

Webinar on Inclusive Education for Deaf Learners

Susana Stiglich, WFD Sign Language Rights Officer (Moderator)

We're delighted to invite you to this webinar on inclusive education. This is hosted by the World Federation of the Deaf, the WFD. It is supported by IDA, the International Disability Alliance. This is part of the webinar series that we have been having to celebrate the 75th anniversary of the WFD. My name is Susana. I will be hosting this webinar today and moderating the questions. This webinar will be presented in International Sign and interpreted into spoken English. All participants are able to comment and put questions in the Q&A box that you can find within your Zoom platform if you want to ask questions. We will be recording this webinar. After the webinar has finished, we will be sharing it through the WFD website. Today we will be discussing the issue of inclusive education and what that means from a variety of deaf perspectives. This is in relation to Article 24 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the UNCRPD. This includes information from the global report on education and the Sign Language Rights Report from the WFD and IDA. We look forward to hearing from our speakers. I would like to introduce Mirriam Mutini and Dr Joseph Murray, Lucas Magongwa, Ikumi Kawamata and Ryoko Konno from the Nippon Foundation and Josh, all of whom will be presenting. After their presentations have finished, we will then have an opportunity to ask questions. I'm delighted to open this webinar and ask Mirriam to join us. She is a global influence manager for IDA and hails from Kenya. Mirriam, the floor is yours.

Mirriam Nthenge, Global Influence and Research Senior Manager International Disability Alliance

Thank you very much, Susana, Dr Joseph Murray, colleagues and representative organisations for persons with disabilities. Good afternoon. Good morning. Good evening. It is a pleasure to join you today on behalf of the International Disability Alliance, the global alliance of fourteen regional and global organisations of persons with disabilities. I'd like to thank the World Federation of the Deaf for convening this important conversation on inclusive education for deaf learners as it celebrates its 75th anniversary. This year, as we all know, we're celebrating 20 years of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Today's webinar offers an opportunity, not only to reflect on the progress in advancing inclusive education for deaf learners, but to renew our commitment to ensuring that every deaf child can access quality education,

develop their full potential, and participate meaningfully in society. Over the past 20 years of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, we have made progress, strengthened international norms and standards on inclusive education, and increased the participation of deaf persons in all aspects of life including decision-making processes. We have witnessed increased political will and recently, established an accountability structure with the Leadership Council. However, we must recognise that commitments and accountability structures are not enough unless they translate into meaningful change. This requires adequate resources and investments in transforming educational systems. Last month, global leaders mobilised close to 3.5 billion US dollars for education. While this is an important milestone, unless finance is prioritised for disability inclusion and invested directly in systemic change, persons with disabilities risk being left behind. For deaf learners, this means ensuring investment in Sign Language and creating learning environments where deaf learners can learn, communicate, and participate fully. We also know very well that meaningful inclusion also requires leadership by persons, by deaf persons and their organisation. As the International Disability Alliance, we believe that participation is central to the realisation of the rights of persons with disabilities including the right to education. This is why we have dedicated a working group on inclusive education that brings together representation from all fourteen regional and global members including the World Federation of the Deaf. Deaf persons must not simply be consulted after decisions have been made, they must participate meaningfully in designing, implementing, monitoring, and evaluating education policies and programmes and this is the spirit of the convention and the spirit of General Comment No. 4. As I conclude, let us ensure that financing policies and accountability mechanisms respond to the realities of deaf learners. Thank you.

Susana Stiglich, WFD Sign Language Rights Officer (Moderator)

Thank you very much for your presentation. Thank you very much to the International Disability Alliance, IDA, for joining us and continually supporting the WFD in partnership on the topic of inclusive education. I'd like to pass the floor to our next speaker who will be establishing the framework, the international framework for today to influence our discussion. I'm delighted to introduce the President of the WFD, Dr Joseph Murray. He will be talking about what inclusive education means, and the challenges when conceiving mainstreaming versus inclusive education in light of the IDA Report, Article 24 of the CRPD and also the global deaf experience.

Dr Joseph J. Murray, President, World Federation of the Deaf

The WFD is delighted to work in collaboration with IDA, with the goal of inclusive education. I would like to echo the remarks of Susana. Recently, the WFD celebrated our 75th anniversary in Rome. One of the topics discussed was the education of deaf children. This is one of our primary goals to ensure when we're working with 140 members, two-thirds from the global south, we focus on the rights of deaf children, the rights of deaf children to good, quality access and the underpinning that Sign Language has within that context. Many governments support inclusive education, but the question is, what does inclusive education look like for deaf children? What specifically does that mean? In many of our partnerships, we see deaf children are included physically, but they're not able to actively engage in a peer group or actively engage in the learning process. Typically, this is because they may be mainstreamed and they may have physical access to the building, but that child does not have, and is not included meaningfully within the education process and the socialisation that happens in that environment. That child is isolated from everything else that happens. Clearly for inclusive education, the system must change. We need to ensure that that child is included within the educational goals, within a community, with other people like themselves, who use the same language and this is the aim of the IDA Global Report from 2020 discussing clearly whether integration works within an environment for deaf children and how we need to ensure that they have a maximumly inclusive environment with a peer group and learning directly through education. We know that hearing children are not taught through interpreters and so, if we want to ensure that deaf children have meaningful education, they need to be in a Sign Language environment where they're directly communicated with and that means the system of education needs to change. At the WFD, we are founding members of the International Disability Alliance and we have worked in partnership with other disability groups to improve the situation for disabled people. We work in alignment with the disability movement as is seen by the 2020 report and the report is highly significant. It clearly articulates the needs of deaf learners. That inclusive bilingual Sign Language using schools are not a segregated environment. But should be part of a national system for inclusive education. It may be that your country has some deaf schools, where Sign Language isn't used, or that the curriculum is different from the National Curriculum. We know that this is a starting point. These schools should be transformed into bilingual educational schools, not closed. The schools can be strengthened and turned into bilingual institutions, we have some students who can use speech and develop their written language skills as well as their Sign Language skills. These schools should work under the Ministry of Education and include all deaf learners. Schools should include all

people of all disabilities including those who are blind and that's in alignment with Article 24 of the convention. If governments are signatories to that convention then they need to make sure there is systematic change. The Government lobbied to ensure that Sign Language was included in the convention and included in Article 24 to ensure that the language needs and the communication needs of learners were paid attention to. That the environment suited their learning needs. Governments need to recruit teachers including those with disability, and those who are Sign Language users and deaf people as teachers. The committee approved this and General Comment No. 4 is very clear in its articulation. The environment for deaf children needs to be a signing environment where they have adult role models and deaf Sign Language using peers. Deaf children have a right to education. Without Sign Language they're not able to access their education effectively. This position of inclusive education is clearly articulated in our inclusion policy. Deaf learners need to have good quality education. That means they have access to education in their country's Sign Language. The official government curriculum is enacted within that school at the same level as their hearing peers. Teachers must be fluent in Sign Language. That must include deaf teachers and deaf children need not only to have adult role models and peer groups. These principles are very clear and they can fit into many different education systems, larger and smaller schools, co-enrolment models, these four principles must be adhered to. Access to the physical building is less important than ensuring that these four principles are followed to ensure fully inclusive education. Multilingual deaf learners learn best in the academic environment where they're able to socialise. Sign Language creates an avenue for that. The WFD announced the rights in education for deaf children and clearly said that deaf children have the right to Sign Language. This is the one language that they can fully perceive and access throughout the whole of their lives. Families must be given free education so they can learn Sign Language to support their deaf children. Without that, that facilitates discrimination. There are ten government which follow always the four principles, but we need to ensure we continue to lobby for that. Deaf education can't wait. The needs of deaf children are not something that can be put on hold. We need to ensure that children are not excluded from language and not excluded from the classroom. I look forward to the presentations. We have multiple perspectives which can help us consider how we ensure that deaf children have good, inclusive education and can benefit. Thank you very much. I'll hand back to Susana.

Susana Stiglich, WFD Sign Language Rights Officer (Moderator)

Thank you very much Dr Joseph Murray. A very important presentation for us. When we think about deaf education, having the starting point of a linguistic base or a language base. Our next presenter is Dr Wyatt Hall and will follow on from the principles and apply this to research. Dr Wyatt Hall is a deaf researcher who works in the Department of Environmental science, and public health at the University of Rochester. They work in the lab at Rochester University to that end. The research focus being on language acquisition and language deprivation for deaf children, and the importance of the provision of a basic educational understanding and why early language acquisition is the key, accessible language acquisition is the foundation for a quality education. They're going to give us an expert testimonial on early access. Over to you, Wyatt.

Dr Wyatt Hall, University of Rochester Medicine

Good morning to everyone. It is 7:00am here in the States. Therefore, I'm drinking my coffee to keep awake! This presentation is about early Sign Language acquisition and education quality. Here in America, there is a specific framing that is used and I think it is important to observe this framing on a global stage. I do want to give a disclaimer that I tend to be a very chatty presenter. So I am today condensing what is a two to three hour presentation into a very short content presentation. If you are left with any questions, please feel free to contact me. The first slide, I'm showing you different quotes of individuals. These have been stated in regards to deaf education. Some of those quotes date back to 1884. There was one individual who stated that deaf children need to become as if they are hearing. We need to approach educating them and preparing them to assimilate into a hearing society. That was stated in 1884. The second two quotes are modern day quotes. 2026 these were stated. There is this belief that in the mainstream society, listening and speaking are essential and should be prioritised. Therefore, deaf students should assimilate into these communities, hearing communities, specifically. The third quote is regarding schools. If a child is to attend higher education levels they need to be in other programming schools. Ones that do not use Sign Language. It poses a question. So I think this is important. We have seen across time these perspectives endure. Whether a school is bilingual or a signing school for the deaf, they are often cast aside to prioritise hearing, mainstream and spoken language. Over the last 150 years, these ideologies have persisted. Here, in America, we have what is called free and appropriate public education. It was a law that was passed here in the States. The goal of this law was to provide access for students with disabilities, to reinforce their rights to a quality education with equal access as non-disabled peers. This law was fantastic when it was proposed in comparison to prior

to passing that law, many students with disabilities were isolated and did not have access to education. However, it has not yet proven to satisfy the needs of deaf learners. First, we should envision what the concepts of free and appropriate public education looks like for hearing learners. There are some daily activities and exercises which should take place in the school context. I want to give you an example of what that might look like. First, when a hearing learner attends school, they are presented with instructors who are able to communicate directly with them. They receive direct instruction in the same language. Second, they have many adult language models. Whether that's the education instructor or other parents who are in the learning environment, they are presented with a variety of language models from adults who have the similar language as them and additionally, with their peers. They're able to socialise and learn and communicate directly. They also receive this explicit curriculum that provides them with language instruction that satisfies all of the conditions necessary in their learning environment. So these are four activities that are consistently present in hearing learning environments and deaf students should have the same experience. Now where do deaf learners receive a learning environment that is characteristic of these four points I just shared?

It is possible that if they use a cochlear implant or hearing aid that they may have, however, we have learned through research that that is not the case. Whilst incidental conversations are taking place, the deaf learner is consistently missing out on those interactions used, the language used and the socialisation with their peers and they are not receiving the direct instruction due to using an interpreter. So, these characteristics are lacking in those very environments. We might think that the mainstream is a satisfactory educational experience for deaf learners. However, it is not. Where we do see this present is in deaf schools. In deaf schools, learners have direct instruction. They have adult language models, they have socialisation and communication with peers, and they have direct access to the curriculum and instruction. In the United States, I will show you what we have found when these conditions are satisfied. Here is the research from studies conducted in the United States at California School for the Deaf in Fremont. Many schools provide a test to deaf learners called MAP, Measures of Academic Progress, in maths, reading, science and writing. It measures how students progress over time and whether they are making satisfactory academic progress. These tests assess where students are and we partner with the schools in order to collect this data. We decided to categorise the learners based on those who are from deaf families, meaning they are born into a signing environment and they enter into the deaf schools with full access to learning through Sign Language. The second category is deaf children born to hearing families who, upon learning that their learner is deaf, introduced

them to a bilingual deaf school learning environment immediately. The third category are deaf students born to hearing families who are placed in mainstream learning environments first and later we call late placement into the deaf school environment. Amongst these three categories, using their MAP scores to compare with the two other categories, the deaf learners of hearing parents and those who placed them late. We wanted to see if there were similarities or differences and what our research found is that deaf learners of hearing parents who were placed into the deaf school showed measurable and comparable academic progress as deaf learners of deaf families. However, the third category of learners struggled to progress academically until their graduation date. Therefore, the learning environment is a crucial factor in the academic success of deaf learners. Also, age was another factor. Those who indicated delays in progress, showed those delays as early as three years of age. That means a delayed entrance to the deaf school had an impact on their learning practice. To close, I want to show that many deaf schools in the United States receive deaf learners at a late age. That number is astoundingly larger comparable to those who enter deaf schools at an early age. They're often sent into mainstream schools where they experience academic delays. Once those delays are noted, they are then placed in the deaf schools where the deaf schools are working to repair the delays that took place in the mainstream. Therefore, my concluding point is that access to a signing school environment is essential for the access of deaf learners.

Susana Stiglich, WFD Sign Language Rights Officer (Moderator)

Thank you, Dr Hall for your presentation. It was very interesting. You clearly ask an important question. If we consider what happens with direct educational instruction and how that's very important to have adult language, role models and also engage in peer-to-peer discussions and engagement. Many people in the audience said they are having problems seeing the presenters and the interpreters. We are mindful of your struggles. Please make sure you scroll across so you can see the presenters clearly if you're using an iPhone or an iPad or a tablet device. Remember that we are recording the webinar and we will share this afterwards. Please don't worry, you will have another opportunity to view the presentations if you haven't been able to at this time. I'd like to move on to the next presenter, Dr Lucas Magongwa. Who is a deaf educator and a specialist in deaf education from South Africa. With extensive experience as a deaf teacher, school leader, and university specialist. Dr Lucas will be discussing how we move from research into the learning environment. So, I look forward to hearing your points. Please, Dr Lucas Magongwa.

Dr Lucas Magongwa, Deaf educator and specialist in deaf education

Good afternoon everyone. Good afternoon the President of WFD, Joseph Murray and everyone who is joining us from different countries. I'm going to be talking about policy implementation in schools for the deaf. As the deaf community, we believe that a recognition of a language is very important for every language community. For every language group. As I was saying, the question we need to ask is when we have a policy, does that policy benefit a deaf child in the classroom? Is that policy benefiting a deaf child in an education environment? So this is the question I would like you to ask yourself in your specific countries. When you've got a policy that recognises your Sign Language, is that beneficial to deaf learners? Because there is always a gap between a recognition and implementation. In most cases, we have got very good policies on paper, but the implementation of those policies are not properly implemented in the education environment. So my point is - the recognition is not the end for us. We need to ensure that those good policies are implemented in schools for the deaf. We need to translate those policies into investment to ensure that deaf children in classrooms are able to benefit. And ensure that deaf children become successful in different places. Access for us as deaf people does not mean the employment of interpreters. Access means that everything in classrooms for the deaf is accessible in the language they understand. So the question therefore is - do deaf children out there have access with the use of interpreters? Most of the time, no. Because assessment is not accessible for them. And social interaction is not accessible when it is only with the use of Sign Language interpreters. Let me give you an example. Access means that in a classroom situation, or environment, learners should be able to understand and be able to express concepts, for example, through the language they understand which is Sign Language. This is very important. So, Sign Language should not be an option. It is a right in this instance. Can we move on to slide 7? We need teachers who are proficient in the education environment, not teachers who are just proficient in basic Sign Language. They should be able to translate curriculum in the classroom and make it accessible to deaf learners. We also need to have deaf teachers who are going to serve as role models and also deaf people who are mentors, in this instance I'm talking about deaf adults who are going to serve as role models so the deaf learners out there will see them as people they would aspire to be like when they grow up. So, it is important to have role models across for deaf learners to see themselves in those adults. The teachers we have in schools for the deaf, they should also serve as leaders. So that they can be able to influence deaf education. And make sure that we improve constantly in the area of deaf education everywhere. Curriculum again, we need a curriculum that is specific to deaf education. It is not a curriculum that should be translated from a

spoken language only. It should be a curriculum that measures what the deaf learners need in their environment. Because what we have in the hearing environment and the deaf environment is mostly different. So, our curriculum should be in line with the needs of deaf learners. Teachers are responsible for the implementation of the curriculum. As well as our governments, they are responsible for ensuring that they employ qualified teachers and deaf teachers who are going to serve as role models for these learners. We also need other professionals like speech therapists and nurses and their involvement in the deaf education is to ensure that they create awareness out there because they encounter families with deaf children. We need deaf people to take leadership when it comes to the education of deaf learners. We need deaf adults to take part in the education of deaf learners to ensure that what is decided upon, they are involved. I already indicated, lessons should not be spoken language lessons that are just translated into Sign Language. They need to be adapted fully to ensure that they are in line with the needs of deaf learners. So, we need those deaf adults to be part of the education system that they become part of technology development which is going to benefit deaf children in schools for the deaf. And also, to ensure that resources that are used in schools for the deaf are accessible in the language they understand. We need technology that will make education accessible for them. Technology is very much important in the education of deaf learners today. Slide number 12. I think time is unfortunately against us. Our government out there needs to help us. We need governments to ensure that they put resources in schools for the deaf to ensure that the development of deaf education happens and continues to develop constantly.

Susana Stiglich, WFD Sign Language Rights Officer (Moderator)

Thank you, Dr Magongwa. We realise the importance of deaf environments. Our next presenter is Dr Leonides Sulse from the Philippines. He, himself, is a deaf educator and researcher, but Filipino Sign Language and Filipino deaf community. They will be talking about their experience within that context and within that education system and about education principles for deaf learners. So, he's involved in a project that does look into these perspectives on Filipino Sign Language. Over to you, Leonides.

Dr Leonides D. Sulse, Deaf educator and researcher

Hello everyone. It is an honour to be here today, to be able to give this presentation on behalf of WFD's 75th anniversary. Today I will be talking about inclusive education and sharing the experience of the Philippine perspective as a deaf educator. I'm a deaf educator. And so, I have seen these things first-hand. I have also worked as a researcher. I hold two hats as a teacher and as a researcher. My question is why does experience of deaf educators matter? This comes from my personal experience and what I have witnessed first-hand. This also comes from the research that I've conducted. The topic today is inclusive education for deaf learners. I'm going to share the teachers' perspective, the students' perspective, because I think that we need more of the deaf educators' perspectives. Now deaf educators know and understand the problems and the environments that our deaf learners are in. They're able to offer different perspectives. They're also professionals in the field of education. They are part of the deaf community as well. They are signers themselves. Deaf educators also understand the classroom environment. They understand the communication barriers that deaf learners face. They can access Sign Language just like the deaf learners and so they offer the deaf lens on education. Because they are from the community and they know deaf culture themselves so this experience is very important from deaf educators to contribute to the topic of inclusive education to facilitate more inclusive education and classroom environment. So, we can't talk about inclusive education for the deaf without talking about deaf educators. So, as a deaf educator myself, I have personal experience that I've connected that to research. I wanted to make a look in my research around inclusive education in the Philippines. So we have private and public educational institutions in the Philippines. We use IPA which is interpretive phenomenological analysis. A lot of that comes from interviews and field experience. To collect data. The questions that I wanted to explore are what you see on the slide, but I also mostly wanted to know what framework would strengthen deaf inclusion. From the research I conducted, these are the results of our findings. What the deaf educators told us, there is an importance on identity and community. We need to have deaf learners find their identity. When it comes to the deaf profession and the experience, we need to ensure that deaf educators have professional roles and can share their classroom experience, we must provide support for that, but they must be included in these discussions. They are the professionals with the first-hand knowledge and experience. A third finding was around the challenges that are faced by deaf individuals and these are common challenges faced by most deaf people around communication challenges, systemic barriers and so what we see for deaf people worldwide also appears in deaf education. The fourth finding was around perception of inclusion and the definitions of inclusion.

What we found is that they have differing definitions of inclusion and sometimes the differences were due to policies and what we also found is that policy is a focus, but not always implementation is a focus. So, like Dr Joseph Murray mentioned, the students are present, but not being included. The fifth finding was around school administration and management. We need to ensure that deaf educators have the same opportunities around professional development that hearing educators do and that when it comes to leadership and institutional support, we need to see deaf educators be involved more. And we want to ensure that when it comes to inclusive education that school administrators are considering including deaf educators in the policy-making in the curriculum-making, in the decision-making and that leads us to the sixth finding, professional development, that training skills and continuing support is available for deaf educators as well. When all six areas are fulfilled, we will see better outcome for our deaf learners. So around the first condition which is language and communication, what we saw is that language access is educational access. The experience of deaf educators oftentimes was that they wouldn't have access to school-wide meetings because interpreters were not being provided so they had issue around faculty and meetings and professional development and they couldn't communicate to their administrators and so there were a lot of barriers around having deaf educators be involved. So, inclusive education isn't just for deaf learners, but deaf educators as well. Now in the Philippines we have a law which is Republic Act No. 11106 and that is the Filipino Sign Language Act. That has been implemented and what we're seeing is that oftentimes deaf learners are considered in this, but not always the deaf educators. We have law, we have policy, but when it comes to the implementation of this law in schools, we're not where we need to be. Oftentimes deaf educators are not being considered in access and so, we still have a lot of the same issues that are faced worldwide in inclusive education for deaf people. So the second condition is around prepared and supported education. So the educators must be included in the process of curriculum building in classroom support. They have the deaf education knowledge and the Sign Language competence so inclusive teaching and assessment strategies must be available to deaf educators as well. They must have a voice. And because of time, I'm going to skip to the last slide to wrap up my points. My message from the Philippines to the global south is that we need to listen to deaf educators, recognise their experience, include them in decision-making and build systems around meaningful access and participation. Thank you for your time. I appreciate the opportunity.

Susana Stiglich, WFD Sign Language Rights Officer (Moderator)

Thank you very much, Leonides. It was a very interesting presentation. And your point is crucial that deaf educators must be involved in the system and shape that system. I just want to add that we have many participants who wanted to join this webinar, over 700 people. So just to remind you that we are recording this webinar and we will be sharing the webinar after it ends on the WFD website. If we can now move on to our next presenters. We have two representatives from the Nippon Foundation who are looking at how deaf-led bilingual education systems can be implemented. We welcome Ikumi Kawamata, the senior programme officer and Dr Ryoko Konno who will be sharing their experiences of building deaf-led educational system in South-East Asia and we have examples from the Philippines and Indonesia. Ikumi will be presenting in International Sign and Dr Ryoko Konno will be presenting in English. I hand the floor to you.

Dr Ryoko Konno and Ms Ikumi Kawamata, The Nippon Foundation, Japan

Ikumi Kawamata: Thank you for inviting me today. My name is Ikumi Kawamata from the Nippon Foundation. This is the sign that we use for that organisation. I'm a deaf person. I have been working in the Nippon Foundation for seven years. The Nippon Foundation is a not-for-profit organisation, established in Japan in 1962 as a private organisation that gave funds for development. This is the largest in Japan and has significantly supported disabled and deaf people. After the 1990s, rather than just focusing on Japan, we extended our reach more globally. I'm delighted to discuss the project that we've been undertaking with my colleague, Ryoko.

Dr Ryoko Konno: Hello everybody. My name is Ryoko. My sign name is this and I'm also from the Nippon Foundation. I joined the foundation three years ago. It is a great honour to be invited to this webinar and to share our experiences with you.

Ikumi Kawamata: Today, we wanted to share our experience of inclusive education. This is not only something that provides access for deaf people to education, but also to become leaders in society. I'm nervous. I don't know why. Please excuse me. Our project has focused on South-East Asia and we will give you several examples of investment we have in deaf leadership to transform education within those contexts. This is an overview of what we're going to walk you through today. We see that the problem is that many deaf people in South-East Asia do not get the chance to acquire accessible language. They're not able to fully engage in the education process or fully acquire a Sign Language and there are many barriers. The Nippon Foundation has engaged in spreading the use of Sign Language within the region. Wanting to support the acquisition of Sign Language and expand the opportunities of deaf people. So we are committed to deaf education, but why? We see that good, quality inclusive education for

deaf learners gives them the right to achieve their potential. Deaf people use Sign Language, of course, as the perceivable accessible language and the Nippon Foundation has a long history of supporting bilingual education for deaf people, both with the use of Sign Language and developing written literacy. We're going to share three examples of projects within South Asia have been supported by the Foundation and their successes. I'll hand over to my colleague.

Dr Ryoko Konno: In 2018, they needed a deaf school. Among the twelve teachers on staff, seven are deaf and five are hearing. The most significant feature of the programme is that it is a deaf-led initiative. The team supports deaf students for the teachers listening exam and provides training for deaf teachers. Linguistic research is conducted by deaf researchers who create dictionaries and learning materials used in the modern school. The project is driven by deaf people and actively prepares the next generation of deaf professionals.

This photograph it depicts a deaf tutor conducting a session. Tutors who are themselves deaf provide continuous support to students affected by language deprivation prior to entering the school. Deliver interaction. Tutors are not only fluent in Sign Language, but also hold academic qualifications to teach literacy and mathematics. As a result most students have improved their skills which has also boosted their psychological well-being and attitude to learning. The second programme is in Laos. A Japanese organisation, Asian Development with Disabled Persons, launched and the deaf high school was established in 2023. Before the initiative, the students in the country had no choice, but to stop their studies after junior high school. To address this issue, the organisation collaborated with an organisation. Students were recruited to work at the future deaf school. A deaf researcher from Japan has been engaged in the programme to support bilingual education since its inception. This year, the first batch of students graduated from high school. Among the six graduates, four entered university. They are the first deaf students in the country. Here is a video message from one of the students who enrolled in the national university. He speaks in Sign Language and the English translation is provided by captions.

Ikumi Kawamata: I'd like to explain the project from 2025. This is by the Pijar Foundation. They established the first model elementary school. After working with the primary and secondary education, so in 2027, they are hoping to open the Jakarta school. In conclusion, if we consider the three lessons and experiences that we've had. Going forwards, the things that we think are important for us to consider is that initiatives are community-led and that means that local deaf people are involved in those projects. Within the projects they had support from the Nippon Foundation, but

they made sure people were engaged. They have been engaged at looking at those initiatives and we have seen greater leadership. I think time is done. I will stop.

Susana Stiglich, WFD Sign Language Rights Officer (Moderator)

Indeed it has. Thank you both very much. Thank you for sharing your valuable experiences of very important projects. I think it really shows the strength of deaf leadership in education and what it can actually achieve. We're going to move on to our next speaker. Looking at how we can transform commitments into reality in deaf education system. I'd like to welcome Josh Josa. He is a deaf international development researcher from the USA. He turned his interest to bilingual education and inclusive education. He has a lot of experience working with organisations of disabled people. His experience with USAID in Morocco will be key to the presentation. Over to Josh.

Mr Josh Josa, Deaf international development and inclusive education specialist

Hello everyone, my name is Josh Josa. Back in 2016, I was involved with a project through USAID in Morocco. This project is no longer in existence, however we focus on education and there were several questions that were asked of deaf education in Morocco and there were no responses to provide at that time. We wanted to know if the deaf programmes were under the Ministry of Education and the response was they were unsure. We talked about literacy for deaf learners. They were quite confused that I was literate as a deaf individual and I asked what their thoughts were about Moroccan deaf education and the literacy of deaf learners in Morocco and how deaf learners could become literate. I explained to them my journey and questions were posed, one question was whether there should be formal deaf education teacher training programmes and the third was whether there was officially recognised Sign Language in Morocco. The questions made us focus on commitment. That's the focus of the presentation today. Next slide. Article 24 of the CRPD says that governments must provide implementation of education and learners should have access including Sign Languages. Many governments have these commitments, however they have yet to operationalise these commitments. We have the management systems, or EMIS, which describes different strategies in areas which should become the focus of implementation, however we see there is often a disconnect between the commitment and implementation. UNESCO provides this tool that allows us to analyse the EMIS and this tool might be helpful to formalise how we can move from having deaf commitment for a deaf education system into implementation of successful systems. Next slide. As I just showed you that tool, there are four distinct areas that are indicated in this tool. We

have the policy. Next slide, please. Yes, we have the four sub-areas here. They are aligned with that tool. Remember those three questions that were asked, I could go into more depth about how we responded to them, but in sum, I can say that the policy must be analysed to see how many deaf individuals are impacted. What is the Sign Language use of that country, and who is responsible for implementation? Is it the government that is responsible for educating deaf learners? What is their involvement? Are they able to bring in those who are specialising in deaf education to provide that socialisation or is that just the responsibility of the schools to conduct this implementation. So we have a government level. We have the management level. Now on to the technical level. What is the system record of hearing status and the language of instruction? What are the materials being provided for instruction and is there a foundation of instruction in Sign Language as well? Do they provide the materials to the interpreters in advance? In the data section we think about surveys which have been conducted and assessments and what do they inform us about deaf learners and their access to education and what do they inform in regards to their literacy and the acquisition of Sign Language. Going back to Morocco, which is the example presented in this presentation, we do not have the data to answer this question. There might be more than 40 other countries who are responding no in regards to having these four components in their commitments. Therefore, the deficits show up in their deaf education settings. Again, we need to refer to the EMIS and if there is a way for us to separate and disaggregate this data based on disability, often there is no data with regards to deaf education, therefore how can we implement change if we do not have the data which can help to inform our decision-making and set a sturdy foundation for us to create plans of implementation. Next slide. In regards to Morocco, the one country I referenced in this presentation, there are other countries that created bilingual deaf education programmes as well. We wanted to listen to the problems they were facing within their communities in regards to literacy. We asked them what they felt those problems were and what they felt the solutions to those problems could be. And this is not a problem that is solved by one solo person. We must have a collaborative effort in order to have success in this area including collaboration with the Government, with donors and community members and other stakeholders. In Morocco, their solution hasn't been perfect. However, they have more knowledge of deaf education and they are now focusing on the Government level to implement their solutions. It is not enough just to have the commitment. They now recognise that they need to establish a deaf education teacher training programme which has been a positive result. What I can share with you is that the three lessons we learnt from Morocco can apply to our work in other countries as well. Next slide. The first, we must develop alliances from the inside including in the Government. The

Government is often setting policies. However, we must collaborate with them for the implementation. In the UNESCO tool I showed you, one might focus on policy and another on teacher training and therefore we have these alliances. Morocco did not have a singular person who focused at the Government level, they focused at the community level in order to advance their solutions. We must understand there is a problem with language and policy. It is not just a problem with regard to the disabled communities, we need to look at the language of the policy. We're also thinking about parents and other members of the community and how we can work together to achieve our ultimate goals. We can take examples from other countries and what worked in their context to apply in ours as well. Next slide. The second lesson was use their language. Oftentimes governments have supported language rights. However, they don't fully understand that teacher training is needed, learner outcomes must be analysed, there must be budgets that align with these linguistic rights. At the USAID we focused on deaf education to ensure there was a mutual understanding for advancing outcomes. One group were marginalised in regards to language. They were often not included and once we provided parallels to their experience, it became easier for the Government to understand the struggles of deaf individuals. Third lesson was that we should use data and story-telling together. It is not enough to simply have the data. We must have the stories of deaf individuals who attend these schools as well as the educators who work in them. These will help to highlight the gaps. These stories will complement the data so that we can provide better outcomes. There is one organisation, the Global Deaf Research Institute, who is attempting to do that. They are attempting to collect better data and Morocco has a project called All Children Read. This provides an assessment tool of early literacy development and now they have added Sign Language to the tool so they can analyse how Sign Language impacts deaf learners' literacy and what the gaps are. I'm going to get to my last point here. Everyone has provided very wonderful information here. I think what is important in moving forward is that we look at the EMIS to think what is one small thing that we can implement moving forward so that we can have an impact and change on the deaf education system.

Susana Stiglich, WFD Sign Language Rights Officer (Moderator)

Thank you very much Josh Josa for your presentation. It clearly articulated how we need to work with governments. We have had our presenters and we will be sharing this webinar on Friday, on the WFD website. We will include the PowerPoint presentations as well. Thank you for comments and questions that we've had and feedback regarding this webinar. We hope that the next webinar, we will be able to deal with those issues which people have experienced not so well. Our next webinar is on language

deprivation. We've had a wonderful series of presentations. But now we have the opportunity to give one question to each presenter. Each presenter will have a maximum of two minutes to respond. I will appear when your time is done. If I could ask Josh. You've explained the importance of educational data. What do you think the first question would be that you should ask the Ministry of Education when you're wanting to have that? When you have that data.

Mr Josh Josa, Deaf international development and inclusive education specialist

When we had the presentation with the Government of Morocco, I asked how many deaf children they have enrolled in schools and they didn't know. So, if they can't know how many students they have, that's the starting point that we need to answer. Another question you can ask is if there is any kind of monitoring around the quality of education that deaf children are receiving in Sign Language. Oftentimes the governments don't know the answer to that question. And then you can use those questions and that dialogue as a conversation to ask what they're doing and if there is any way to re-approach the education that they're doing. Of course as deaf people, we have an ideal that we're working towards for deaf education, but we can use it as a North Star to work in partnership with governments to move progress in that direction, to be effective. At the same time, what the Nippon Foundation is doing in other countries is a very good example and they have a multitude of those examples that we can leverage and use to show governments is the work that we'd like to do in their country.

Susana Stiglich, WFD Sign Language Rights Officer (Moderator)

Thank you for your answer at this moment. Thank you very much, Josh. I'm going to ask a question to one of our other panellists, Wyatt Hall. Thank you. So Wyatt, my question is, what does your research on the age at which children enter a signing environment tell us specifically? Could you explain the consequences of that in greater detail?

Dr Wyatt Hall, University of Rochester Medicine

That's a big question to answer. When we look at the research around human development, we have a more clear number. When babies are born, their brains are very open to acquiring language and we call this the neuro critical period of language acquisition. What we have seen when it comes to deaf children is that unfortunately, if they don't get their foundational language within that critical window of time, it impacts their future development and it is a permanent impact on brain development, on physical development and their social skills and life-long experiences. So, it is critical

that we give children access to language during that critical brain development window time. In the beginning of my research, I would maybe give presentations, I would say that window is zero to five years old. When children are zero to five, they must have access to language, but that window is closing and we're finding that with recent research, they are saying it is actually by the age of three that this acquisition must have taken place. Recently, Boston University in the United States conducted research which showed that when deaf children acquire Sign Language by the age of six months, this makes a critical difference. If children learn Sign Language by six months, they are able to have what we consider typical development, but if they don't acquire Sign Language by six months, and after six months, it will impact their language acquisition. So, initially we used to say that window was zero to five and it was zero to three and now we're seeing it is zero to six months. It is very small and critical.

Susana Stiglich, WFD Sign Language Rights Officer (Moderator)

Thank you very much, Dr Hall, for your response. I'd like to ask a question of Lucas, if you could join us in the webinar, please, turn your camera on. Dr Magongwa, you proposed an implementation scorecard. Who should use it to hold governments to account and how? What system would you envisage for that? Could you explain that in greater detail?

Dr Lucas Magongwa, Deaf educator and specialist in deaf education

Yes. What I think is that government should indeed account. Deaf associations, national deaf associations, should work closely with the Government departments to ensure that these policies are implemented. Working together with the Government departments, the deaf organisations should come up with systems which will ensure that there is monitoring because most of the time you find governments or government departments trying to do this alone, but if they were to include national deaf associations in different countries, they would be able to ensure that they collaborate and come up with systems which will ensure there is accountability.

Susana Stiglich, WFD Sign Language Rights Officer (Moderator)

Thank you very much, Lucas for your response. It is very interesting. If I could now talk to Leonides, Dr Sulse. Thank you very much for rejoining us. I was wondering how can education systems best prepare, recruit, and retain more deaf teachers and teachers who are fluent in national Sign Languages? What do you think the best process would be?

Dr Leonides D. Sulse, Deaf educator and researcher

That's a very important question to discuss right now. We need to ensure that what deaf educators work through, maybe their instruction programmes, their degree for becoming educators have full support. What we're seeing is a lot of deaf students who want to become deaf educators and don't have access to courses, to the degree curriculum because it is all run by hearing instructors and have hearing peers and so we need to ensure that for future deaf educators, who want to attend schooling, to achieve their degree, that it is accessible and that the resources are accessible for them and once they are employed that they are considered in the decisions that are made for the curriculum that they then teach as well. It is important that as members of the community they're included at the table and in the decision-making process. Of course, we have the principles and we have policies and they need to be reviewed. We can't just have policies and no implementation. So it is important that once policies are in place that we have ways to implement and then assess the implementation to ensure that it is just as accessible as hearing educators access, we hope to see more access for more deaf educators and that we keep asking what is inclusive education and what that means and how to best achieve that because oftentimes inclusive education doesn't mean through interpreters, but rather with deaf peers and through deaf educators. Thank you.

Susana Stiglich, WFD Sign Language Rights Officer (Moderator)

Thank you very much for that detailed response. Lastly, I'd like to ask questions from our colleagues from the Nippon Foundation, Ikumi and Ryoko, if you could join us on screen. Your projects show deaf learners becoming teachers and leaders. The power of education. What do you think, how could that be made possible in the future do you think beyond external funding? How can this be made sustainable? Ryoko, do you want to respond?

Dr Ryoko Konno, The Nippon Foundation

I will respond and Ikumi will respond in Sign Language. It is important to continuously enhance the quality of deaf education. That is essential.

Thank you very much. It is very important to work in partnership with the deaf communities and deaf associations and government. And universities. Those are the main stakeholders. The models we had, happened because of the partnerships that were developed and that enabled sustained partnership with government. In Indonesia, when we started the project, we have seen there is an MOU between the local education and the Ministry of Education to try and ensure they're working together in tandem on

the same goals, aiming to ensure there is bilingual education and that can be delivered extensively across Asia. When the elementary school is developed, that gives a pathway for further development and further work. The initial discussions with government and with local organisations in partnership and including universities are very important, the initial first steps.

Susana Stiglich, WFD Sign Language Rights Officer (Moderator)

Thank you very much. I'd like to thank all of our other presenters and panellists for sharing such rich information and worthy data. I'd like to hand over to the President of the WFD, Dr Joseph Murray who has some concluding words as we draw this webinar to a close.

Dr Joseph J. Murray, WFD President

Thank you very much, Susana. We can in the webinar, we discussed the question of inclusive education and how it can be facilitated and we have seen through the variety of presentations that there are many ways that inclusion can occur, but inclusion means that somebody is linguistically included and not just a participant. Children must have full access to the Sign Language of their countries, irrespective of where they are around the globe. We have seen examples from South-East Asia, the Philippines, South Africa. In all those examples, there was good, quality bilingual education and opportunities for that to grow. These are important approaches. The most important thing is, inclusive bilingual education has to include Sign Language and that is possible for all children around the world. The convention is very clear in Article 24. Governments need to make sure they meet their obligations to include deaf children in the education system and that must have an environment where deaf children can learn with each other and, teachers are fluent in the national Sign Languages and there are deaf children and that parents and families are given access to free education classes so they can interact with their children. We have seen examples of this globally and we have seen that this can happen.

We had many, many people in this webinar. We have 140 member associations in the WFD. We can see that the work that the WFD has done within the International Disability Alliance, we can move forward collectively to facilitate change. If your country is a signatory, they need to work in collaboration with the disability movement. We need to show them the IDA inclusive education report.

They need to have a better understanding of how they can ensure inclusive deaf education is achieved. We hope this work that the WFD has done can support you in your efforts. These presentations that we have seen have just shown the knowledge

and expertise that there are. I'd like to thank all of the audience for your comments throughout the webinar. You've shared valuable information with us. We can see that we have a large global community who have a passion and an interest in ensuring that deaf children have effective, inclusive education. Passion is always something that has motivated the WFD. Since its inception 75 years ago. We are committed to continuing with that passion to ensure that every child achieves their right of a quality, inclusive education through Sign Language. We need to ensure that we agree as we draw this to a close to continue to achieve that goal, a world where people everywhere can sign anywhere.