

The Deaf of Angola The Angolan Sign Language Community



The typical life of a Deaf person in Angola is hard. Living expenses - food, housing, transportation, etc. - in Angola are very expensive and most Deaf can't find jobs.

Another struggle the Angola Deaf face is lack of access to technology. Data enabled phones are very expensive, so most of the Deaf can't afford them. Most of their phones are over 10 years old. This means they can't communicate with their community like Deaf in other countries. They don't have great access to video chatting, and that means video in general.

Deaf education is found wanting in Angola. The capital city has a few schools, but once you leave the city, the quality of education goes way down. The next largest city in Angola is actually quite small, and the Deaf school there suffers from that.

Lastly, there are only 3 or 4 Deaf friendly churches in Angola. They have hearing pastors with interpreters. However, none of them are found in the capital, so their reach is limited. About 20-25 people go to these services. If the people in the Capital want a religious experience, they either have to go to an un-interpreted service (that their parents go to) and not understand anything or go to a Jehovah's Witness gathering that does have an interpreter.

Angola is a huge country. Going eastward from the long Atlantic coast, the land rises to a high plateau averaging 6,000 feet in height. From there most of the land is Sahel or deciduous forest and grass. The southern coastal region is desert.

There was civil war starting after independence from Portugal in 1975 that continued until 2002. Land mines were strewn everywhere. Today the country is recovering with the economy driven by oil production. Angola has 42 indigenous, living languages spoken today.

Primary Religion:

Christianity

Disciples (Matt 28:19):

Unknown

Churches:

3

Scripture Status (Matt 28:20):

None

Population (date):

Potentially 318,000



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Have They Heard The Gospel?

Hindrances to Scripture Use	There is no scripture officially translated into Angolan Sign Language. There is work being done by Jehovah's Witnesses in Sign Language videos, but that's the only kind of access they have to the Bible in their language (which isn't actually satisfactory.)
Response to the Gospel	Most of the Deaf in Angola do not attend church. If they attend somewhere, it is most likely a Jehovah Witness gathering. However, the Baptist church in Huambo is trying to set up interpreted services. There are some Church services conducted in other towns directed towards reaching the Deaf. However, these churches reach a very small minority.
Bilingualism	The Deaf naturally live in a bilingual state. They know a language that most of the people around them do not know and they do not fully know the language of the hearing people around them. Therefore, a Bible in the spoken language is not satisfactory for the Deaf. The sign language in Angola has some variation, but it is all one language, so the Deaf as a group can all understand each other.
Cross-Cultural Missionary Need	All types of ministry are needed for the Angola Deaf, but the most helpful would be in education and literacy (not the typical type of reading and writing, but in their own sign language—watching and comprehension), church planting, and pastoral training.
Number of Christian Congregations	There are about 3 or 4 churches that have interpreted services for the Deaf. 1 or 2 in Lubango and 1 or 2 in Huambo. There is also a missionary to the Deaf from Brazil serving in Huambo. This missionary has good connections with the churches in both places and wants a Bible for the Deaf.
Churches using primarily vernacular Language of Wider Communication	None using sign, only hearing services that are interpreted
Organizations Serving the Deaf	AIM has local missionaries with an interest in helping the Deaf. AIM asked DOOR, a ministry working in Bible translation and discipleship making throughout the Deaf world (doorinternational.org), to see if a partnership to start translation and discipleship training could take effect.

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General Description

Population

Comment

Potentially 318,000

When we speak about Deaf people as opposed to deaf people, we are making the distinction of, among other things, their language of preference. Simply stated, Deaf people identify with the Deaf culture and use that signed language; deaf people do not and prefer to use the spoken language. Estimating the population of a Deaf community is difficult. Quite honestly, no one knows how many Deaf there are in a given country. However, some generalities seem to hold true. In 1st world nations (like the US) 1-2 people in 1000 are Deaf; in those nations that are considered "2nd world", 3-4 people per 1000 are Deaf; in 3rd world nations, the numbers are much higher: 6-8 people per 1000 are Deaf. Again, this is an estimation only. There is absolutely no quantifiable documentation to support these numbers. But, they are the best we know.

As implied, the estimated number of deaf is always larger than the number of those who learn sign language and become part of the Deaf community. Some become deaf late in life. Some children's parents do not have the funds to send their child to a deaf school and some of these children never encounter others with whom to communicate. Almost all deaf children are born to hearing parents. Instead these children grow and work at home where they use gestures and sounds but do not have a true language. The number of these is unknown.

Since the population of Angola is over 30 million, there are an estimated 318,000 who would use Angolan Sign Language if they had contact with other Deaf people.

Schools for the Deaf

Depending on the school, they either teach oralism or sign language. The school system in Angola is not great. Civil war, looting, and lack of funding has stunted the growth and flourishing of schools. However, these schools offer education up to secondary level for the Deaf

Complexo de Ensino Especial, Rangel , Luanda

Complexo de Escola De ensino especial N797- Lubango

Institute of Deaf Education , Lubango

Escola Primar do Kapango, Huambo

Escola do ensino Especial, Huambo

Publications

There is a mini dictionary published, but the local people want to create one with more accurate and local signs.

The Deaf of Angola

Deaf Associations

These associations advocate for recognition of the Deaf, for Angolan sign language, and general welfare for the Deaf.

- A. Asociação Nacional Dos Surdo De Angola(NASA), Luanda
- B. Asociação dos Dificuldades Activadas & De Fala (ADAH)
- C. Deaf association of Huambo