

Newsletter  
Issue 1  
2012



Committed to the development of the profession of sign language interpreting worldwide

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### WELCOME WASLI'S NEW ASIA REPRESENTATIVES:

Monica Punjabi of India (ISLIA) and Etsuko Umemoto of Japan (NRASLI).

Monica and Etsuko have been appointed to represent the large linguistic and culturally diverse Asia region. The new representatives have four main goals in the Asia region and these are: networking among Asian countries, supporting the establishment of interpreter associations, increasing WASLI National Membership and continuing interpreter meetings across Asia. Please welcome Etsuko and Monica to the WASLI Board.

Monica is a pioneer in the interpreting profession in India. She was the first trained interpreter to complete the one-year diploma programme in India and to become a certified interpreter. Monica was born to Deaf parents and is a fluent user of Indian Sign Language as well as four other spoken languages. She has been a freelance interpreter in India and also abroad for many years. Monica is the Director of the Indian Sign Language Department at Indore Bilingual Academy for the Deaf. Through the position she holds at this academy she has conducted various training programmes in sign language and interpreting for more than five years. Monica is also the President of the Indian Sign Language Interpreters Association (ISLIA).



Etsuko Umemoto is an exceptional leader. She lives in Otsu City in Shiga Prefecture in Japan. In 1983, she registered as a Japanese Sign Language (JSL) interpreter of Mitaka City in Tokyo, then passed the certification exam of JSL in Tokyo after that, and began working as a JSL interpreter. In 1989, Etsuko certified as an inaugural national-level JSL interpreter. In 2000, she registered as a JSL interpreter of both Shiga Prefecture and Otsu City. In 2001, Etsuko she became a member of the steering committee of the Shiga Chapter of the National Research Association for Sign Language Interpretation (NRASLI) and then became the Chapter Vice-President. She is an active Board member of NRASLI and Manager of the International Division since 2010. Etsuko is also a teacher of categorised nursing care (including skill practice of JSL) at welfare technical colleges.



## Report on my visit to the Republic of the Gambia 3-9 December 2011

By Zane Hema- (British Sign Language interpreter and trainer and former WASLI secretary)



Left to right: Yahya and Kaddy with Zane Hema

The Republic of the Gambia is situated in West Africa. It is the smallest country in mainland Africa and has a population of 1.5 million. The capital city is Banjul. English is the official language, but local languages include Fulla, Mandinka, Wollof, Jola and also Gambian Sign Language. I would like to explain the history and economic situation of the Gambia but there isn't the space here so I recommend reading up on life in the Gambia (sources available include the CIA World Factbook and Wikipedia). The main thing you need to know is that the Gambia is a poor country.

Many organisations, charities and individuals from all around the world are supporting the people of the Gambia, including the Deaf and hard of hearing communities. Gambian Sign Language is the language of the Gambian Deaf community. GADHOH is the Gambian Association of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, and it was established in 1993 (see [www.gadhoh.com](http://www.gadhoh.com)). GADHOH does a lot of campaigning work, most recently with the Ministry of Information and Communications Infrastructure (MOICI) and the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare (MoHSW) to provide interpreters on TV and in hospitals.

I was invited to the Gambia by Yahya Jabbi, a sign language interpreter that I had met at the WASLI 2011 conference. He invited me to come and do some teaching, particularly in the areas of education and healthcare. For the past three years, the development of sign language interpreter training has been supported by Summer Ross, a Voluntary Service Overseas (VSO) volunteer. Summer trained as a British Sign Language Interpreter in the UK before starting her work with VSO and with the sign language interpreters in the Gambia. So I wore two hats on my visit: firstly as an ambassador for WASLI and secondly as a teacher of interpreters. I had the pleasure of meeting the GADHOH Board on my first day and I presented the GADHOH President with official greetings from the WASLI President, Deb Russell.



The GADHOH Board

All the sign language interpreting services in the Gambia come under GADHOH. Presently there is a group of seven interpreters with a range of experiences. We enjoyed two days together for training. The first day looked at working in educational settings with a range of practical exercises that examined the special relationship between a deaf student, their tutor and the interpreter. The interpreters interpreted mini-lectures on a range of topics. The aim of this was to identify difficulties that can be encountered and to then consider ways these might be best overcome. The second day looked at interpreting in the medical setting.

The Gambia has a very vibrant Deaf community. I visited St John's School for the Deaf (established in 1983) and saw where Deaf children are educated from the ages of 7-16. Up until the age of 7, children attend a nursery school based at the GADHOH compound. It was good to see that some of the teachers at St John's are also ex-pupils. More and more students want to do further study after they finish at St John's. I attended Fajara Skills Centre where there were six Deaf students. Some were studying hairdressing and others were studying fashion; Bakary Sanneh was there from GADHOH as the interpreter.

I wanted to also visit interpreters working with students at the Gambian Technical Training Institute but unfortunately I ran out of time. There are more students wanting to study than there are sign language interpreters available. This has placed pressure on GADHOH to try and plan how to deal with this increasing demand. Therefore, the work that Summer is doing to develop a professional development programme in addition to the interpreter training programme is an increasing priority.

One experience I really enjoyed was going to Deaf club on my last night. The gathering happened at GADHOH and Deaf people came from all over to socialise, eat and spend time together as a community, Gambian style. There was mix of ages but mostly young people together with GADHOH staff and it was great to spend a couple of hours having fun.

After 6 days it was time to say goodbye and return home. It is true that Gambia is the "smiling coast of Africa" and that it is very poor. I have agreed to provide input into the development of the sign language interpreter two-year professional development proposal. I left a copy of the WASLI Interpreter Education Guidelines along with some other supporting documentation. I've also agreed to respond to a number of other proposals related to interpreting.

Since my return home I have heard that meetings are taking place with the Gambian Technical Training Institute around further provision of sign language interpreters. But there is a lot to do and I think that GADHOH are doing much to work towards achieving "full participation and equality for the Deaf and hard of hearing communities" of the Gambia and I am hoping that my visit in some way aided the good work that has been done so far. I also hope that it has put a spotlight on the importance of the Deaf community working with the sign language interpreters as further development takes place.

Thank you GADHOH for your fine hospitality. Thank you also to Summer Ross and Yahya Jabbi for all your assistance in the weeks leading up to my visit. I hope that one day soon I will be able to return to your wonderful country.



Above: On my last day I had time to go to the beach and have a juice and enjoy the sun for an hour and it was just lovely



The first generation of sign language interpreters in the Gambia on the final day of training

# Law changes advance Sign Language in Ukraine

By Igor Bondarenko (WASLI Transcaucasia & Central Asia Representative)



Above: Ukrainian Parliament

For a long time, sign language in Ukraine has been limited in status. Ukrainian law confines sign language by describing it as “a means of interpersonal communication and education for the hearing impaired” (Article 23 of the Law of Ukraine “On the basis of social protection of disabled persons in Ukraine”). The authorities have not participated in the development and promotion of sign language, nor have they provided sign language interpreting services.

However, on December 22, 2011, the Ukrainian Parliament (“Verkhovna Rada”) gave Ukraine’s Deaf citizens a New Year’s gift by adopting the law “On Amending Certain Laws of Ukraine on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.” Ukrainian legislation now complies with the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, ratified on December 16, 2009. This law was enacted in the Ukraine on March 16, 2010.

Following the amendments adopted by our Parliament, Ukrainian Sign Language is getting more rights and opportunities. However the article of the law that determines the status of the sign language has different wording:

**“Article 23.** *Sign language as the language of hearing impaired is the means of communication and education and is protected by the state.*

*Government agencies and organs of local self-government*

- *contribute to the dissemination of sign language and the promotion of the linguistic identity of hearing impaired;*
- *ensure the preservation, study and full development of sign language, using it as a means of education, training, teaching, communication and creative process;*
- *provide the possibility of communication for the hearing impaired in government bodies, facilities and social protection institutions, law-enforcement authorities, fire safety facilities, emergency rescue teams, health care institutions, educational organizations, etc.;*
- *facilitate the provision of sign language interpreting services for the hearing impaired citizens of the Ukraine who use the sign language;*
- *create conditions for the scientific research of sign language;*
- *promote the use of sign language in official relations.*

*Broadcasters (regardless of ownership and departmental subordination) provide subtitling or sign language interpretation of official announcements, movies, videos, broadcasts and TV programs on terms and conditions specified by the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine.”*

Time will tell how much these changes will simplify life for Deaf people in Ukraine. But we can already say with certainty that the first important step towards the development of a tolerant civil society and equality in rights for all, without exception, has been made!

# Bridging the Knowledge Gap: The Global Disability Rights Library

How much of your valuable time do you spend thinking about how to find answers to your questions? If you have easy internet access, you probably just fire up your laptop or grab your smart phone and google it in a matter of minutes. Maybe you don't give this a second thought. However, accessing information for disability right advocates and policy makers in developing countries is not as easy. Often they do not have Internet access or have access that is too slow, expensive, or unreliable. WASLI is doing its part to support an initiative that is working to close this knowledge gap: the Global Disability Rights Library (GDRL) project.



The GDRL project is a joint initiative of the United States International Council on Disabilities and the WiderNet Project at the University of Iowa with funding from USAID. The GDRL is part of a massive digital library called an eGranary. The eGranary has an interface that allows users to access websites, documents, videos and more without requiring a connection to the internet. This off-line version has been deployed to 21 locations and 39 more sites will be added in 2012. Both the off-line e-Granary Digital Library and the on-line version of the library have been designed to be accessible to users with disabilities. The on-line version of the GDRL has been available since June 2011 and can be viewed at <http://gdrl.org>.

WASLI is proud to help the GDRL become a more valuable resource for organisations and policy makers fighting for the human rights of people with disabilities by allowing the use of its website in the off-line digital library. If you would like to learn more about this innovative project that has the potential to change the lives of thousands of people with disabilities in developing countries, please visit <http://www.usicd.org/index.cfm/global-disability-rights-library>.

If you would like to be notified of future opportunities to apply for a free, off-line digital copy of the GDRL for organisations in developing countries, then sign up at <http://www.widernet.org/digitalibrary/GDRLSiteSelection/>.

Please feel free to email us at [GDRL@USICD.org](mailto:GDRL@USICD.org) with questions and suggestions with information to include in the GDRL, or to learn more about how you can be involved.



## AICC accepts sign language interpreters

By Juan Druetta (Argentinian Deaf interpreter)

On the 10th of January 2012 I attended the AICC (the worldwide association for conference interpreters) Sign Language Network meeting in Buenos Aires. It wasn't a long meeting but I was able to present for about 15 minutes about WASLI. I talked about WASLI's work with European Forum of Sign Language Interpreters (efsli), World Federation of the Deaf (WFD), the United Nations, the human rights of Deaf people, about the UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities, and about Deaf interpreters and so on! They had questions for me about sign language, about International Sign (for conferences) and about interpreter training. I told them it is very important that AICC consider working with WASLI for interpreter training throughout the world. AICC mentioned they often receive questions about sign language interpreters and do not know how to correctly answer the questions so I explained that WASLI has great resources and knowledge that they can draw upon.

As a result of this meeting, the AICC general assembly have decided to accept sign language conference interpreters as members. This will put sign languages on an equal footing with spoken languages within the world of conference interpreting. Sign language interpreters can now become individual members of AICC and have voting rights. It was a really great meeting with AICC.

I was also invited to attend the AICC conference, the keynote address and the cocktail evening. The keynote speaker was the great Dr. Pedro Luis Barcia, President of the Argentine Academy of Letters, linguist, researcher, university professor and prolific writer. It made for a very long day despite them reassuring me it wouldn't be, although all in all it was an interesting and inspiring experience.



Above: Juan Druetta (left front) at the AICC meeting.

Top right: Juan (far right) with friends at the AICC conference.

Bottom right: AICC keynote speaker Dr. Pedro Luis Barcia.



## Want to read more?

The WASLI website is always up to date with the most recent news.

Check out the latest [press release](#) about the World Federation of the Deaf signing an historic agreement with a North Korean disability organisation.



Above: World Federation of the Deaf and the North Korean disability organisation sign the agreement in Finland

### SHARE YOUR NEWS WITH THE WORLD!

Please send updates, announcements, articles and photos from your part of the world for the next WASLI newsletter.

Please email them to: [newsletter@wasli.org](mailto:newsletter@wasli.org)

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