



AFRICA DEAF DECLARATION 2011

The 3rd Africa Workshop of the Africa Contact Group for Mental Health and Deafness, held in Ezulwini, Swaziland, from 7 to 11 February, 2011, attended by 130 delegates (79 Deaf and 51 hearing), representing 32 African countries, agreed to the following declaration.

The 3rd Africa Workshop (herein after Workshop) wishes to inform all relevant role-players and stakeholders in the public and private sector that the delegates vigorously participated in discussions and resolutions regarding working together for a better future for Deaf people and their families in Africa. The Workshop invites all entities of society to join efforts to give effect to the theme “Working together for a better future for Deaf people and their families in Africa”.

The Workshop urges governments that have not done so yet, to put laws and regulations in place to ensure that Sign Language takes its rightful place alongside other official languages in countries – specifically in schools and other education and training settings – to give equal access to Deaf people in school and tertiary education. The Workshop urges governments to put into place criteria, rules and regulations to require that teachers of the Deaf are proficient in Sign Language within two years after entering Deaf education.

The Workshop expresses concern that Deaf children of hearing parents are not exposed to Sign Language in their early childhood, and urges relevant government departments; NGO’s and schools to put into place support programmes for parents to learn Sign Language soon after the birth of the Deaf child.

The Workshop requests that all relevant parties in society include Deaf people in decision-making processes.

The Workshop demands that the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities be adhered to, specifically where it refers to Deaf people. The Workshop calls on African countries to ratify the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and to ensure that legislation is aligned therewith.

The Workshop sensitizes health and mental health services to the fact that Deaf people are faced with enormous communication barriers and discrimination when they need to access services. The Workshop brings under the government’s attention the risk of misdiagnosis and inappropriate treatment due to communication inefficiencies of health and mental health professionals. This also applies to judicial services and their professionals.

The Workshop strongly believes that more can be done by authorities to ensure equal access to information for Deaf people.

The Workshop strongly emphasizes that accessible communication in the Deaf person's own language is essential, which includes mandatory requirements for appropriate and effective communication support to be provided at no expense to the Deaf person when a Deaf person is admitted to a psychiatric setting, informed of treatment procedures, arrested by police, appears in court, or should there be any action against a Deaf person taken by the state.

Adopted on 11 February 2011 at the Happy Valley Convention Centre, Ezulwini, Swaziland

Mr Abdelaziz Arssi
Chairperson

Ms Deborah Oyuu Iyute
Vice-Chairperson

Rev A L Smit
Executive Secretary

Countries present:

Algeria, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Botswana, Cameroon, Congo/Brazzaville, Chad, Democratic Republic Congo, Egypt, Ethiopia, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Kenya, Lesotho, Mauritania, Mauritius, Malawi, Morocco, Mali, Madagascar, Nigeria, Namibia, Rwanda, Seychelles, Senegal, South Africa, Swaziland, Togo, Uganda, Zambia, Zimbabwe