



WFD POLICY

Position Paper on Technology & Accessibility

WFD Mission

WFD works in partnership with the United Nations (UN) and its agencies and member states, other international organizations, national organizations of Deaf people, Regional Secretariats and with experts. With these partners, WFD promotes the rights of Deaf people to participate in society, government and other areas of life as equal citizens.

Technology Revolution as the Impetus

The fast progress in communication and information technologies is creating the strongest effect on the life of a Deaf person. The use of various communication tools such as text telephones, pagers, email, cell phones, videophones, and most notably the Internet has revolutionized interaction opportunities for people. To avoid the marginalization of Deaf people, investments must be made in information and communication technology that will have increasing impact and status for future Deaf people.

World Congress Resolutions on Technology

1999

2003

WFD Vision 2020 on Technology

Technological advances ensure access

Because of technological advances, ensuring full access to information, Deaf people can do and participate more. This means there are more employment equality and more opportunities for employment advancement. There are more Deaf people in professional positions of leadership, for example, teaching, medicine, psychology, business, law, and politics.

Deaf people have taken advantage of the use of information and communication technology, and use this technology creatively to improve their quality of life. Access to

information and ease of interaction is possible by visual communications, services supplied in sign language, relay services and other technology. The Internet and other information technology allow for communication in sign language, between two or more individuals anywhere in the world. The general environment is good for Deaf people, with information that is visual and clear, thus guaranteeing full accessibility.

Thus, by 2020 all Deaf people have full access to communications, language, and information, and full interaction through provision of information technologies.

Guiding Principles

WFD recognizes the role of information and communication technologies as a powerful channel for information creation and exchange, for promoting equitable access to social opportunities, for capacity building and training, for providing new opportunities for Deaf persons. To maximise the incorporation of communication and information technology in every Deaf person's life, WFD has adopted the following guiding principles.

1. Provide barrier-free national policies that include the communication needs of Deaf people, which, in turn, assure their rights to maximum fulfilment of life.
2. Deliver services in a manner that guarantees universal, full and equitable access to information and communication technology.
3. Incorporate universal design principles and universal service regulations in the provision of telecommunication services, including recognizing diverse communication needs of Deaf people, which includes the use of video, text, voice and data technologies.
4. Develop a global information network for exchange, documentation, and dissemination of resources, best practices, and information that addresses the information and communication needs of Deaf people.
5. Implement measures that ensure technological transitions expand the range of Deaf persons benefiting from these changes rather than marginalizing current users.
6. Facilitate surveys and studies on public, corporate and voluntary initiatives, laws, policies and regulations with a view that supports development of indicators and evidence-based policies for protecting and promoting the freedom of information and right to communicate.
7. Support initiatives for the development and introduction of communication networks and devices encompassing all video, text, voice and data technologies, which ensures the freedom of expression and communication by Deaf people,

especially those from developing countries. Such measures should be encouraged both from mainstream industries and from society.

8. Provide translation between sign language, text and voice on line in communication services in order to enable full participation in society.
9. Support initiatives to develop web-based tools and technologies to include sign language easily and economically in web-based information and entertainment.
10. Provide emergency services in all media with interpreting services available on line whenever needed.
11. Collaborate with WFD and its partners on initiatives that focus on capacity building and advocacy using information and communication technology.

WFD Implementation Priorities for Technology in 2006 – 2007

1. Support – provide input to organizations seeking directions and input on information and communication technology
2. Networking – create website to offer information and resources on technology
3. Developing Countries – conduct expert collaboration to address lack of information and technology parity in developing countries
4. 2007 WFD World Congress – Encourage and solicit papers that focus on policy initiatives on technology and accessibility, and on assimilation of technology in developing countries.

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