

IFHOHYP
NEWSLETTER Autumn 2013



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There will be one more IFHOHYP Newsletter this year, published in **March 2014**.

Deadline for the submission of articles for the next Issue **25 December**.

If you wish to submit an article for the IFHOHYP Newsletter, please send it in .rtf or .txt form to the newsletter team by the deadline indicated above. Please do not exceed 800 words. Pictures should be sent in .jpg form along with captions. Remember to indicate the name of the photographer.

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courtesy of Karina Chupina
3 Chair IDA event

Disability and World Bank Safeguards Campaign

By Karina Chupina

President
IFHOHYP



Karina Chupina was a representative of IFHOHYP in the Consultation process on disability at the World Bank Expert Focus Group Meeting on Safeguards and Disability, April 4, Washington, DC.

She was invited through Global Partnership on Disability and Development of which IFHOHYP is a member. At this meeting Karina Chupina provided arguments as to why disability issues should be included into the Safeguard policies and provided examples of good practices, such as including disability NGOs into the monitoring process of the European Structural Funds.

In July 2013 it became known that the World Bank decided to include disability in its Safeguards Policies!

What are Safeguards?

"The World Bank's environmental and social safeguard policies are a cornerstone of its support to sustainable poverty reduction. The objective of these policies is to prevent and mitigate undue harm to people and their environment in the development process. These policies provide guidelines for bank and borrower staffs in the identification, preparation, and implementation of programs and projects."



courtesy of Karina Chupina 2

United Nations Conference of the States Parties (COSP) to the UN CRPD, 17-19 July, New York.

Karina Chupina, IFHOHYP President, and Maggie Plattner, IFHOHYP Vice President, represented IFHOHYP at this event for the first time. Karina Chupina made a comprehensive presentation at the UN COSP Side Event conducted by the Human Rights Watch "Examples of Accessibility from Russia, the US and Europe". She spoke about challenges in access to participation of young people with disabilities in Russia and Europe, and possible practical solutions. Besides, she was a Chair of the International Disability Alliance Side Event on Accessible Environments with participation of Ahiya Kamara, former Vice President of IFHOHYP as one of key speakers.

Why does the World Bank need to address disability in its Safeguard Policies?

The World Bank's Environmental and Social Safeguard Policies are designed to lessen social and environmental risks associated with World Bank investments. However, as they stand now, the rights of people with disabilities have not been addressed in these policies. People with disabilities, often some of the poorest and most vulnerable people in countries where the World Bank has its projects, are not systematically consulted or considered in the planning and design of projects. The lack of a development policy that addresses the specific needs and vulnerabilities of people with disabilities may have resulted in harm. The World Bank must mandate systematic inclusion of disability into World Bank operations, ensuring that all relevant Bank-funded projects are inclusive in design and implementation, and ensuring strong, clear policy language on disability in the safeguards.

<http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/PROJECTS/EXTPOLICIES/EXTSAFEPOL/0,,menuPK:584441~pagePK:64168427~piPK:64168435~theSitePK:584435,00.html>

courtesy of Karina Chupina

What is the overarching goal of the World Bank Safeguard Policies consultation process?

To ensure that the World Bank understands the link between disability and development;

Recognizes the vulnerability of people with disabilities in developing countries;

Includes people with disabilities and disability advocates throughout the accessible consultation process;

Understands the harm done when people with disabilities are left out of development projects and programs;

Understands the need to systematically incorporate disability into the safeguards so that there is binding policy language on disability;

Acknowledges the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities as a model for policy language.





Courtesy of Sara Kwekkeboom

Use the fact you're hard of hearing and have loads of fun!

By Sara Kwekkeboom



Three or four times a year, I'm off for a weekend to play Larp. Larp means 'Live Action Role Playing'. As far as I know, I am the only hard of hearing person who does Larping in the Netherlands, but that is not a problem at all because a lot of Larpers (the people) are relaxed people who accept everybody, as long as the other person accepts them for who they are.

Larp can be explained as: improvisation theatre with a group of people in the open air, usually in woods, dunes or scouting terrains. The setting and characters are known, there is no script.

People make up what they do and how their character reacts, on the spot. They don't react for themselves but from a character's point of view.

There are two kinds of players on every event: the people with their own characters, which they made themselves (or made by a friend). You will always have just

one character at each event with that particular organization, these people are called 'the players', and on the other side there are the 'extras or monsters'. These people, the monsters, get their character from a game leader - to fit in the plans of the game leader - for that event. They just play a role to give the players more adventure and more ways of having fun on a weekend. Only the game leaders (the organization of the Larp weekend) know what will happen on the

event - they have the big schemes and plans in their head. It is never ever a good thing, for when a game leader walks up to you, then you know that you need to drop all the plans you had made.

That is how it works in the Netherlands and I know that there are different systems in Belgium and Germany. In Larp, what you need to know is that, if someone is 'out of character' (OC), this person does not play a role and can see the game leader. If someone is 'in character' (IC), they play a role, for example, they can't read or they play a strange animal and don't see the game leader coming. If an IC walks up to you, you can't run away.

I love playing a monster for several reasons: you learn how to fight with a weapon, like a sword, a dagger, or with bow and arrow (no real weapons, of course). I know how to protect my body if someone in real life would attack me, I'm faster with my reactions, and know better what to do and I love to fight beautifully. With long lash outs, with my sword, to hit a player. And to run screaming in the woods, to let the players know that I am there to scare them. Also I don't need to talk or listen that much. In real life, I love talking, having conversations about random subjects. And I don't like violence at all!

It's quite hard to listen to people in the dark and it is the same with listening to people with painted or covered faces or mumbles (as part of their role) or while playing an animal. So less talking there is, the more action we have.

For example, there is a role I play a lot: a returned character (a zombie) who just wants to hurt the players (mock play, not real injuries). Returned characters always fight to the death, and then they are resurrected (as zombies) and just scream, fight and die again. No words, nothing to listen to, just action. It happened that some players try to use a spell on me but it just doesn't work because if I don't hear them, I don't respond to those spells. Other (hearing) monsters always need to react and I just don't. The greatest thing is: everyone who knows is fine with it!

One of the first roles I played was being a seer using my deafness: 'in character' I couldn't hear the players because I used my ears for hearing the dead. I did communicate in sign language with my daughter (in real life my older sister) but there was no way that I could hear the players talk. I loved doing it because a lot of players did not know, 'IC or OC', that I really could not hear them (I turned my hearing aids off).

Another role I play by using the fact that I am hard of hearing, is playing the role of a war veteran. My character just came back from a war and

had lost most of (my) hearing because of the hits on my head I got. My friends were also veterans and they were just tired or lost a leg, but they could hear well. The whole night I kept saying to everyone "sorry, what did you say?" or "you're mumbling, say it again" or "no, I can't hear you, your beard is hanging in front of your mouth." to "huh? Did you say something" and "what did he say?" It was quite annoying for the friends and the other people in the role playing conversation. 'In character', my friends tried to shut me up and one person did try to kill me, just because nobody could say anything without hearing "huh? Can you say it again?"

They needed to repeat and hear me something completely different. The funny part was, that everybody 'out of character' knows about me being hard of hearing, but did not know whether I was pretending to mishear or couldn't hear it in real life. I had the night of my life at that event.

«It's quite hard to listen to people in the dark and it is the same with listening to people with painted or covered faces or mumbles (as part of their role) or while playing an animal. So less talking there is, the more action we have.»

The more there are hard of hearing people playing Larp, the more fun it will be. Also, there would be acceptance and knowledge will be shared. The people I play with in Larping have learned how to communicate with deaf and hard of hearing people during that game. They are no longer scared, just more understanding, and I really think it will make a difference if they can learn that deaf and hard of hearing people are just as fun as hearing people are.



AGM 2013 IN STOCKHOLM

By Ece Saygi



The Annual General Meeting 2013 was held on April 14 to 17 in Stockholm, Sweden. This year's AGM was organized by the Swedish hard of hearing young adult organization Unga Hörselskadade.

The participants were from European countries as Russia, Poland, Slovakia, Spain, Italy, Czech Republic, Netherlands, Denmark, Sweden, Finland and Switzerland. There were also other participants from African and Arabic countries as Tunisia, Kuwait, Uganda and Turkey.

The program of AGM 2013 in Sweden generally consisted of presentations, workshops, committees' work, activities and annual meeting. On the first day of the AGM, in the evening, most of the participants had arrived, introduced themselves and told

about the most three popular things in their countries. Heléne Larsson from Unga Hörselskadade, gave information to the participants about the program and rules of the Kårsögården Hostel (which was a pretty hostel near the lake and forest).

On the second day, participants started the day with workshops of committees. In the workshops participants discussed and shared their opinions about how committees can be developed. The popular idea of spreading the IFHOHYP over the entire world was discussed. The finances, fundraising and the strategy plan of the next five years were formed, and ideas about how IFHOHYP can raise the finances were discussed. After the workshops and presentations, it was time for the sightseeing in Stockholm, and the historically rich, live and beautiful capital city amazed the participants.

The third day was a workshop day, and Hélene shared her interesting story of hearing loss with us and also told how it affected her life and how she achieved her accomplishments as a hard of hearing person. The significance of bilingualism (both sign language and spoken language) is explained with studies made by Hélene and her friend Anna, and also by psychologist Maria Midböe.

After these profound presentations and workshops, it was time to relax. Participants experienced immersing inside a hot sauna outside in the freezing cold. Participants played funny games, talked to and shared their cultures with fellow participants.

On the last day of the AGM, agenda points were followed by the chairperson Jesse Oikarinen. Congratulations were given to the newly elected vice-president Maggie Pepunkt (Switzerland), secretary Astrid Fejrø (Denmark), treasurer Anna Vita Ross (Denmark) and board member Nomy Bitman (Israel). The current president of IFHOHYP, Karina Chupina (Russia), stated that next year she will resign from the position of the president due to her individual reasons. Karina did add that she would carry on supporting IFHOHYP long after her tenure as president has ended.

In conclusion, the AGM in Sweden was informative, interesting, and enjoyable for the participants. We also thank the Swedish team for their organizing the AGM, and also their hospitality, helpfulness and being friendly. ■

courtesy of Sabina Hedstrom

courtesy of IFHOHYP





courtesy of Airi Nisikawa

between Japan and IFHOHYP

IFHOHYP has expressed interest in the different hard of hearing young adult groups in the world, and Yan Nan views it as a good opportunity to exchange information between Japan and IFHOHYP.

An introduction to Yan Nan is in order. Yan Nan (Japanese for Hard of Hearing Youth) was established in 1983, and this year, we held our 30th anniversary party in Kobe on June 15th. Currently, Yan Nan is divided into 50 groups (by prefectures or cities).

As mentioned before, Yan Nan is divided into 50 groups. According to the members of Yan Nan, "Tokyo was the main centre for Yan Nan, however it is almost changed. Currently, other groups such as Tohoku and Kansai areas are active for hard of hearing young people. They held activities and tried to recruit new members." The Tohoku areas, Akita and Sendai-Miyagi work closely and actively support each other with resources and people. Last year, they held a skiing trip and called for participants to all Yan Nan members in Japan.

In Tokyo, Yan Nan held study sessions and social events.

Recently, Yan Nan hosted a festival in the city of Hachiko, Shibuya, and at that time the president and vice-president of Tokyo area held a workshop called, "Minna de Discussion" (Japanese: Let's discuss together).

By Airi Nisikawa



During the discussion, we discussed the problem in jobs, schools, friendships, partnerships, family relationships, and other public situations. In this workshop, we discussed with several young hearing people and deaf people. It was a great experience for everyone involved.

However, we are now faced with the issue of an aging population of hard of hearing people. The majority of Yan Nan committee members are over 35 years of age and this is the reason why we cannot join in IFHOHYP. But Yan Nan wants to make relationships with other countries and exchange information. I do not know how many people are interested in my country, but I hope we will organize something activity for future relationship.

Choose your committee!

As a unique youth organization, IFHOHYP needs help of its members to make all their dreams, goals and purposes come true. The best way to become an active member and make Hard of Hearing young people's life better is joining our committees.

By Nomy Bitman



Board member

Our current committees cover most of Hard of Hearing people's life areas: Communication, Accessibility, Expansion, Study Session and Nomination. The greatest advantage of this working format is having active members from all over the world, with varied points of view, life experience and ideas.

The Communication Committee

The Communication Committee, for example, includes Juraj Variny from Slovakia, Irina Ivanova from Russia and Ece Saygi from Turkey.

They are responsible for current IFHOHYP newsletter and improving the organization's new website, since those are IFHOHYP main communication tools. Another important goal is raising awareness to Hard of Hearing people's lives by making their own YouTube and video channels soon.

Expansion Committee

Our Expansion Committee creates contact with potential member organizations of IFHOHYP in order to help Hard of Hearing people worldwide, as part of IFHOHYP strategic goal.

Accordingly, the members of the committee live in varied countries and continents: Rasmus Draklander from Sweden, Royee Rothman from Israel, Alper Coscun from Turkey and Akram Muhammad from Pakistan. Their main goals this year are having new member organizations of IFHOHYP from Asia, USA and South America, and having better contact with member individuals and organizations.

Accessibility Committee

An important committee is the Accessibility Committee, which also includes members of varied countries. Those members are Ernst De-Hart from the Netherlands, Hanifah Nalwoga from Uganda, Giacomo Pirelli from Italy and Nomy Bitman from Israel. The committee's main goals are improving use of subtitles through cooperation with CCAC, EFHOH and IFHOH, as well as raising awareness to Hard of Hearing people needs.

Another important goal is making a position paper for use in the future.

Nomination Committee

Another important committee is the Nomination Committee, which is responsible for the nominations for IFHOHYP Board and members elections before and during the AGM. The committee's members are Rasmus Draklander from Sweden and Joonas Mannaberg from Finland.

+?

Do you want to be more active at IFHOHYP and take part in our committees?

Please contact me: boardmember@ifhohyp.org and have more details.

Join us! ■

Hearing Loss in Tunisia

By Mona Belhouane



Hearing loss in Tunisia remained an unfamiliar disability and despite different medical services provided for hard of hearing people, they still face different barriers in many aspects of life. This is due to two major factors - the low level of awareness of hearing loss as well as the lack of resources in the health sector.

Education

With the help of hearing aids, hard of hearing students are capable enough of studying in the mainstream schools after having an extensive preparatory year in special deaf schools and also sessions of speech therapy.

However, public schools don't provide any additional services to facilitate the access to information, which in turn increases the rate of academic failure among these students. A few hard of hearing or Deaf students manage to finish high school and get into university. The academic efforts cannot be done without the support of their family, significant individual efforts and available courses. In addition to that, they choose to bring the tutor to their home in order to compensate the lack of academic acquisition.

Nevertheless, only families who have good financial status can afford to pay for private tutors.

Diagnosis

People with hearing loss will consult their family doctor first. The doctor may then send them on to the hospital for further testing and diagnosis at a specialist in order to evaluate their hearing loss, a procedure after which then they can get hearing aids. Hearing aids insurance is partly covered by the hearing care system and available for people under 23 years of age.

Speech therapists are available mainly at hospitals and public dispensaries. This service is covered by the state, yet they offer only one session in two weeks and that is not sufficient. However some families opt for private sector as it has proved to be more skillful and efficient, but it is more expensive and the patient has to pay the full cost.



courtesy of Mona Belhouane

This a new group of youth gathered together after the Jasmine Revolution to advocate for disability rights. Three hard of hearing people

Recent challenges

So far, most of the associations in Tunisia focus on medical rehabilitation for persons with disability. Hence, the definition of disability remained practically the same until the Tunisian revolution, which was followed by a transitional process that is characterized by the active youth participation in civil society. I engaged with other young persons who have different disabilities to raise awareness about Committees on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) and I was committed vividly to advocate for disability rights. Fortunately the disability rights was introduced in a new constitution which is an important step contributing in the promotion of rights and undertaking special measures in the future

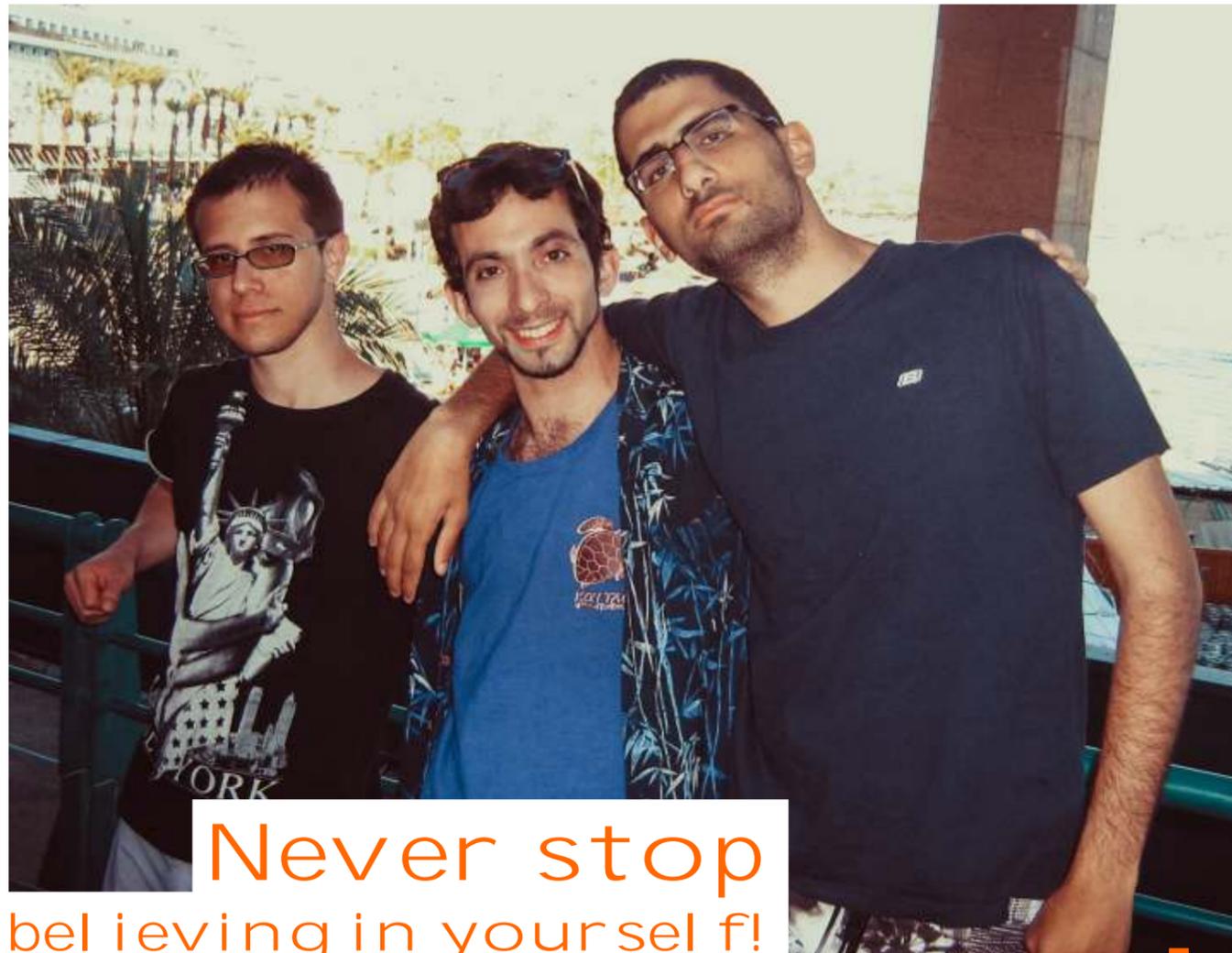
Recently Tunisia is undergoing a period of political transition. We cannot presume a significant change within short period of time, due to the political instability in Tunisia. We are hopeful that the instability won't last after the next elections are held, of which implementing new laws will be guaranteed. ■

Social identity... No clear identity

Due to the nature of hearing disability, which is viewed as a hidden disability, most of hard of hearing are often left out from conversations and discussions. Some people try to get involved in a hearing world; nevertheless, they still lack social skills. Thus, they are misinterpreted as being shy and reserved persons who are unwilling to communicate.

Many others choose to get into deaf related associations where the communication is much easier and social rejection is much more unlikely, they eventually learn sign

This is present predominantly among a wide range of young who have mild hearing loss, and consequently they end up by identifying themselves as Deaf.



Never stop believing in yourself!

It's 7 a.m and my alarm clock rotates, shaking me out of my dreams. I jump out of the bed, making my morning arrangements, looking at the phone clock.

I'm 5 minutes late, as regular. Getting down to the street, trying to decide if I should either take the bus or walk on foot to my studies at the Technion institute in the city of Haifa, Israel. Just 15 minutes away from my place. I decide to walk on foot. The lecturer of today is always late at any rate.

I get into the auditorium where I have a course named "Introduce to Building Details". That's a part of my study cour-

se in the 3rd year (out of 5 years) of Architecture. I'm facing towards my usual seat in the third line from the stage, at the mid of the line. I could get one of the first seats to the stage, which is reserved for Hard of Hearing people, but these seats are too close to the screen. Besides my seat there is already waiting my typist, who is a student in the class but works for me so that everything the lecturer says is typed into my own laptop.

By: Raviv Marcus



a student of Architecture in the Technion, Haifa, Israel, and also proud of being Hard of Hearing

courtesy of Raviv Marcus 2

This specific auditorium is fair built acoustical, but there is a better auditorium in the Faculty of Architecture and Town Planning. In fact, the only classes which are adjusted specifically for HoHs in the Technion are in another building – a main building where the 1st year students study. The current F.M systems installed in these classes are old fashioned. I hope to trigger the process of updating these systems and their maintenance.

As an Architecture student, I have a lot of practical lessons. Those lessons are conducted in workshop classes, which are not very quiet. I was somewhat worried about these conditions before my 3rd year, because my grade and me were supposed to move to a greater workshop where about 70 students work together simultaneously, substituted into eight groups. To my surprise, I found I could hear well in there – maybe because I had ensured my own group would be in one of the room's corners on advance, by e-mailing with the course coordinator.

«Up to here was I talking about the perspectives of the institute and my own. However, what about the nation's perspective?»

The Technion maintains a department responsible for promotion of students with special needs (including HoHs, ADHD, etc.). This authority is rather limited but they could carry for time additions in exams, discussions and coordination with the lecturers and tutors, and providing personal mentors (higher year students who help in specific courses). My profession is unique among the other professions in the Technion (sciences and engineering at most) so this department was failure finding appropriate mentors in some of the courses. In addition, there is a strong student association in the Technion. In the last years they have been developing a desk involved with integration of students owing special needs. I look forward to co-working with them and the department mentioned above. I see a lot of good intentions, so I'm optimistic.

In general, most of the class fellows treat me properly and help me when I ask them to, however my relationship with my classmates isn't strong. My good friend, Shahar, had left two years ago because of academic stress.

Since then, I haven't found my place, so I went and looked for other HoH people studying in the Technion or just living in the city of Haifa. Some of them became very good friends of mine, so I could say I'm satisfied with my social life.

During my searches, I have found that there was an association named "Kivunim" (Hebrew for "Directions") which dealt with HoH people and helped them manage semi-independent life and approach their own goals. I thought this concept to be great, so I joined the association apartment, with HoH people as roommates. At the time of this article I'm finishing the two years program and happy to continue on my own way.

Up to here was I talking about the perspectives of the institute and my own. However, what about the nation's perspective? Israel has the National Insurance Institute that takes care for the needs of weakened populations (including Hard of Hearing and deaf people). It raises monies and aid for our population, especially in the economical aspect. It also has an assigned department responsible for vocational rehabilitation – directing the people towards studies and acquiring professions, thus, by funding most of the studies' expenses. The expenses consist of a variety of subjects: Tuition (pay of the studies), transportation to and from studies site, rents, equipment (inclusive of laptop and printer – as for me, that's just "wow!" I'm writing this article on my supplied laptop) and accessibility services. As it's for HoHs and deaf people, it means personal lessons (in my case, with the Technion's students for example) and translation to sign language or typing, like my own typist.

To sum it all up, the aid directly supplied to the HoHs and deaf people by the state may come in a total of dozens of thousands of dollars, and that's meaningful support for us. The Israeli law also charges accessibility solutions in the higher education institutes (and public spaces at all), and the regulations have been coming into force in the last years. We are rest of raising the awareness for accessibility at the institutes themselves, including my own one – the Technion. We have a long way up to fulfilling accessibility for deaf and Hard of Hearing, but we are also full of energies, hope and faith in our abilities. Never stop believing in yourself!



courtesy of Daria Panicheva

IT ALL DEPENDS ON US

By: Daria Panicheva



It is often said that for hard of hearing people, everything is bad in Eastern European countries and much better in developed Western countries. This assertion might be true but there always are two sides to the story. Hard of hearing people face the same problems all over the world, no matter where they live, but the ways to solve those problems have different outcomes.

For example, I had moved away from an Eastern European country to America several years ago and had the chance to compare two different worlds. My experience might be limited as it includes only everyday life situations. I did not attend school or college in the USA because I already graduated from university; but people who studied here may have had different experience. On the other hand, I have had an opportunity to compare similar situations in different countries and it was a good experience to learn from.

One of these situations involved cochlear implant surgery. I once walked in the Institute of Hearing in my hometown, and many employees here knew me since childhood. I agreed with their offer to check if I qualify for a cochlear implant (CI). It was pretty much unexpected, because normally only children would get a CI in that clinic. At that time I didn't have an opinion on the subject and had to rely on what doctors said. The doctors said that I will benefit from a CI. However, I did not like the pressure with what I was persuaded to get a CI, and I

was not even allowed to choose on what ear I would like to have the CI placed. It was not the only thing that put me on my guard, so I decided to take a second opinion.

I visited another Institute of Hearing in my current city and was again informed that I qualify for a CI. The tests were all the same and so were the results. The difference was that I was allowed to choose a CI for either of my left or right ear, color of my future processor, color of replacement processor and so on. These details didn't matter, but the experience made a good impression on me.

I asked about my possible chances to benefit from this surgery (assuming I was born almost deaf and English is not my native language).

I expected to hear something like "your chances are rather high" or "it will be harder for you to learn new sounds of English language". To be honest, the audiologist didn't at first even realize that I am not American, as I live in a multinational state where people are used to all types of accents. But she replied this "It all depends on you, and it is all up to you". It didn't work out by reasons beyond control, but gave me a good lesson.

People may have what is called "special needs", but it is not the same as "disability". Disability means that one is not able to do something. I prefer the pragmatic approach to the problem utilized in the USA: "one is able to do everything". I do not have medically confirmed disability because I am not considered to be disabled. For example, when I sat an exam for my driver's license, I only had to check my vision. Nobody discriminated against me due to my hearing loss or other health conditions. It is my sole responsibility to evaluate if I am able to drive safely. But nobody assisted me as well. I only asked the examiner to give me directions with his hand instead of saying "turn right" or "park here".

When I looked for job and attended courses at the Department of Rehabilitation, we were taught not how to deal with our impaired hearing, but how to write a good resume and emphasize our strengths to make a good impression on an employer.

People's special needs are almost always met, no matter what they might be: hearing impairment, lack of English knowledge or dietary needs. All products have detailed description of contents; public bathrooms have wheelchair access and so on.

Same about sign language: many hearing people take courses in college and a cashier at a grocery store or post office clerk may repeat

what they said to you in sign language, just a few examples of languages. Many people also teach their children sign language through a play as a part of summer fun.

Hearing aids are also widely advertised as an option for elderly people to be as active as they used to be in their youth. This will not mean that if you use sign language or hearing aids, or wear glasses or are a wheelchair user - you are "disabled". You will be generally treated just like any other person, with the same respect, unless you specifically state that you need special assistance.

Americans tend to rely on different assistive devices like TTY (teletypewriter, when you type what you have to say) or TRC (Telecommunication Relay Service, when a special operator types whatever you say). When you need to contact customer support, you generally have to call them instead of coming in person, but a TTY line is usually available almost everywhere.

«Disability means that one is not able to do something. I prefer the pragmatic approach to the problem utilized in the USA: "one is able to do everything".»

It doesn't mean that America is a paradise, as weird situations happen when hearing impaired people are denied service, happen there as well. Discrimination against deaf and hard of hearing applicants happens sometimes too, even when there's a law protecting disabled workers from discrimination. People are the same everywhere around the world - some of them are flexible and some are not.

I like the fact that you are given many possibilities that you may use or not to use. You are completely free in your choice of how to build your life. It doesn't depend on where you live; it only depends on how strong we are!

YEARS



courtesy of Hanifa Uganda

FIVE YEARS OF UGANDA FEDERATION OF THE HARD OF HEARING - THE STRUGGLE FOR SUCCESS

Until 2008, hard of hearing (HOH) people in Uganda were fully integrated into the deaf people's organizations and as well as organizations of persons with different categories of disability. Like their constitution states, "For the deaf and hard of hearing people in Uganda", all their work was for the Deaf and HOH, although HOH were the victims of this integration.

By: Hanifah Nalwoga-Uganda



Thanks to the founding members (especially the President (James Aniyamuzaala)) who realized the gap, teamed up and established an independent organization of HOH people in Uganda-Uganda Federation of the Hard of Hearing (UFHOH).

At first it was met with resistance, rejection, and opposition from leaders of the National Association of the Deaf - a challenge in the first place! Without resources, the founders embarked on voluntary mobilization of members and resources from well-wishers, and activities were carried out on individual and grassroots level voluntarily by the founding members.

As I write down this article I wonder how time must be moving so fast! What started as a local organization a few years back in 2008, has now grown into a national organization with both national and international recognition.

The negative attitude and stereotypes held in the disability movement in Uganda places

«But then we said "YES! We should learn and use sign Language, but only by choice." Our decision meant complete rejection but it was to be the turning point and the subsequent formation of UFHOH. Now the advocacy issues stems from this background.»

HOH people under another category of disability (Deafness). Even after clear advocacy efforts by HOH members, the community still held the traditional belief that HOH people are more or less like Deaf people and therefore they should benefit from the services generally intended for the Deaf - another challenge in place. It was very clear that, although we benefited from some of their services like Sign Language, the Deaf Culture was generally different from what a hard of hearing person or late deafened person could expect. Speaking, talking on cell phone and any verbal communication was against the Deaf culture; all what was acceptable was sign language communication.

We thought otherwise, and we therefore said "NO! It was against our wishes and above all another violation of our human rights and freedom of choice." But then we said "YES! We should learn and use sign Language, but only by choice."

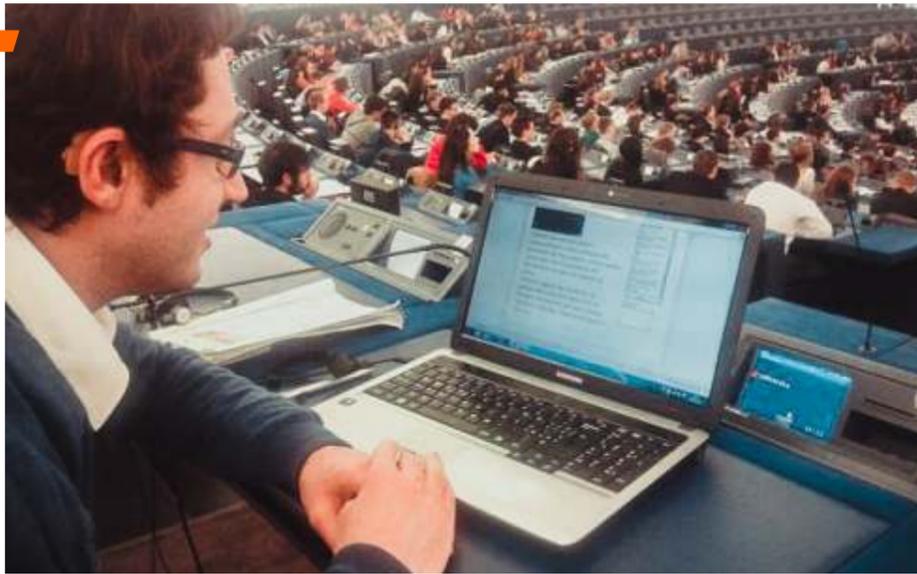
Our decision meant complete rejection but it was to be the turning point and the subsequent formation of UFHOH. Now the advocacy issues stems from this background.

UFHOH's work is mainly centered on four program areas that include: capacity building, advocacy and awareness raising, lobbying and networking, and rehabilitation of hard of hearing people. Human Rights advocacy is put at the forefront of our activities. Our approach is to promote the use of all forms of communication (including sign language) by choice, and adoption to effective communication technologies for total communication by HOH people in Uganda.

The journey has just begun and big plans are being laid down. As I write down, Sign Language and lip reading are still the major communication means for HOH people in Uganda. Our two year human rights project activities have had done wonders in sensitizing the public about hard of hearing disability and human rights (thanks to Disability Rights Fund (DRF) for the financial support). ABILIS Foundation has shown special interest in working with hard of hearing people and there is a possibility for future partnership.

Although with limited financial resources UFHOH is slowly but steadily moving forward to the journey of success. We always believe that total communication is not all about applying a universal language, but having effective and efficient means of transmitting the information understanding what is being transmitted and giving feedback. It's just the beginning, the struggle continues! ■

live subtitling Euroscola-2



MY INTERNSHIP AT EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

By: Giacomo Pirelli



In May of 2012, I joined the open competitive examination for the program of traineeships (internship) for the persons with disabilities at European Parliament (EP). The EP selected me among the winners of this examination and I started to work since the start of October 2012, at the Information Office of EP in Strasbourg.

The EP is the one of European Union (EU) Institutions where the members are elected directly by the citizens from twenty-eight EU countries. It has three main offices in Brussels, in Luxembourg, in Strasbourg, the General Directions and several Information Offices. The European Parliament Information Offices (EPIO) has the main aim for informing EU citizens about the EP, the other European Institutions and encouraging them for voting at the parliamentary elections.

These offices are in part of the General Directorate for the Communication and they are as information points for giving educational materials to the schools and universities. The EPIO of Brussels and Strasbourg can organize the visits for single visitors or groups in different languages of EU at the Hemicycle of EP in Strasbourg and also the EP building in Brussels.

For this program the students of secondary schools from twenty-eight EU countries will simulate the role of the Member of European Parliament (MEP) for a day at the Hemicycle of EP in Strasbourg together the teachers. The rules of this simulation are the same applied during the voting and the plenary sessions of EP. Every year the EPIO is organizing around 20 Euroscola sessions.

For joining to the one or more of these sessions, the schools should send a request to the Information Office in every EU country for participate in the open competitive examination for selection. If they are selected by these EPIO for the best projects related to the EU, they will go to Strasbourg for a session.

The EPIO of Strasbourg gave me some tasks: the management of the website, the Facebook page and the participation in several press conferences and several events related to the EU programs called Euroscola.

For the management of the Facebook page and the website, it is a group work involving my colleagues and me. I took some photos during the Euroscola sessions and I also wrote news stories about the sessions. We had the official photographer to take other photos of the session. I published some photos of mine and of this photographer on the website, and also on the Facebook page.

For publishing news on the Facebook page and in the website, my colleagues were interested in working quickly and I followed the developments of the Euroscola session for writing summarized topics that were discussed in the workgroups.

My task is limited to follow the set of several moments of that event and writing sentences for publishing, it wasn't important understanding the contents of the debates between students, organizers and MEPs obviously for my problems related to my hearing. But the ability to discuss about general everyday topics was important for me to understand my colleagues talking about.

My experience was good because I took advantage of attending an internship in a higher level (the European one) for a longer period and I learnt different things about the tasks of the European Institutions (EP, EC and European Council) and about their several roles. I worked in two other languages, reading and writing in English and French. For facilitating the communication with my colleagues in other languages, I wrote emails with them and sometimes chatted with some of them. For this reason I did a request a communication assistant to help me with communicating with my colleagues. My communication assistant was an Italian who attended the same internship at European Parliament the previous year.

The EP understood it is important for me for following the debates and discussions between participants and allowed me to organize the last two Euroscola sessions with the live subtitles last February. I obtained the online subtitling from remote location through the modern system of respeaking in the experimental way. Respeaking is the aim of reformulating the speech of a speaker in a language more simple for deaf and HOH people. The re-speaking is applied as subtitling and in this case the reformulation is live subtitles through the use of the technology of automatic speech recognition. It can permit the participants with deafness and the ones without deafness (who needs to take notes in a lecture or to learn a new language) to have better comprehension about the speeches of speakers during any type of event. It is also used for participating in the debates, and also to questions and discussions.

At EP there was Internet Wi-Fi available in all the rooms of the building and at the Hemicycle. The organizers of Euroscola sessions were working for the live streaming with the audio in different languages in their website. For this reason I submitted my request for subtitling the Euroscola sessions to my colleagues last October. It was applied near the end of my internship and the concrete result is the experimentation of live subtitling from remote location. For this solution the Italian captionists are connected to the live streaming of two Euroscola sessions,

and they were listening into the debates between students, colleagues and MEP in English and in French. They then interpreted them into Italian by voice in real time. This live voice interpreting was transformed in the live subtitles in Italian through the remote system of re-speaking. In this case they broadcasted the subtitles in a multimedia platform of the website of the Re-speaking On Air International Association and I was reading them in my laptop in the Hemicycle of EP in Strasbourg in real time during the Euroscola Session. This experimentation of subtitling was supported by the two MEP interested to this topic, Adam Kosa and Mario Mauro. During my internship I had frequent contacts with the persons outside my job, with these MEPs, their assistants and colleagues of European Commission and of Council of Europe who followed me for the development of VOICE Project, the website and of the speech recognition system.

It was important for anyone knowing that the EPIO wasn't the only possibility for giving information, but also for having some connections with the professional groups, companies, the NGO for working about the aims and the roles of EP. For this reason I informed my colleagues about the meetings of subtitling organized by EFHOH, IFHOHYP, CCAC (Collaborative Communication Access Via Captioning), the AFIDEO (French Association of HOH people), the national and local associations of HOH and deaf people in Italy and the ones of subtitling as Respeaking On Air. Access to EU Institutions isn't easy for a deaf or HOH person to obtain a job as functionary or MEP inside the EP or the EC.

My office sent me for participating to the two official conferences organized between the European Disability Forum, the EC and the EP for the European Day of the Persons with Disabilities (held on December 3rd of every year). These events took place from December 3 to 5 in Brussels and they are entirely subtitled in real time in English in the conference room and in the web live streaming. One of them was the third European Parliament of the Persons with Disabilities and it was mainly concentrated about the ratification of the UN Convention of Rights for the persons with disabilities in Europe and the request to EU Institutions for writing the report. In this case the Institutions should demonstrate that the Europe is working towards improving the accessibility in several sectors (education, employment, government, etc.) and also for respecting the rights of the people with disabilities.