



WASLI is committed to the development of the profession of sign language interpreting worldwide

Thailand

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The Deaf community in Thailand

- The result from the 2007 Disability Survey revealed that there were about 1,833,297 persons with disabilities in Thailand (about 2.85 % of the whole population).
- For the population aged 7 years and over, there were 389,402 persons who had hearing impairment.
- Over one-third of this group may not be able to communicate effectively with spoken language and will benefit by using sign language. However, very few hearing persons know or want to learn sign language.
- Without sign language interpreters, however, deaf people cannot access audible information.
- At present, Ratchasuda College (Mahidol University) is the only educational institution that offers sign language interpreting programmes.

Education for the Deaf in Thailand

- The first educational programme for the Deaf in Thailand began in 1951 as an experimental unit serving twelve deaf students at a public school in Bangkok.
- Later, this unit expanded to become the first school for the deaf in Thailand.
- The first two directors of the school received their training at Gallaudet University in the USA.



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- Over the past 60 years, more programmes were established and, today, throughout the Kingdom of Thailand, a wide variety of programmes provide service to approximately 29,372 out of 281,221 deaf and hard of hearing students in Thailand.
- Programmes include 20 residential schools for the Deaf in 19 provinces serving 5,909 students, numerous special education centres serving 372 preschool students, various mainstreaming programmes serving 1,195 students, and a variety of programmes that provide access for more than 500 deaf college and university students.

Sign language interpreter training

- At present, Ratchasuda College (Mahidol University) is the only institution in Thailand that offers programmes in sign language interpreting.
- The first programme started in 1998 in collaboration with the National Institute of Deaf Studies and Sign Language Research, La Trobe University, Australia.
- The programme was held between December 1998 and January 1999. Participants were 28 volunteers, teachers in Deaf schools from all over Thailand, as well as volunteers from the National Deaf Association of Thailand.
- After this training, the Sign Language Interpreter Club was established. Dr.Maliwan Thammaseng was the first chairperson.
- Since the first training, there have been 151 graduates of three sign language interpreter curriculums:
 1. Certificate programme in Thai Sign Language interpreting (4 groups, 52 persons).
 2. Bachelor degree programme in Deaf Studies majoring in sign language interpreting (2 groups, 68 persons).
 3. Graduate Diploma in Interpreting programme (1 group, 31 persons).



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- At present, there are 3 curriculums related to sign language interpreting at Ratchusuda College, Mahidol University:
 1. Bachelor of Arts, Deaf Studies branch, years, 55 persons.
 2. Bachelor of Arts, Thai sign language interpreters branch, four years, new curriculum in 2010. Now, there are 48 students.
 3. Short programme on the basics of Thai Sign Language and Thai Sign Language interpreting.

Sign language interpreting remuneration

- Interpreters receive a general government salary of 9,000 – 12,000 bahts per month for permanent employees.
- For medical interpreting, they receive 300 - 500 bahts per hour.
- For interpreting seminars and training, they receive 600 bahts per hour.

Sign language interpreting services

- In the past, there were no offices responsible for sign language interpreting services.
- At present, the National Office for Empowerment of Persons with a Disability (NEP) is responsible for providing sign language interpreting services. They have approximately 472 persons registered as interpreters (including both hearing interpreters and deaf interpreters).
- However, qualified interpreters are only 30 persons. We must support the capacity of these interpreters. We must train them to be professional interpreters.

National Association of Thai Sign Language Interpreter (NATSI)



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- In March 2003 an academic conference was held, at which discussions were held about establishing a national association.
- NATSI was registered in September 2003 and Sophon Chaiwatthanakunwanich was the first President.
- The membership is currently 50 persons.
- NATSI's objectives are:
 1. To promote quality interpreting services and to cooperate with Thai sign language interpreter services.
 2. To represent Thai sign language interpreters at a national level.
 3. To promote the enrichment of knowledge and experiences between members.
 4. To promote knowledge about sign language interpreters to the public.
 5. To study and research.
 6. To facilitate and to control quality standards for training.
 7. To collaborate with relevant institutes and associations.

Encouragement that we would like from WASLI or other organisations

- Training for the trainers of sign language interpreters.
- Support for the process of sign language interpreters becoming professional interpreters.
- Interpreter exchanges with other countries to broaden experiences.
- Suggestions about methods of sign language interpreter training.



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