



Legal Seat – Helsinki, Finland

## WORLD FEDERATION OF THE DEAF

An International Non-Governmental Organisation in official liaison with ECOSOC, UNESCO, ILO, WHO and the Council of Europe. WFD was established in Rome in 1951.

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President

COLIN ALLEN

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25 April 2016

International Disability Alliance

Attention: Jaimie Grant

Via email: [jgrant@ida-secretariat.org](mailto:jgrant@ida-secretariat.org)

Dear Jaimie

We refer to the email correspondence from IDA of 20 April 2016 inviting input toward a draft report on disability and development in line with the General Assembly resolution 69/142.

As requested, WFD provides information primarily on existing practices and projects including related data, under the following headings:

a) *Progress in the implementation of the Outcome Document of the High-level Meeting of the General Assembly (23 September 2014): "The way forward: a disability inclusive development agenda towards 2015 and beyond" with a specific focus on current efforts to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development for persons with disabilities, identifying priorities and obstacles for actionable policies and programs;*

- General Assembly resolution 69/142- recommendation 9: make a concerted effort to include persons with disabilities and to integrate the principles of accessibility and inclusion into the monitoring and evaluation of the development goals;

WFD continues to work with its member organisations to build capacity to advocate for, monitor implementation of and report on principles of accessibility and inclusion in CRPD parallel reporting, and in relevant reports on progress toward the MDGs, and now the SDGs.

WFD assisted IDA to develop a toolkit on CRPD and the SDGs and will continue to assist its members to understand the SDGs, their targets and indicators so that deaf people can participate in national monitoring processes. WFD will advocate with IDA and IDDC to ensure that resources that are developed are also developed in International Sign to assist meaningful engagement by our country members and deaf people in these processes. 'Leave No-one Behind' means that International Sign must be available.

- (General Assembly resolution 69/142- recommendation 10: improve coordination among existing international processes and instruments in order to advance a disability-inclusive global agenda);

WFD has made many submissions to the CRPD committee and other UN Human Rights Committees to ensure that the perspectives of deaf people are reflected in international processes and instruments. These include:

- [WFD & EUD Submission to the Day of General Discussion on the right to education for persons with disabilities](#) (20 March 2015)
- [Submission on the Draft General Comment No. 3 on Article 6](#) (22 June 2015)

- [WFD, EUD, WFDYS & EUDY Submission on the Draft General Comment No. 4 on the right to inclusive education](#) (23 December 2015)
- [Submission for the OHCHR Working Group on Arbitrary Detention](#) (6 March 2015)
- [Submission for the CESCR Committee on general discussion on just and favourable conditions of work](#) (28 April 2015)
- [Submission for the Special Rapporteur on the right to health on the right to health in early childhood](#) (22 June 2015)
- [WFD, IDE & WASLI submission for the OHCHR study on the rights of persons with disabilities on situations of risk and humanitarian emergencies](#) (3 July 2015)
- [Submission for General Comment on the rights of the child in the context of migration](#) (29 February 2016)
- [Submission for General Comment on children in street situations](#) (12 April 2016)
- [WFD Submission – Towards the full realization of an inclusive and accessible United Nations for persons with disabilities](#) (14 March 2016)

Through its membership of IDA, WFD also contributes significantly to coordination and a common vision for people with disabilities in development processes globally.

- (General Assembly resolution 69/142- recommendation 16: make all efforts to engage with and ensure accessibility for the full and effective participation and inclusion of persons with disabilities, in cooperation with organizations of persons with disabilities and, as appropriate, national human rights institutions, in development processes and decision-making at the local, national, regional and international levels)

The WFD has made extensive representations to national governments, regional organisations and international organisations to increase the accessibility of their information in sign language and to provide for the information and communication rights of deaf people. See recommendations under heading (c) below.

- (General Assembly resolution 69/142- recommendation 21: Requests S-G to compile and analyse national policies, programmes, best practices and available statistics regarding persons with disabilities, reflecting progress made in addressing the relevant internationally agreed development goals and the provisions of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, to be submitted to the General Assembly in a flagship report during 2018.)

The WFD has been monitoring the status of formal sign language recognition and promotion in countries globally and collecting and compiling statistics on this. Tracking progress on this helps to see how countries are complying with – inter alia- Art 21(e) of CRPD. Together with the World Association of the Sign Language Interpreters (WASLI) we would like to track how countries are providing access to sign interpreting to enable access by deaf people on an equal basis to others to health, education, employment, public services and the full breadth of social, economic, cultural, civil and political rights provided for in CRPD.

The WFD supports national deaf associations to engage in the parallel reporting process, and in doing so contributes to the understanding of the situation of deaf people globally, and to identify how we are tracking toward implementation of CRPD, and achievement of SDGs for deaf people.

- b) *Progress and current efforts for improved analysis, monitoring and evaluation of the situation of persons with disabilities in economic and social development, and efforts to strengthen resilience for and responses to disasters and humanitarian crises for persons with disabilities; (Note also - relevant under progress against GA resolution 69/142 recommendation 11 –perspectives of people with disabilities in mainstream DRR))*

WFD has assisted to mainstream the perspectives of persons with disabilities in disaster risk reduction by making a [joint submission](#) with International Deaf Emergency (IDE) and WASLI to the OHCHR on the rights of persons with disabilities on situations of risk and humanitarian emergencies. WFD was pleased that the resultant OHCHR [report](#) included strong recommendations to ensure that deaf people receive the sign language and communication support that they need to prepare for, respond to and recover from disasters and humanitarian emergencies.

- c) *Recommendations for specific actions to be taken at national, regional and international levels to implement a disability-inclusive 2030 development agenda.*

We have focussed our recommendations into three discrete areas of comment below.

1. Access to education by deaf children.

As noted in our submission to the CRPD Committee, even though situations vary significantly between countries, the WFD and the European Union of the Deaf (EUD) are concerned about the lack of implementation of the CRPD Article 24 and the lack of opportunities for deaf leaders and deaf people to have a say in educational options. The [WFD Deaf People and Human Rights Report](#) (p. 29-30) revealed that education for most deaf people is provided in oral or total communication (simultaneous use of speech and signs) instead of a sign language approach. Since the report was launched in 2009, the situation has not improved, as is apparent from information WFD received from national deaf communities.

**Recommendations** from WFD and EUD to ensure deaf children are included in a disability inclusive 2030 development agenda and are not 'left behind' include that:

1. Governments should adopt and modify legislation in accordance with Article 24 of the CRPD to ensure the right to education in national sign language(s) and environment promoting linguistic identity of the Deaf Community. Consultation with national association of the deaf and Deaf Community is vital in this step. Public resources need to be allocated to nationwide implementation.
2. Official recognition of sign language according Article 21(e) may affect possibilities of deaf students to receive education in sign language. For this reason governments should be obliged to recognise and promote the use of national sign languages.
3. Public authorities should provide neutral, sufficient and comprehensive information to families of deaf children on linguistic and educational options.
4. Governments should be obliged to provide sign language training to families of deaf children because early language acquisition affects educational possibilities and outcomes.
5. Sign language training should be obligatory for current and future teachers of deaf children. Training should be included in university programs and also provided in-house at schools. Periodic evaluation of sign language skills should be mandatory.
6. Deaf educational professionals should be recruited particularly to teach deaf children.
7. Resources need to be allocated to the development of deaf-friendly teaching and examination material, and methodology.

2. Improved accessibility of communications regionally/internationally- through International Sign

Despite the requirements of the CRPD about accessibility of information and communications, much information related to international development and efforts toward implementing and achieving the SDGs remains inaccessible for deaf people.

Greater efforts are needed by all development stakeholders –at the international, regional and national levels- to provide information in sign language so that millions of deaf people globally are not left behind.

WFD made a [submission](#) dated 14 March 2016 to the UN's Inter-Departmental Task on Accessibility providing feedback and recommendations on best practice for accessibility, which are of broader relevance.

The Submission noted that there are hundreds of signed languages globally. As a matter of compromise, and in the spirit of trying to achieve reasonable accommodation, WFD and its member organisations have agreed that *International Sign* (IS) can be used for communication. Whilst not a formal sign language, it is an agreed means of communicating through signs internationally.

It is the responsibility of the UN and development stakeholders to provide accessibility of their information and services in accordance with the UN CRPD using professional sign language interpreters with *International Sign* as a priority.

**Recommendations** for an accessible and inclusive environment for deaf people are:

1. The establishment of a dedicated International Sign (IS) interpreting services centre at any of the UN sites, to assist provide the level of access that is required interpreting at live events, tours, and to increase access to UN information made available on the internet.
  2. (*Subject to Recommendation 3 below*) IS interpreters must be provided at all UNCPRD-related meetings, Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) meetings and events as a matter of course, and at all other UN events where by deaf person (*e.g. WFD or International Disability Alliance (IDA)*) attending or participating;
    - this could be managed either through live (face to face) interpreters and / or Video Relay Interpreting (VRI) service access.
  3. Where a deaf person is presenting at or participating in an official interaction (*e.g. as a member of a UN committee, a panel or as a presenter*), that person must have the right to request a sign language interpreter in the sign language of their choice. This sign language interpreter should be available to interpret in the room live, not through relay service, which should be an option of last resort.
  4. IS interpreters must be available at, and live filmed at, all UN webinar/webcasts related to the UN CRPD, SDG and at UN events, and other UN events requested by WFD, IDA or a deaf participant/viewer;
    - this could be managed either through Video Relay Interpreting (VRI) service access (IS interpreters can be available from any location).
  5. IS interpreters must be hired through an accredited list of IS Interpreters for appropriate quality control, and where periods of longer than one hour are required, two interpreters are required;
    - WFD/WASLI have a list of accredited IS interpreters who are approved to work at International level including UN-related activities.<sup>1</sup>
  6. IS and (or the host country's sign language) interpreters are available for the general public
    - via call live interpreters pre-booked; and,
    - IS interpretation option available for guided tours on an approved UN Tour app.<sup>2</sup>
  7. Infrastructure (*e.g. screens, devices*) and services must be provided to allow:
    - real time captioning at all UN CRPD and SDG events, and at all other UN events where by deaf person (*e.g. WFD or IDA members*) attending or participating
    - accessible public announcements including evacuation
    - captions on public information screens
    - mobile phone and / or pager alert system
    - a built-in visual light system for fire / evacuation / emergency alerts announcements
  8. Public address systems, conference and meeting rooms for international development meetings must have
    - a built-in audio loop and
    - radio frequency transmitter device (for hearing augmentation) features to assist those deaf people who use hearing aids
  9. Stakeholders should provide accessible websites that includes
    - key news and relevant 'way finding' information available in IS
    - [on the UN website: all video messages from the UN Secretary General be provided with IS Interpretation along with closed captions in official UN languages]
  10. UN Personnel, and all stakeholder personnel working in disability inclusive development, should receive basic deaf awareness training, about deaf culture and working with the sign language interpreters, the right to give and receive information in and to promote sign languages.
3. Increased attention to disability inclusive development in Official Development Assistance and formal strategies for disability inclusive development by bilateral and multilateral donors

WFD would like to see more strategic attention being given to disability inclusive development in official development cooperation by all State Parties who have ratified the CRPD. Specific budget allocations should be made to ensure disability is mainstreamed and also that disability specific interventions are established.

<sup>1</sup> See <http://wfdeaf.org/our-work/wfd-wasli-accredited-interpreter>

<sup>2</sup> E.g. similar to 9/11 Memorial audio tour app - <http://www.911memorial.org/apps>

Many organisations receiving funds or channelling humanitarian aid are not yet required to provide disability-related data, and hence persons with disabilities are not sufficiently prioritised. As a result, the development sector is generally neglectful of disability issues and solutions which ought to form part of reflections on development interventions. This has significant ramifications for achieving the SDGs if much development cooperation is not inclusive.

**Recommendations are:**

1. That the UN urge all States Parties to the CRPD to develop guidelines and strategies which are publicly available, which set out how persons with disabilities will benefit from and participate in official development cooperation, as required by Article 32 of the CRPD.
2. That States Parties allocate sufficient development funds to enable persons with disabilities and their representative organisations to participate in development activities on an equal basis with the rest of the population.
3. That the obligations of the CRPD be fully incorporated into all mainstream strategies, policies, guidelines, monitoring and reporting regarding States Parties' development cooperation. This also means developing standards and indicators that hold recipients of development aid to account for inclusion of persons with disabilities.
4. That, as a step towards full integration of disability into all development interventions, specific programmes be targeted at persons with disabilities, especially within the areas of poverty reduction, education, employment, health, prevention and rehabilitation, as well as a sector programme targeted at the special needs for development aid that persons with disabilities have in general.
5. That State Parties and the relevant UN agencies obtain sufficient insight into the needs of persons with disabilities in connection with development cooperation. This includes taking steps to ensure that there is internal capacity in the development agencies with sufficient knowledge of the disability field to advise and guide both the development agencies and mainstream organisations when they include disability issues into their work, preferably by employing persons with disabilities as advisors
6. That effort toward better data disaggregation by disability and building the evidence base around disability and good and emerging disability inclusive practice be given priority in development cooperation surveys, reviews and research.

Please do not hesitate to contact Ms Elena Down, Human Rights Officer, WFD, at [elena.down@wfd.fi](mailto:elena.down@wfd.fi) should you wish to seek clarification to, or expansion of, any of the above information.



Colin Allen  
President

**About the World Federation of the Deaf**

*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 132 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 member of International Disability Alliance (IDA). ([www.wfdeaf.org](http://www.wfdeaf.org)) Email: [info@wfdeaf.org](mailto:info@wfdeaf.org)*