The Deaf of Grenada

The Grenada Sign Language Community

This profile primarily focuses on deaf Grenadians that use sign language as their primary form of communication and identify themselves as a deaf community and not Grenadians who may have hearing loss but primarily identify with hearing people.

Deaf Grenadians primarily live near deaf schools and larger cities. There are only two special education centers for deaf people: a school for deaf students with multiple disabilities and another school for various types of disabled students, including deaf students in a special classroom. Most deaf people, however, are mainstreamed into hearing schools without interpreters. Only a very few do well enough educationally to pass the entrance exams for secondary school and most of these do not finish because there are no interpreters and little support. In reality, deaf people have limited access to social services in general.

The Grenadian deaf community uses American Sign Language (ASL) as their primary language. Others who live in more isolated areas, especially in the northern part of Grenada, may develop a system of home signs to communicate with their families but have not had the opportunity to learn ASL. Because of communication barriers and lack of shared experience with hearing people, deaf people tend to socialize within the deaf community. Until recently, though, there has been no consistent infrastructure of deaf associations or clubs that have brought deaf people together.

Following national trends, deaf people are mostly culturally Christian. However, there are no deaf churches or ministries and deaf people report that they do not comprehend well either the written English Bible or church services they attend with their families. Some deaf people express a strong desire to know more about the Bible and to attend a church service that they understand. The New Testament is available in ASL, but deaf Grenadians have not had access to it. In addition, currently available ASL Scripture are primarily presented by Caucasian signers that do not represent the ethnic make-up of Grenada (principally Afro-Caribbean).
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Have They Heard the Gospel?

Hindrances to Scripture  
It is difficult for most deaf people to understand written English, so access to the Bible and educational materials is limited. They may be able to use ASL materials, but community testing for acceptability and understanding has not been done.

Response to the Gospel  
There are no deaf ministries or churches available in Grenada. Some deaf people report that they go with their hearing families to church but do not understand the services. However, because of the Christian culture, many deaf people are very open to the gospel.

Bilingualism  
There is some bilingualism between ASL and English, however, most deaf people do not read English or communicate orally at a high level.

Are Cross-Cultural Missionaries Needed?  
There is a significant need for missionaries in the Grenadian deaf community through education, interpreter training, and pastoral/deaf-leadership training.

Number of Christian Congregations Serving Group  
None
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**Group Description**

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**POPULATION**
Total People (Year): 150 to 200 Deaf people in Grenada have been identified as using a sign language.
Urban Percent: They are most concentrated near deaf schools and larger cities, including Saint George’s and Grenville.
Corrections to Ethnologue entry: Deaf population is much lower than reported number

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**GEOGRAPHICAL/ENVIRONMENTAL INFORMATION**
Location: Caribbean island between the Caribbean Sea and Atlantic Ocean, south of St. Vincent and the Grenadines and north of Trinidad and Tobago
Country: Grenada
Altitude: between sea level and 840 meters (Mount Saint Catherine)
Longitude: 61 40 W
Latitude: 12 07 N
Climate: Tropical, cooled by northeast trade winds

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**LANGUAGE/LINGUISTICS INFORMATION**
Primary Language: American Sign Language (ASL)
Ethnologue Code: ase
Attitude towards mother tongue: very receptive
Second Languages: English (written)
Other mother tongues of this group: English, Grenadian Creole English, Grenadian Creole French (deaf people who were raised orally – speech therapy and lip-reading)
Other people groups speaking this language as their mother tongue: Is primarily the mother tongue of Deaf People in the USA and Canada
Neighbor Languages: English (eng), Grenadian Creole English (gcl), Grenadian Creole French (acf), Trinidad and Tobago Sign Language
Literacy (in written English): lower than average (average in total population is 85% as of a 2000-2004 study)
Comments: Deaf and hearing people report that there was no sign language being used by the deaf community or in deaf educational centers until ASL was brought from the USA and Canada.
Corrections to Ethnologue entry: American Sign Language as a primary language used by the Deaf community.

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**ECONOMICS**
Unemployment Rate: unemployment rate is higher than average (average in total population is 12.5% as of 2000)
Occupation: basic labor job or self-employment
Comments: deaf people report that the pay they receive is not the same as the pay a hearing person receives for the same job. There is no government-based financial support for deaf people in Grenada

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**COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT STATUS**
Clothing: modern western style
Transportation: many roads with buses, one airport on southern side of island. Deaf Grenadians primarily use buses because deaf people are not allowed to have driver’s licenses. Only one deaf person currently has a license and owns their own vehicle.
Infant Mortality Rate: 22 deaths/1,000 live births for country as whole
Life Expectancy: 66 years for country as whole
Comments: Electricity is available, 220/240 volt, 50 cycle, standard plug has 3 rectangular pins, drinking water may need to be treated for outsiders depending on location
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SOCIETY
Family Structures: nuclear family, often live in same house as family because they cannot afford independent housing
Social Habits/Groupings: prefer to socialize with other deaf – 100% communication without barriers
Identification with Nat'l Culture: similar
Self Image: threatened
Attitude to Outsiders: somewhat receptive
Attitude to Changes: very receptive
Cultural Change Pace: moderate
Local Lang Broadcasting: none, but some television programs are closed captioned in English
Comments: often separated from hearing society due to communication barriers and attitudes, deaf people are often seen as inferior by hearing society, no interpreters available for general access to hearing society
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EDUCATION/YOUTH
Primary Schools: 2 deaf and/or disabled schools where deaf children with multiple disabilities primarily attend. An increase of deaf students are mainstreamed without interpreters.
Primary School Enrollment: 3-5 in each special schools, unknown in mainstream programs
Secondary Schools: No deaf school available for secondary grades. If students can pass the entrance exam, they will be allowed to go to mainstreamed secondary schools but without interpreters.
Teacher to Student Ratio: 1:3 to 1:5 for special schools
Language of Instruction: American Sign Language and English (total communication philosophy used)
Language of Textbooks: English
Problems/Needs: discrimination/oppression from hearing society, no interpreters available for general needs/access, few adult deaf signing role models for youth
Comments: There are no trained interpreters in Grenada. Two teachers at the deaf school in St. Paul sometimes serve as interpreters for meetings, but only when they have time for it.
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RELIGION
Religions # of Adherents
1. Roman Catholic 53%
2. Anglican 14%
3. Other (Protestant) 33%

Primary Religion: Christianity
Religious Practices/Ceremonies: attend mass, Christmas, Easter celebrations, Lent
Comments: Religious information was taken from the general population. It is reported that no church provides interpretation for deaf people and that deaf people attend churches with their families and so would follow the national trends.
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Status of Christianity

CHURCH GROWTH
Reached Status: [CHOOSE: reported/verified/evaluated/selected/adopted/engaged/reached]
Total Believers: Unknown
Pastors: 0
Lay Leaders: 0
Churches: 0
Bible Schools: 0

HISTORY OF CHRISTIANITY IN GROUP
Significant Events: Deaf people may attend hearing services with their families but report not understanding them.
A few deaf people attend internationally held Christian camps (previously in places such as St. Vincent, Jamaica, and Trinidad).

SCRIPTURE/LITERATURE/MEDIA STATUS
Translation Status: possible need
Available Scripture: video NT Bible materials in ASL from Deaf Missions, Simplified English Bible
Available Form(s): video, written Simplified English Bible
Use of Translation/Scripture Use: unknown
Hindrances to Scripture Distribution: It is difficult for most deaf people to understand written English, so access to the Bible and educational materials is limited. They may be able to use ASL materials, but community testing for acceptability and understanding has not been done.
Uncertain Need Explained: it is unknown if the available ASL video materials will be acceptable and understandable by the deaf community in St. Vincent – community testing is needed
Other Literature/Video Materials: an ASL video sermon series was sent to the deaf school that serves a resource center for the Grenadian deaf community

RESPONSIVENESS
Attitude to Christianity: receptive
Attitude to Religious Change: some are indifferent, most want increased access to primarily religions
Recommended Approaches or Specific Ways to Reach Group: work together with deaf school and resource center to identify leaders and possible partners
Current Needs: deaf leadership training, church planting, interpreter training

REFERENCES

