

WASLI Newsletter 2009-01



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NEW YEAR MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Did you know that 2009 is the International Year of Astronomy? It celebrates the work done by Galileo and his telescope in 1609, which gave us new views of the moon, and made discoveries which changed our understanding of the world.

WASLI has been in existence now for only 4 years, but in that time through our contacts and this Newsletter, our 'WASLI telescope', we have also become aware of many developments in the profession of signed language interpreting throughout the world. The Newsletter has been a wonderful means of sharing our experiences with our colleagues in different countries, and learning from them of the challenges which they face.

WASLI is now in touch with interpreters in 120 countries, many of whom look to us for support and advice. We are still a small organisation, relying totally on the voluntary energy and enthusiasm of our members and the elected Executive Board, but we believe we can make a difference to the profession of signed language interpreters.

We wish to encourage you to join us – become an individual sponsoring member. For those of you from income rich countries, why not meet the membership fees of someone from a country which is

income poor? For others, why not contribute your skills and volunteer to help us in other ways, perhaps by translating information or volunteering to be part of a task group?

The WASLI Board looks forward to welcoming you to our work – and to continuing to work in partnership with National Associations of Deaf people to raise the standards of our profession. Like Galileo, together we can find a new understanding of the world of signed language interpreters!

LIZ SCOTT GIBSON



WASLI President Liz Scott Gibson and Australian Sign Language interpreter Mark Cave with Deaf representatives from Saudi Arabia at a recent conference in Morocco

CREATING OPPORTUNITIES: ASLIA NATIONAL CONFERENCE 2009

Funding is available to support sign language interpreters from developing countries to attend the ASLIA (Australian Sign Language Interpreters Association) National Conference this year. The conference will be held in Melbourne, Australia, August 21-23 2009; for more information about the conference programme see www.anc09.com.

Please note that preference for funding will be given to those who have not benefited from previous funding support, and that successful applicants will be expected to write a report about the conference. The deadline to apply for funding support is 30 March 2009 (late applications will not be accepted).

For more information about this funding opportunity, please email Susan Emerson:
susan@anc09.com

SEMINAR ON THE GLOBAL EDUCATION PRE-PLANNING PROJECT ON THE HUMAN RIGHTS OF DEAF PEOPLE, HELSINKI, FINLAND

WASLI was pleased to be asked to contribute to the work of the World Federation of the Deaf, and the Nordic Council of the Deaf's survey into the Human Rights of Deaf People. This very significant piece of work was carried out with the Deaf Associations in:

- Eastern Europe & Middle Asia
- The Asia Pacific
- South America
- Mexico, Central America and the Caribbean
- Eastern & Southern Africa
- Western & Central Africa
- The Arab region

This has highlighted some extremely interesting information regarding the status of sign language interpreting services across the world. In addition, there are useful details about Deaf people's access to education, employment, government services and the media, as well as the status of a country's sign language and legislation and policies.

Liz Scott Gibson, WASLI President, attended a Seminar on the topic, hosted by the WFD & Finnish Association of the Deaf in Helsinki. The most common needs expressed by Deaf Associations in relation to the provision of interpreting services were:

- How to set up training
- How to accredit
- How to deliver services
- How to agree a Code of Ethics

The WASLI Board has already established task groups on the first two items, and hopes to make this information widely available soon. The Regional Survey Reports can be downloaded at: <http://www.wfdeaf.org/projects.html>



THE 2ND MEETING OF ASIA / PACIFIC SIGN LANGUAGE INTERPRETERS IN NEPAL 2008

Ms Emiko Ichikawa

WASLI Asia Regional Representative

President NRASLI (National Research Association for Sign Language Interpretation), Japan

The 2nd Meeting of Sign Language Interpreters in Asia was held in Pokhara, Nepal on Thursday, December 11th, 2008. It was held in parallel with the 20th WFD Regional Secretariat for Asia-Pacific (WFD RS-A/P) Representatives Meeting, which was from December 10th through 12th. The National Research Association for Sign Language Interpretation (NRASLI) in Japan sent Ms. Emiko ICHIKAWA, the President (WASLI Asia Regional Representative), and 3 other participants from its International Division.

The Meeting of Sign Language Interpreters was held with the aim of improvement of the status of interpreters and advancement of interpretation service provision in Asia, where interpreters in Asian countries got together following the 1st Meeting in Macau in December 2006.

8 interpreters from 4 countries and 1 area in Asia-Pacific region participated

Due to the shutdown of Bangkok Airport, one of the transit points to Nepal, just before the meeting, we had fewer participants than the last meeting. 8 interpreters from 4 countries and 1 area (i.e. Singapore, Macau, New Zealand, Nepal and Japan) participated in the meeting (there were also 8 observers from Nepal). Japan (NRASLI), whose President serves as WASLI Asia Regional Representative, had sent information to interpreters in Asian countries, prepared documents and conducted the meeting, in close contact with WFD RS-A/P (Japanese Federation of the Deaf).



Interpreters meeting in Nepal. Interpreters shown represent (from left) Japan, New Zealand, and Nepal

To set up an association/group of interpreters in each Asian country

Asia lags behind other regions in legislation and provision of sign language interpretation, and the status of interpreters is not guaranteed sufficiently. Also, there are few countries where interpreters have established their associations/groups and are working in partnership with Deaf associations such as Japan. At this meeting, we discussed about the necessity of associations/groups of interpreters in order to establish interpretation provision systems and move forward to

advancement of the status of interpreters and that, to that end, we would promote the information exchange and partnerships by networking interpreters in Asia. And then attending countries confirmed our intention to work toward becoming WASLI members. We also found that the supports from Deaf associations are essential to establish interpreters' associations/groups. Therefore some countries hoped Japan (NRASLI), who is working along with the WASLI Asia Representative, can provide various messages and information to Deaf associations and other contacts in Asian countries.

Then, we agreed to hold the 3rd meeting for 2-day schedule in 2009 and keep in touch regularly among Asian countries. Also, we affirmed that Japan (NRASLI) will be an organizer of the next meeting again.

The importance of NRASLI's role

It was a great success in this meeting that we could gather momentum for the establishment of interpreters' associations/groups and joining the activities of WASLI. The history and activities of NRASLI contributed substantially to networking interpreters in Asia.

In addition, for this meeting, NRASLI was able to support interpreters from Singapore and Macau for their costs of accommodation and meals (US\$400 each) with Asian Sign Language Interpreters' Fund donated by NRASLI members and others. The 2 interpreters expressed their gratitude and gave Japan plaques to mark the meeting.

WFD ASIA / PACIFIC REGIONAL MEETING, POKHARA, NEPAL 2008

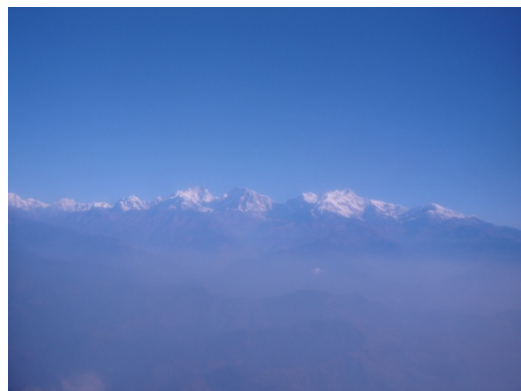
Delys Magill

President SLIANZ (Sign Language Interpreters Association of New Zealand)

The setting for this meeting could not have been more majestic. Pokhara is just 41 kilometres away from the towering mountains known as the Nepal Himalayas and our hotel afforded us views of three peaks over 8000 metres in height; worldwide there are only fourteen and eight of them are in Nepal.

Our Nepalese hosts were fantastic, and went out of their way to make sure our stay was memorable. We were treated to sightseeing tours on two days of the meeting. The first, an afternoon bus excursion, saw

us travel to the nearby Davi Falls, a small waterfall that plunges into the depths of the earth. The power of the falls isn't truly realised until you see how far into the earth they disappear. Once we had seen the entry point, the tour was then taken into the caves to view the falls from the other



end. This path wasn't for the feint hearted or the claustrophobic (I fit both of those categories, so went to meet locals instead).

After resurfacing we travelled to the source of the river, the lake at the centre of Pokhara. The now empty Royal Residence sits on the shore. Still heavily fortified and guarded it seems to stand as a testament to the previous Monarchy. A boat/gondola ride across the lake to the island temple provided us with both photo opportunities and an example of the strong faith held by the Nepalese people. Our last visit on this trip was a stop at the local shopping precinct by the lake to do some souvenir shopping with the helpful bartering skills of our local Deaf community guides.



Our second outing was by far the most memorable and inspirational part of the entire week. We were taken by bus at 5.00am to 1400 metres above sea level to experience a sunrise in the Himalayas. The colours and scenery are impossible to describe and the resulting photos don't do the event true justice. They can be viewed in their entirety on the 'Advance Centre for Deaf and Hearing Impaired Students' Facebook page for those who wish to have a look.



Of course during all this sightseeing we managed to squeeze in the WFD meeting and a one day meeting of Asia/Pacific interpreters as well.

At the WFD meeting, each attending country outlined the issues and achievements from the last 12 months. Deaf Youth addressed the meeting with a proposal that youth representation from each country become part of subsequent WFD A/P meetings. This was agreed to by all present and the details will be worked out during the year. Emiko Ichikawa and myself were invited to address the meeting to present updates on the interpreting situation in our respective WASLI regions, Emiko-san

is WASLI Regional Representative for Asia and I presented on behalf of the WASLI Australasia and Oceania Regional Representative George Major.



A special mention should be given to the impact the map of Australasia/Oceania had on the meeting. Some of you may be aware that discussions have been held as to whether WFD Asia/Pacific could be split into two sub-regions of Asia and Oceania. The existing Asia/Pacific region covers a vast area and it is felt that with the implementation of two sub-regions more could be achieved in a shorter amount of time. When I presented the map of our region highlighting the 31 nations encompassed within, it provided a visual representation to support the proposal of the division.

On the last day of the meeting, discussion turned to how to support smaller nations in the region to form Deaf organisations, and also how to support all countries within the region when a natural disaster strikes. In times of stress and disaster when those normally turned to for support are themselves struggling to cope the less fortunate, disabled and other minority groups are often neglected. The Deaf community often falls into the forgotten category and discussion formed around setting up a support fund which could be accessed in times of strife to provide support and aide to Deaf communities in need. Support of this in principle was unanimous and it will be looked into further.



The interpreter meeting took place on the second day. In Macau 2008, the first interpreter meeting was held over half a day. At the conclusion of that meeting it was decided to extend the meeting to a full day to allow more in depth discussion. Needless to say, when you put a group of interpreters in a room together one day isn't enough either.

Emiko-san facilitated the day which allowed each country to highlight problems they encounter on a regular basis, the other attendees could then suggest strategies and solutions which may work for them. It was apparent that New Zealand and Japan were in a better position to offer advice and support than some of the smaller nations but we all shared a common goal of wanting to make sure interpreter organisations work alongside the Deaf communities to achieve shared goals. The day quickly passed and we agreed to reconvene our meeting over dinner after returning from the bus trip to the lake.

Whether the meeting is extended to one and half days or more is a matter for discussion during the year. However, thought would need to be given to the reason we attend the WFD A/P meeting in the first place. Are we attending to participate as observers at the WFD meeting or are we attending as WASLI meeting participants? If it is the latter, should we look at providing a workshop of some kind as part of the meeting?

Attendance by interpreters at the WFD meeting is a valuable experience. It provides us with a clearer picture of what is happening within the Deaf communities of the various member countries of the region which allows interpreters to support different projects in the region, it also gives interpreters from the different countries the opportunity to liaise and work on strategies to support and mentor each other through long distance relationships.

Although I was in Nepal as the pseudo-WASLI representative, I plan to attend again as an observer if work and finances allow. Relationships formed at both meetings have given me a new found enthusiasm for my career and the desire to extend my International Sign skills.



Interpreters meeting in Nepal

IMPORTANT

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