



Legal Seat – Helsinki, Finland

WORLD FEDERATION OF THE DEAF

An International Non-Governmental Organisation in official liaison with ECOSOC, UNESCO, ILO, WHO and the Council of Europe. WFD was established in Rome in 1951.

PO Box 65, 00401 Helsinki, FINLAND

www.wfdeaf.org

President

COLIN ALLEN

Email: info@wfdeaf.org

8 April 2016

Deaf people and Situations of Risk and Humanitarian Emergencies

The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) recently published its annual thematic study on the rights of persons with disabilities, this year on Article 11 of the CRPD on 'Situations of Risk and Humanitarian Emergencies.'

WFD together with our partners WASLI, and IDE made a submission (<http://wfdeaf.wpengine.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/WFD-IDE-WASLI-letter-to-OHCHR-article-11.pdf>) to inform this report. It is pleasing that some of our recommendations and case studies were included in the final report.

The report makes clear that it is a human right to have access to information about emergencies and that those assisting in emergencies must treat deaf people and people with disability as having rights.

In particular, *"the Committee highlights (in paragraph 7) the duty to ensure that all emergency-related information be made available in formats accessible to persons with different types of impairments, including to deaf persons through sign language. It also requires disability-awareness training for all civil defence staff, rescue and emergency personnel, and for all potential actors involved in humanitarian emergencies, including on accessible communication."*

The OHCHR notes that health and counselling services following emergencies must also be accessible (para 32). Importantly it recommends (para 56) that:

"Adequate and timely delivery of accessible information is crucial in times of emergency. The use of multiple and innovative means of communication can improve accessibility and help to ensure that no constituency of persons with disabilities is excluded throughout the different stages of the emergency response, including recovery and reconstruction. States, non-State actors and other humanitarian actors should ensure the effective management and dissemination of accessible information at all stages of response."

It is important that our members are aware that they have rights under the CRPD to request all information at all stages of emergency response (e.g. fires, floods, cyclones, earthquakes, tsunamis, and other disasters) to be accessible, this includes making information available in sign language. This report provides an excellent tool for advocacy around these issues.

The OHCHR report is available in the six official UN languages at http://ap.ohchr.org/documents/dpage_e.aspx?si=A/HRC/31/30

Elena Down

Human Rights Officer

World Federation of the Deaf

elena.down@wfd.fi

Skype: wfd_HRO (by appointment only)