



World Federation of the Deaf

International Week of the Deaf 2011

It is again that time of the year when deaf people around the world gather together to commemorate the International Week of the Deaf.

This year the International Week of the Deaf is celebrated from 19 to 25 September. Deaf Associations throughout the world organise events, marches, campaigns and meetings to highlight current topics that they wish to be addressed by local or national authorities. Their aim is to direct the attention of decision makers, general public, and media to the problems and concerns deaf persons face and make them understand that deaf people have human rights too! So the International Week of the Deaf is all about getting together, feeling united and powerful and showing that force to the rest of the world. This week also increases solidarity among deaf people and their supporters and is used as a way to stimulate greater efforts to promote the rights of deaf people.

For the past couple of years the World Federation of the Deaf has introduced a theme to the deaf community for its celebration. In 2009 we demonstrated to the general public our cultural achievements and last year the focus was directed to deaf education. This year we would like to encourage you to tackle problems that are related to accessibility to information and communications. Freedom of expression and opinion, and access to information is strongly emphasised in the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, in articles 9 and 21. We urge our national members to choose one, two or more issues that are related to this theme and make a campaign around it. The concrete troubles that deaf people face might vary from country to country and priorities change too but the root causes are the same: information, services and education are not available in sign language and interpreter services are poor, non-existent or too expensive which hinders deaf people's participation in society as equal citizens.

If you are not 100% sure what you can do with regard the accessibility theme you can have a look at the following article ("This year's theme: Accessibility, freedom of expression and opinion, and access to information") which presents more concrete ideas. If you have already decided to use another theme for this year don't worry either. This is perfectly fine too.

We would like to report in the next issue of the WFD newsletter how the International Week went and what your association did? We would be very happy if you could send us some photos and/or short articles of your celebrations to info@wfdeaf.org. The dead line for these submissions is October 20th.

WFD wishes cheerful International Week of the Deaf to all of you!

This year's theme: Accessibility, freedom of expression and opinion, and access to information

International Week of the Deaf has a long history. The WFD first launched the International Day of the Deaf in 1958 and then later on the “day” was extended to a “week”. The reason why it is celebrated in September is because of the 1st World Congress of the World Federation of the Deaf taking place in Rome, Italy, in September 1951. The choice of September for these celebrations is therefore natural in order to commemorate this historical event. So at the same time the WFD is gathering together to discuss our current achievements and problems we wish to think about our past too. The WFD also recognises that some associations prefer celebrating the International Week of the Deaf at another moment of the year which better reflects their country's culture and customs.

This year the week is celebrated from 19 to 25 September culminating with International Day of the Deaf on the last Sunday of the week (25th of September).

What is the goal?

- To organise a campaign that is visible, draws attention to your issue with the aim of bringing a change to the current state of affairs
- To propagate information on the articles 9 and 21 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) to decision makers
- To ensure that the campaign(s) will be noticed and the message will also pass to wider society through sufficient media coverage

What would you like to change? (This list is not exhaustive)

- Has your country ratified the CRPD and its Optional Protocol? If yes, how well are the national legislation and policies respecting the articles 9 and 21 of the CRPD?
- Has your country's government translated the CRPD as well as related handbooks and guidelines into sign language?
- What is the situation in your country with regard sign language interpreting services?
 - Do they function well?
 - Do you always get an interpreter when you ask, both in your country and abroad?
 - Can you interact without a problem with an official when taking care of your personal affairs?
 - Are the sign language interpreters qualified and skilled – are the interpreter training programs sufficient in number and quality?
 - Are interpreting services at no cost to you?
 - Does the government understand how important sign language interpreting services are for your participation in society and equality?
 - Are professional sign language interpreters available in inclusive education settings?
 - Are you provided with an interpreter in a profession that you want to exercise and which would not be possible without sign language interpreting services?

- Do you or your children receive quality education in sign language?
- Is/are sign language(s) respected and recognised as (a) language(s) just as spoken languages in your country? If yes, are legislation and practices in line with the official status?
 - Is the recognition of sign language seen as a fundamental human right for all deaf people including infants and children?
- Are official printed documents translated into sign language?
 - Are there sign language translations available of different web sites provided to the public for example on health services?
- Are TV programs subtitled?
- Can you watch different TV programs including news, in sign language every day for an ample period of time?
- How are emergency situations dealt with in your country?
 - Do deaf people always get the same information at the same time as others in crisis situation?

How to do?

- Select one, two or more sub issues of the theme that you would like to introduce to decision makers of your country to improve the situation of the Deaf Community. Know exactly what the problem is and how you propose to solve it
- Choose a strategy and implement it with careful planning: will you organise a march, event or ask for an appointment. Who will meet the decision makers, will you also involve the national/local Deaf Community and if yes how
- Select (a) target group(s) with power to make a change to your problem, e.g. a group of parliamentarians, minister, vice-minister or another government representative, president or any other key decision maker in national or local level
- Produce campaign material that strikes so that the decision makers will also have something to refresh their memory after meeting you in person
- Invite media. Distribute information through your web site, newsletter, facebook, twitter and other ways if this is what you want from your campaign
- You might also want to organise side-event(s) such as parties, cultural exhibitions and events, seminars or a sign language cafeteria to celebrate the International Week of the Deaf together with the deaf and hearing community. These events depending on their character can also have other, more “serious” aims than just having fun: invite the decision maker to your party too!

Full access to information and communications

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Step forward towards full Human Rights for deaf people

Fundraise for the WFD during the International Week of the Deaf Week

In conjunction with the International Week of the Deaf campaign that your association is carrying out the WFD hopes that your association could also initiate some fundraising activities for the WFD. These might include:

- Placing a video on your Deaf association's web site about becoming an individual member of the WFD (Finnish rap artist Signmark signing the clip) with the following text: "World Federation of the Deaf will be happy for all support to its work. Become an individual member or contribute by a convenient amount of money. More information on <http://www.wfdeaf.org/become-an-individual-member> or direct donations to
 - Account Name: World Federation of the Deaf
 - Bank: Nordea Bank, Helsinki Finland
 - IBAN: FI04 1555 3000 113 37
 - Swift NDEAFIHH

If you are interested in this option, please contact Ms. Phillipa Sandholm for obtaining the video

- Distribute WFD Individual Member (IM) forms to your members through your web site or in an event organised during the International Week of the Deaf celebrations. Please contact Ms. Phillipa Sandholm at memberships@wfdeaf.org to receive an electronic IM application form
- Any other activities you prefer. Make sure that the legislation is followed and that all required licenses are obtained.