



ASSOCIATION OF SIGN LANGUAGE INTERPRETERS OF NIGERIA

ON THE MOVE

PROGRAMS & ACTIVITIES

MARCH, 2025



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**TIDBITS FROM SEN.
TANKO ALMAKURA**

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ASLIN

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REGISTRATION COUNCIL**



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THE BOARD *notes*

APPRECIATION

It is with great honor and a deep sense of responsibility that I serve as the Chairman of the Board of Trustees for the Association of Sign Language Interpreters of Nigeria (ASLIN). This esteemed Association stands as a beacon of inclusivity, tirelessly advocating for the rights and accessibility of the Deaf community across our nation. ASLIN embodies the values of communication, empowerment, and equality, ensuring that no voice goes unheard.

I wish to commend the National Executive for their unwavering dedication and visionary leadership in steering this association towards its noble goals. Your efforts have been instrumental in fostering a community that thrives on collaboration and mutual respect.

*His Excellency (Gen.)
Tanko Atmakura*

To our esteemed partners, your steadfast support has been the backbone of our success. Your contributions have enabled ASLIN to continue providing vital support services to the Deaf community, bridging gaps and creating opportunities for a more inclusive society. Together, we are making a profound impact, and I am confident that our collective efforts will continue to yield remarkable results.

Thank you all for your commitment to this cause. Let us forge ahead with renewed vigor and determination to build a future where every individual, regardless of their abilities, can fully participate and thrive.



NATIONAL EXECUTIVE REPORT



COMMUNIQUE ISSUED AT THE END OF NATIONAL CONFERENCE / ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF ASSOCIATION OF SIGN LANGUAGE INTERPRETERS OF NIGERIA HELD ON 30TH – 31ST OCTOBER, 2024 AT PROTEA HOTEL, IKEJA, LAGOS.

THEME:

"Mental Health and Emerging Trends on Sign Language Interpreting Empowering".

INTRODUCTION

Sign language interpreters are a critical part of the Deaf community, providing essential communication support to an estimated 9 million Deaf Nigerians. However, despite their critical role, they often face unique mental health challenges due to the high cognitive demands of their work and limited access to mental health resources. The World Health Organization defines mental health as a state of well-being in which individuals can cope with life's stresses, realize their abilities, work productively, and contribute to their community. Given the intensive mental and emotional labour required in interpreting, maintaining strong mental health is essential for interpreters to perform their duties effectively.

In addition to the demanding nature of their work, Nigerian interpreters face significant professional uncertainties, including limited recognition, inadequate compensation, a lack of structured career progression, and few opportunities for continuous training. These challenges contribute to high-stress levels and have led some interpreters to consider leaving the field in search of more stable, better-paying careers. If these issues are not addressed, the future of sign language interpreting in Nigeria is at risk, with the potential for both burnout and a reduced interpreter workforce.



"MENTAL HEALTH AND EMERGING TRENDS ON SIGN LANGUAGE INTERPRETING".

AIM & OBJECTIVES OF THE CONFERENCE

The conference aimed to examine the situation of Sign Language Interpreting services in Nigeria, the mental health impact, and proffer a sustainable solution that will mitigate negative environmental factors that might be a barrier to effective and efficient service delivery.

The Objectives of the conference are as follows:

- a. To bring together relevant stakeholders such as educational Institutions, Medical and health Practitioners, Legislatures, legal practitioners, ministries, Departments, and Agencies of government to discuss best practices and propose a recommendation for a national approach to minimizing mental health cases among sign language interpreters.
- b. Enable Sign Language Interpreters in Nigeria to discuss a strategy for formalizing the practice, which will include accreditation and certification of practitioners, and propose a better and more attractive working environment for effective service delivery.

CONFERENCE CENTRAL THEME:

The conference highlighted several pressing challenges affecting sign language interpreters in Nigeria:

- a. The demanding nature of the sign language interpreting profession both mentally and physically coupled with the emotional challenges of working in diverse settings is impacting interpreters' mental well-being.





CHALLENGES HIGHLIGHTED DURING THE SESSIONS:

THE CONFERENCE HIGHLIGHTED SEVERAL PRESSING CHALLENGES AFFECTING SIGN LANGUAGE INTERPRETERS IN NIGERIA:

a. The demanding nature of the sign language interpreting profession both mentally and physically coupled with the emotional challenges of working in diverse settings is impacting interpreters' mental well-being.

1. Sign Language interpreters are often exposed to experience vicarious trauma or Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) as a result of being exposed to someone else's trauma, hence affecting their mental health.

c. Sign language Interpreting requires intense cognitive focus and emotional resilience, which, without mental health support, leads to burnout, anxiety, and a decline in service quality.

d. Sign language interpreters struggle with low professional visibility and limited opportunities for advancement and career progression, which impacts morale and discourages talented individuals from entering or remaining in the field.

e. The absence of a structured compensation framework results in low wages and job insecurity, pushing interpreters to seek alternative careers that offer better financial stability.

f. Rapid changes in the interpreting profession and the specialized nature of various interpreting contexts necessitate ongoing training, yet such opportunities remain scarce.

g. Lack of professional/experienced sign language interpreters in the mental health and medical setting coupled with the fact that mental health terminologies have not been captured in Nigerian Sign Language in ways that simplify them. This poses limitations for sign language interpreters in the mental health and medical setting.

i. Lack of accreditation and certification procedures for Sign Language Interpreters in Nigeria.

j. Lack of a sign language continuous education programme for sign language interpreters in Nigeria.

k. The general lack of understanding about the importance of sign language interpreting and the role of interpreters contributes to stigmatization and limits access to the resources interpreters need to perform their roles effectively.

RECOMMENDATION

After the ASLIN Conference on "Mental Health and Emerging Trends on Sign Language Interpreting Empowering", we, the participants, comprising the ASLIN members, Representatives of the National Commission of Persons with Disabilities, Nigeria National Association of the Deaf, Deaf-Blind Association of Nigeria, and other relevant stakeholders committed to the advancement of Sign Language interpreting profession, thereby issue the following recommendations:

a. All relevant ministries and mental health organizations should create support programs specifically for sign language interpreters, including counseling services, workshops on stress management, and peer support networks that enable sign interpreters to share experiences and access mental health resources.

b. The Federal government, state government, and other relevant stakeholders should develop structured career paths for sign language interpreters working in government establishments, along with a standardized compensation framework. This will attract more qualified individuals to the profession and incentivize experienced interpreters to continue serving the Deaf community.

c. ASLIN, NNAD, and NCPWD are committed to initiating public awareness campaigns to educate the public, healthcare providers, and employers on the critical role of sign interpreters in promoting accessibility and disability- inclusion. This will encourage respect for the profession and promote broader social support.

d. The National Commission for Persons with Disabilities, Nigeria National Association of the Deaf, and the Association of Sign Language Interpreters of Nigeria should set up a National Committee for the Accreditation and Certification of Sign Language Interpreters in Nigeria.

e. Psychosocial therapy should be incorporated into the training curricula for sign language interpreters. Workshops and courses focusing on stress management, emotional regulation, and resilience-building can equip interpreters with essential skills for their professional roles.

f. The mental health terminologies should be developed and captured in Nigerian Sign Language in ways that simplify them.

g. Sign Language interpreters continued education programme should be introduced in all higher institutions of learning in collaboration with the Association of Sign Language Interpreters of Nigeria (ASLIN).

h. ASLIN in collaboration with NCPWD and NNAD will actively engage with lawmakers to advocate for policies that protect the rights and welfare of interpreters, including labor protections, professional recognition, and access to continuous education.



PARTNERS



EU, INTERNATIONAL IDEA PROJECT

THE RULE OF LAW AND ANTI-CORRUPTION PROJECT II

The EU-funded International IDEA project in Nigeria, known as the Rule of Law and Anti-Corruption (RoLAC) Programme Phase II, aims to strengthen the rule of law and combat corruption in the country. This initiative focuses on improving the criminal justice system, enhancing access to justice for vulnerable groups, and increasing transparency and accountability in anti-corruption systems.

RoLAC Phase II builds upon the achievements of its predecessor, RoLAC Phase I, which successfully advocated for policy changes and supported survivors of gender-based violence through sexual assault and referral centers. The programme aligns with Nigeria's National Development Plan and Anti-Corruption Strategy, contributing to the country's global commitments such as the Sustainable Development Goals.

As part of the efforts to enhance and expand the achievements of RoLAC 1, the introduction of RoLAC 2 identified three critical components aimed at furthering the inclusion and professional development of sign language interpreters in Nigeria. These components are:



Development of a National Sign Language Interpreters Directory.



Establishment of a Certificate Program for Continuous Professional Development (CPD).



Recognition of Sign Language Interpreters as a Professional Body.

OUR PROJECT

& the 3 Key COMPONENTS

Development of a National Sign Language Interpreters Directory.

As part of the efforts to enhance and expand the achievements of RoLAC 1, the introduction of RoLAC 2 identified three critical components aimed at furthering the inclusion and professional development of sign language interpreters in Nigeria. These components are:

- Development of a National Sign Language Interpreters Directory:
 - A comprehensive and centralized directory will be created, documenting qualified sign language interpreters across Nigeria.
 - This directory will serve as an accessible resource for stakeholders, including the judiciary, law enforcement, and other sectors, to locate certified interpreters with ease.
 - It aims to bridge the gap in accessibility, ensuring that Deaf individuals have timely access to qualified professionals who can provide effective interpretation in legal and other crucial settings.



ESTABLISHMENT OF A CERTIFICATE PROGRAM FOR CONTINUOUS PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT (CPD):

- A structured training program will be introduced to provide sign language interpreters with opportunities for ongoing education and skill enhancement.
- The certificate program will focus on specialized areas such as legal, medical, and educational interpretation, ensuring interpreters are well-equipped to meet diverse needs.
- This initiative will also foster career growth and uphold professional standards among interpreters.

Together, these components aim to strengthen the role of sign language interpreters in promoting accessibility and inclusivity for the Deaf community, while also enhancing their professional development and recognition.

RECOGNITION OF SIGN LANGUAGE INTERPRETERS AS A PROFESSIONAL BODY.

- Recognition of Sign Language Interpreters as a Professional Body:
 - Efforts will be made to formalize the recognition of sign language interpreters as a distinct and respected profession in Nigeria.
 - This includes establishing a professional association or licensing body responsible for setting ethical standards, accrediting interpreters, and regulating the profession.
 - Recognition will not only elevate the status of interpreters but also ensure accountability, professionalism, and quality service delivery.



A man with short dark hair, wearing a grey short-sleeved shirt and a patterned tie, is standing behind a wooden podium. He has both hands raised in a gesture of emphasis while speaking. The background is a plain, light-colored wall.

Board Roles

on

HIGH LEVEL
ADVOCACY

Embarking on the journey to establish a regulatory body in Nigeria for the certification of sign language interpreters is undoubtedly a challenging and monumental task. This initiative represents a crucial step toward professionalizing sign language interpreting and ensuring the recognition of interpreters as vital contributors to inclusive communication and societal progress.

To achieve this vision, the Board of ASLIN must adopt a proactive and determined approach. High-level advocacy efforts will be pivotal in engaging the Nigerian legislatures and other

A BILL TO ESTABLISH SIGN LANGUAGE INTERPRETERS REGISTRATION COUNCIL OF NIGERIA (SLIRCON)

key ministries that align with ASLIN's mission and aspirations. The success of this endeavor relies heavily on strategic collaboration and a unified commitment to effecting change

In this regard, we humbly request that the board constitutes a dedicated advocacy team to spearhead this effort. The team's responsibilities should include visiting the

National Assembly to foster relationships with lawmakers and advance discussions on this critical issue. Additionally, outreach to the Minister of Information, Education, and Humanitarian Affairs will be essential in garnering support from relevant government stakeholders.

The advocacy team should also undertake a comprehensive review of the draft proposal for a bill that seeks to establish sign language interpreters as a professional body. This review will ensure that the bill aligns with ASLIN's goals while addressing the needs of interpreters and the communities they serve.



This initiative symbolizes a beacon of progress, with the potential to reshape perceptions, policies, and practices related to sign language interpretation in Nigeria. Together, we can build a future that champions inclusivity, accessibility, and professional excellence.

THE BIG PICTURE



OUR BIGGEST AMBITION IS TO HAVE THE SIGN LANGUAGE INTERPRETERS REGISTRATION COUNCIL (SLIRCON) ESTABLISHED

Timothy Tinat Gwazah

National President (ASLIN)

World Association of Sign Language Interpreter (WASLI)

Board Secretary

When considering the broader objective of establishing a regulatory body to oversee the effective and efficient delivery of sign language interpretation services, the Nigerian National Association of the Deaf plays a pivotal role as a key stakeholder in realizing this vision. As the primary beneficiary, the Deaf Association is central to this initiative, with the general public as secondary beneficiaries. With Nigeria's population exceeding 200 million, and approximately 5% of this number being Deaf Nigerians, the current estimate of 400 sign language interpreters is severely insufficient to meet the daily communication needs of this community.

why it is important to have SLIRCON:

- 1. Monitor Service Delivery:** Ensure the effectiveness and quality of interpretation services for the Deaf community across various sectors.
- 2. Increase Practitioners:** Encourage and facilitate the entry of more qualified professionals into the field of sign language interpretation to meet the growing demand.

- 3. Eliminate Quackery:** Remove unqualified and fraudulent sign language interpreters from practice, safeguarding the Deaf community from potential harm and misrepresentation.

- 4. Enhance Accessibility:** Improve access to critical services such as healthcare, education, justice, and other government programs for the Deaf population.

- 5. Support Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs):** Contribute to the achievement of universal inclusivity and equality in line with global SDGs.

- 6. Promote Cultural and Linguistic Rights:** Ensure strict adherence to the cultural and linguistic rights of the Deaf community, empowering them to achieve their goals and thrive within society.

- 7. Advance Human Capital Development:** Strengthen professional capacity and skillsets within the field of sign language interpretation, fostering growth and innovation in service delivery.

While nurturing this vision, ASLIN will remain as a body that will promote and protect the rights of sign language interpreters with nongovernmental status.

ASLIN



01

NATIONAL PRESIDENT



Leads with vision, driving strategic growth, advocacy, and partnerships for Terps in Nigeria.

02

VICE PRESIDENT

Supports the President, ensures smooth operations, and steps in to lead when necessary.

03

SECRETARY GENERAL



Manages records, comms, and meetings, ensuring efficient administration and compliance.

04

THE TREASURER



Oversees finances, budgets, and fundraising, ensuring transparency and sustainability.

05

PUBLIC RELATIONS OFFICER



Amplifies ASLIN's voice, advocating for Terps' rights and Deaf accessibility nationwide.

06

FINANCIAL SECRETARY



Enhances interpreters' skills through training, certifications, and ethical standards.

07

ASSISTANT SECRETARY



Supports members, fosters engagement, and ensures their well-being

08

AUDITOR



Advances interpretation through research, innovation, and resource development.

09

ASLIN COMMITTEES

Setup as per needs basis to implement decisions of the Board, binding on members

Organizational STRUCTURE

THE BOARD



NATIONAL EXECUTIVES.

**ZONAL
COORDINATORS.**

STATE EXECUTIVES.

INDIVIDUAL MEMBERS



APPRECIATION TO ALL OUR PARTNERS.



The Leprosy Mission

CBM Family



Sightsavers

Sightsavers



WASLI
World Association of
Sign Language Interpreters

Nigeria Disability
Commission

Federal University Lafia

World Association of Sign
Language Interpreter

Enhance your professional journey by joining the Association of Sign Language Interpreters of Nigeria (ASLIN). Benefit from specialized training, networking opportunities, and resources tailored for sign language interpreters. Visit our website to become a member today.

www.aslin.org.ng