia, Interim East, Interim Southern Africa, Oceania, Western and Central Africa, and South America), building stronger relations and communication with the WFD Ordinary Members who are affiliated with them.



10 Staff Members

The staff of the WFD Secretariat expanded from 9 to 10 people by welcoming a new Media Officer. We established a detailed 4-year Action Plan and monitoring system of Objectives and Key Results, providing a robust framework for the work of the WFD's work until 2027.



New partnerships

We expanded our partnership network to nearly 60 Partners by closing new partnerships with the Global Alliance for Disaster Resource Acceleration (World Institute on Disability) and Minority Rights Group International. Moreover, the WFD joined several consultative platforms and organisations such as the UNESCAP's Working Group on the Asian and Pacific Decade 2023-2032, the Disability Reference Group, the Zero Project's Committee on AI and Disability, the Leave No One Behind Global Partnership on Citizen Data, the Women Rights Caucus, and the Women Enabled International's Inclusive Generation Equality Collective.



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