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EDITORIAL

The year 2011 will probably be remembered by two significant events: the unprecedented and devastating earthquake and tsunami that hit Japan in March and the debilitating sovereign debt crisis. Both have affected the lives of millions of people, but the impact on people with disabilities is often overlooked. A visually impaired Japanese colleague interpreter shares the experiences of people with disabilities after the earthquake.

The effects of the economic crisis were much debated at the Asian World Economic Forum meeting in Jakarta in June. Asian participants discussed issues in their own languages through interpreters recruited by CIAP, which has been servicing most of the WEF's Asian meetings for the past 20 years. An aspect of interpreters' lives rarely mentioned is the demands of preparation for each assignment and even anxiety during their careers, as highlighted in the article on stress.

We hope that you will enjoy this issue of Interpretasia.

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THE SUFFERING OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES AFTER AN EARTHQUAKE

by Jean-Pierre Allain

The massive earthquake that hit northeast Japan on 11 March 2011, followed by the most enormous tsunami ever witnessed, caused thousands of deaths, traumatic suffering and unimaginable devastation. It affected the blind and visually impaired, as well as other disabled people, in ways that do not occur to ordinary people.

A Japanese interpreter, who is herself visually impaired and who works closely with the Japan Federation of the Blind, sent regular reports of her involvement in the rescue efforts to her friends and relatives. This article is based on her reports.

"The main earthquake was followed by hundreds of aftershocks for several weeks. Many of them were over 5.0 or even 6.0 on the Richter scale and caused further damage and deaths, as well as constant insecurity, further hampering rescue operations. All power supply was entirely or partially interrupted for several weeks. Imagine living, or rather surviving, without electricity in a world where everything is dependent on it!"



"Many disabled people who survived the destruction of housing and infrastructure were trapped in crumbling buildings and were unable to flee to safe areas and rescue centres, unable to call for help or get help. On 15 March afternoon, a 78-year-old blind woman was rescued from isolation after more than 4 days."



Elderly earthquake victims at a rescue centre

"Thursday 17 March was scary. It was very cold; it even snowed in the earthquake-stricken Tohoku area. Energy consumption was the highest after March 11, and the government warned of sudden massive blackouts unless people really saved energy. Offices closed before six, transport was reduced to less than 50%. Shelves in bakeries were empty as usual.

"Persons with disabilities evacuated with literally nothing, so they have nothing to assist their lives; nothing to read with, nothing to move around on or with. A blind person told TV that life at evacuation centres is so difficult, many things are inaccessible; they can't read the signs and warnings; they can't even go to the toilet without enormous problems. Tohoku people are generally so quiet and patient, that even when their pain and suffering is enormous they just cannot show it in front of TV cameras.

"There are blind masseurs in Japan who work at companies for the employees' welfare and are called 'health keepers'. Due to the tremendous difficulties in transport, many of them cannot go to work and so are placed on 'home standby', but they must be under great stress, not being able to go to work.

"A newspaper article on 21 March described persons with disabilities in evacuation centres, asking those organizing the centres to try to announce information orally so that the blind people in the centres know what is happening or what will be delivered.

"The Japan Disability Forum sent members to Sendai, the biggest city in Tohoku, for meetings with various disability-related organisations,

to form a network in support of disaster-stricken persons with disabilities. Sendai is in Miyagi Prefecture, which was the most severely hit. Many of the sites of these organisations were washed away, and there are still members whom they cannot contact. Access to information is always a big issue for blind as well as deaf people. Soon some of them will be moved to temporary housing, which will also pose problems of accessibility.

"There were warnings about drinking water with radioactive

environment of a rescue centre, while others are waiting for information on the whereabouts of their missing family members. Others are unable to move around with a cane in one hand and luggage in the other. The Japan Braille Library has the biggest database of blind individuals and tried to contact all their users. They were still unable to contact 20% of the users in the three most affected prefectures by 2 April.

"On 10 April one of the local running club members told me her sister-in-law in Iwate had her house totally washed away by the tsunami, so they now live in an evacuation centre. She said that the people were very, very cooperative in the first two weeks, but as time goes on, we all lose our patience. Right now life at the centre is much more difficult. You cannot blame them: conditions are extremely harsh for everybody."

These vivid descriptions reveal, amongst other things, how dependent we all are on information and communication. The plight of people with disabilities is heightened after a natural disaster. Some interpreters have made donations to the rescue and relief efforts, but it will take many years to clear the rubble, invest and rebuild not only the infrastructure but also the landscape of Tohoku. ■

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Nature's fury -- enormous tsunami approaching, destroying everything in its path

iodine and caesium in Tokyo, although the levels there were not high. The water in my part of Tokyo was declared contaminated, but you can hardly buy mineral water nowadays. And visually impaired persons are likely to lose in the race for panic buying. I decided not to worry and keep drinking regular water. Dairy products are another scarce luxury. I went to a nearby supermarket this morning and found more than 300 people lined up just to get in. I managed to get two boxes of yogurt but the store was limiting milk to one package per person. Refrigerators for dairy products were filled with cakes to make up the empty space.

"There are blind people, especially in the evacuation zones of Fukushima, who prefer staying home, for many reasons: some do not want to face the unfamiliar en-

All work causes some kind of stress: long hours, not getting on with colleagues or the line manager; having to meet targets but having no say in how to achieve them, or not knowing how to attain them. In a freelance profession such as interpreting the causes of stress may be different, but they are just as pervasive.

Exogenous stress comes from the world around us - material concerns, other people or our own lifestyle. Every interpreter has to satisfy several simultaneous demands: keeping a calendar up to date, arranging travel, finding a hotel, packing, corresponding with clients, sending invoices, keeping accounts and work statistics.

A freelance interpreter constantly deals intensively yet briefly with a broad range of often very technical subjects. This calls for cramming: you have to find the information you need or sort what has been sent by the organiser, print out critical documents and bone up on specialised vocabulary. And meetings don't arrive singly; at busy times of the year they come thick and fast, so the interpreter is preparing several conferences at the same time while trying to juggle all the travel arrangements.

The mental effort of preparation plus the strain of making travel arrangements create stress of time management: can I manage to do the necessary homework before rushing to the station or airport in time to clear security and get to my hotel not too late and then to the venue in time for the conference? Many things are beyond our control (strikes, delays), so an interpreter must develop a keen sense of how much time is needed, but unforeseen circumstances can upset the timing.



There are stressors at the meeting too: changes to the schedule or the elaborate system of relay, garbled or extremely fast read speeches with no text provided to the interpreters, things said entirely out of context, problems within the team or with the equipment, such as poor sound quality, lack of ventilation, etc.

Mental nimbleness and an ability to absorb another person's ideas, coping techniques for difficult speakers and multitasking are things we learn during training to deal with the cognitive load. Individually the challenges are not insurmountable, but in conjunction they may make the interpreter feel 'swamped' or stressed.

Work is not the only source of stress. We also create our own, endogenous, stress. Beginners wonder if they will be up to the job, how they will compare with more experienced colleagues, whether they have done enough preparation, whether they will get enough work to live off interpreting.

Age and experience do not shield us from this existential-cum-professional angst. Given the realities of the world we live in, it is perfectly reasonable to worry about the future, to wonder whether our languages will be in demand and whether there is any prospect for our profession. And to cap it all, our profession is not the only source of endogenous or exogenous stress: our private lives, families, general health, and other factors bring their dose of fears, tension and worry. Taken singly we

can cope; it is when problems of all types hit us simultaneously and sometimes at the worst possible moment that we find it hard to shed the tangible tension which may take hold of us.

Stress manifests itself as something specific and physical.

In the short term it causes breathing problems and affects our heart rate. And breathing is what gives us our voice through which the message passes, as well as the calmness, ease and fluidity of rendition that reassure and ring true to our listeners. Poor breathing also deprives the brain of sufficient oxygen, causing concentration to slip – leading to anxiety.

Over the long term the prognosis is even gloomier: insomnia, stomach problems, irritability, serious illnesses....

We should know how to escape the feeling of being pressured from all sides. We need to learn to plan our daily lives, manage our time sensibly, stick to regular timetables, respect our need for sleep, set ourselves attainable – i.e. quantifiable and measurable – professional targets, ensure rest periods when we disconnect from the world and all the paraphernalia of modern communication.

We should also lead a healthy life: eat healthily, exercise, get fresh air, relax physically, have pastimes that release pressure or meditate. We must learn to tame stress and make it our ally. ■



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is currently
President of AIIC
(International
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¹ This article is an edited version of a Letter from the President written for the spring 2011 issue of *Communicate!*

The World Economic Forum (WEF) was born 40 years ago in Switzerland, in January 1971. It is perhaps best known for its annual meetings in Davos-Klosters (Switzerland) where political and financial leaders “committed to improving the state of the world” meet every January.

From the initial Annual Meeting in Davos, the activities of the WEF have expanded all over the world. It is therefore not surprising that 20 years ago, the leaders in Switzerland decided to take the Forum to Asia, conscious of the tremendous potential of the region as the powerhouse of the world.

The first meeting in Asia took place in Hong Kong in 1991. As a truly global organisation with participants including distinguished world leaders and well known figures from government, business and civil society, who work together to find solutions to global problems, the WEF requires the assistance of simultaneous interpreters to provide smooth communication amongst its participants whose culture and languages are very diverse.

The meetings in Asia were originally called the ‘WEF with Europe and Asia’. Later the title was changed

to ‘Strategic Roundtable Insight Discussions’ and then to ‘WEF in Asia and the Pacific’, when the 2000 meeting took place in Melbourne, Australia, just before the opening of the Olympic Games there. For the last few years the meetings in Asia have been called ‘East Asia Economic Summits’.

During the first three or four years, the practical organisation of the meetings was in the hands of the Logistics Department of the WEF and the venue alternated between Hong Kong and Singapore. As the magnitude of the meetings increased, the logistics were entrusted to event planners, with different Asian capitals serving as hosts. CIAP is proud to have been the main supplier of interpretation services during the evolution of WEF in Asia, working closely with Global Events Management, the convention organisers which later became Publicis Events and then Publicis Live. In addition, CIAP worked as

consultant for several years for the China Business Meetings of the WEF that were held in Beijing. CIAP also played an important part in two WEF meetings held in Istanbul in 2006 and 2008 designed to reinforce the relationship between the WEF with Europe, Turkey and Central Asia.

To ensure the best simultaneous interpretation at WEF meetings, CIAP counts on a network of qualified interpreters throughout Asia. This has allowed us to service

these and other meetings not only with the commonly used UN languages, but also with a great variety of Asian languages, including Japanese, Thai, Vietnamese, Indonesian, Khmer, Lao, Korean, and others, depending on the venue and circumstances.

The 20th anniversary of WEF meetings in East Asia took place on 12-13 June 2011 in Jakarta. Over 600 participants from 40 countries were present for this first meeting of the WEF in Indonesia, which was acclaimed by all participants as a great success. For CIAP, it continues to be a source of great pride and satisfaction to be associated with these prestigious meetings and to be called upon to assist in ensuring appropriate language communications for meetings of the WEF, handled so effectively by Publicis Live. ■

CIAP associate Socorro Browning has been the consultant interpreter for the WEF meetings in Asia for the past 20 years. She is based partly in Hong Kong and partly in Nice (France).



Team of Interpreters at the World Economic Forum, Jakarta, June 2011



The team of interpreters at the meeting of the International Land Coalition & Assembly of Members in Tirana, Albania

SOME INTERPRETATION TEAMS ORGANISED BY CIAP RECENTLY

2011

Paris	July	The Council of the 21st Century - The Future of Europe Project
Jakarta	Jun	World Economic Forum
Siem Reap	Jun	CSO Development Effectiveness Second Global Assembly
Tirana	May	International Land Coalition and Assembly of Members
Kuala Lumpur	May	A-Long Investigator Meeting (drug research)
Seoul	May	World Congress of Dermatology
Bali	May	Non-Aligned Movement Ministerial Conference
Hong Kong	Mar	International Metropolitan Railways Committee of UITP
Chiba	Jan	Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee on Mercury (INC2)

2010

Singapore	Nov	Toshiba Press Conference
Bangkok	Nov	International Program Effectiveness, Policy, Advocacy and Campaigns (PEPAC) Conference
Bangkok	Nov	International Anti-Corruption Conference (IACC)
New York	Nov	International Council of Creators of Graphic, Plastic and Photographic Arts, CISAC
Taipei	Nov	Fédération Equestre International (FEI) General Assembly
Nagoya	Oct	High Level Segment of CBD COP10 Ministerial Meeting
Niigata	Oct	APEC Ministerial Meeting on Food Security



▲ Interpreters enjoying an evening out in Tirana, Albania



▲ Technicians monitoring sound for interpretation at ICN2 Chiba, January 2011

Visit our website! www.ciap.net

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NOTICE!

*In order to save paper and reduce its carbon footprint, as of 2012 CIAP will send out **Interpretasia** as electronic version only. Send your email address to info@ciap.net so that we can put you on our mailing list.*

Many thanks!



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WHAT IS AIIC?

Founded in 1953, AIIC (Association Internationale des Interprètes de Conférence - International Association of Conference Interpreters) is the only worldwide association of professional conference interpreters. AIIC has nearly 3,000 members in 102 countries and is recognised by the United Nations, the World Bank, NATO, the European Union and many business organisations as the only representative of professional interpreters and the authoritative voice on matters of conference interpretation.

AIIC sets professional standards and its recommended working conditions are accepted worldwide. Together with the International Organisation for Standardisation, AIIC's Technical and Health Committee has drawn up standards ISO 2603 for built-in booths and equipment for simultaneous interpretation and ISO 4043 for mobile booths for use in conference rooms without built-in facilities.



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WHAT IS CIAP?

Conference Interpreters Asia Pacific (CIAP) is a network of consultant interpreters, all members of AIIC, who live and work in the Asia-Pacific region. Established in 1990, CIAP provides teams of conference interpreters for simultaneous and consecutive interpretation at meetings of all sizes.

Its members advise conference organisers on language requirements, choice of conference venues, technical requirements and even seating arrangements, and recruit teams of interpreters suited to the needs of a conference. CIAP also provides written translations of conference documents.

CIAP associates can provide simultaneous interpretation teams for English, Chinese, Japanese, Korean, French, Spanish, German, Italian, Portuguese, Russian and other languages.



CONFERENCE INTERPRETERS ASIA PACIFIC

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There are CIAP Associates in several cities in Asia-Pacific. For the consultant interpreter nearest to you, please see the list of names and contact numbers provided in this issue.

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