

Report of the 46th National Summer Assembly on Sign Language Interpretation in Gifu

Reported by Etsuko Umemoto,
WASLI Asian Representative,
Manager of the International Division, NRASLI, Japan

The 46th National Assembly was held for three days from August 23 to 25, 2013, at Gifu Prefecture, central Japan. We had 938 participants including interpreters, sign learners, medical experts and deaf people all over Japan.



Opening Ceremony

The event was kicked off with the opening ceremony on August 23, followed by a commemorative speech. The Minister of Health, Labour and Welfare and the Minister of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology offered congratulatory messages and officials addressed the event at the opening ceremony in their place. It was a long-cherished dream to have sign language recognized as a language, because Japanese deaf children have been

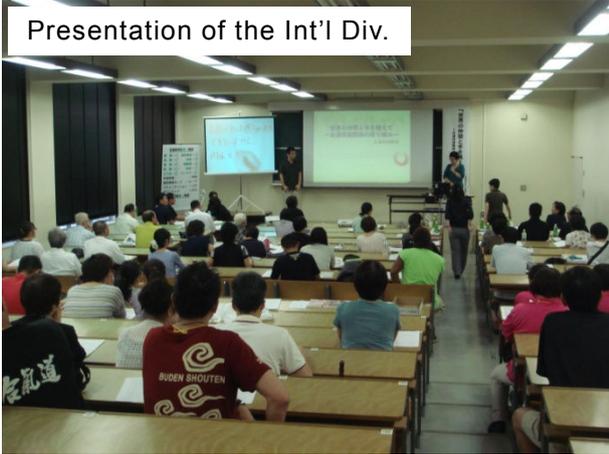
not allowed to sign in deaf schools for long period. The Fundamental Law for People with Disabilities was revised in August 2011 which stipulates sign language as a language for the first time, and now we are working toward the enactment of Sign Language Law (provisional name), amid the ongoing amendment of domestic laws in anticipation of ratification of UN CRPD. In this surroundings, the official of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology signed the whole congratulatory speech from the Minister. This marks a milestone given the history of deaf people and it provides me a visual result of deaf movements that changed an era. In the evening, we had an exchange party and enjoyed talking and information-sharing, having local dishes and dancing Gujo Bon Dance, traditional dance for a local annual festival, together.

On August 24 and 25, we had 6 separate working sessions themed such as “Community Relations”, “Communication” and “Human Right”. The International Division of NRASLI made a presentation in the Session No.6 “Introduction”. We told about activities of the International Division, history of WASLI, reports of international and Asian meetings. In



Video message from Deb

Presentation of the Int'l Div.



that presentation, we showed a message video from Deb, President of WASLI. I hope participants gained a better understanding of WASLI and we will have more individual members.

We carry out a medical checkup for cervico - omo - brachial syndrome (neck – shoulder - arm syndrome) during the Summer Assembly every year. This year, 21 interpreters received the checkup. More

interpreters used to get it, but the number of recipients goes down as checkups in local community increases recently. However, 3 out of 21 recipients were diagnosed with severe case this year and the doctor told them that “suspension of work or treatment is required”. I realized even more that it is urgently necessary to improve the environment and conditions for interpreters to work in good health.