

The Deaf of Malaysia

The Malaysian Sign Language Community



“Amen” in Malaysian Sign Language

The Deaf are found throughout the country of Malaysia. Most are legally “unreachable” since it is against the Malaysian constitution for the Muslims to be evangelized. There are a handful of churches with a ministry to the non-Muslim Deaf, at least one of which has a semi-independent Deaf church within the premises of the church.

The adult Deaf tend to congregate in cities or towns where they can find jobs and socialize with other Deaf. In Malaysia each state has at least one school for Deaf children, with a total of 23 elementary schools, two vocational schools and one secondary school. Most are residential schools where local Deaf children live at home. There are also private deaf schools: two registered elementary schools and other non-registered private schools. Sometimes conditions are not good for the children in these schools while in other schools the children can live more comfortably. In the State of Sabah there are several private kindergartens for Deaf children. For primary one, the children go to the regular Deaf school. The language of the Deaf, Malaysian Sign Language, is not taught in school and the teachers discourage its use. The teachers (except for the Deaf teachers) only know and use Signing Exact Malay, using the word order and other aspects of the grammar of the national language.

The Deaf of Malaysia usually are gainfully employed, though often in low-paying jobs. There are a few graduates of Gallaudet University and some Malaysian universities colleges and polytechnic colleges, who have fairly good jobs.

Primary Religion:

Islam

Disciples (Matt 28:19):

Less than 1%

Churches:

4

Scripture Status (Matt 28:20):

None in their language

Population (date):

39,894 registered (2010)



The Deaf of Malaysia

Have They Heard The Gospel?

Call Themselves Christian	Those who would call themselves Christian varies depending on the state they live in. In Sabah and Sarawak about 25-30% would call themselves Christian because of having Christians in the family. In the other states it would be 0-1%.
Believe In Jesus As God And Only Savior Comment	Less than 1% Less than 1% have Jesus as their God and only Savior, because very few churches have services for the Deaf or interpretation. I know of about 14 churches in the whole country with any Deaf ministry.
Prophet/Good Man, But Not God's Son	50-60 %
Believe Local Traditional Religion	5-10%
Have Not Heard Who Jesus is	30-40%
Number Of Pastors	1 Malaysian Deaf, 3 Korean Deaf, and 1 Malaysian hearing
Number Of Missionaries	0
Response To The Gospel Comment	Where there is interpretation for the Deaf, there are always a few who respond. Maybe the average number of church goers (from my observation) is about 30 in each church that has Deaf outreach. The Deaf are found throughout the country of Malaysia. There are no known areas where the population is higher than normal/average for the Deaf throughout the world. In one town there is a non-denominational church reaching out to the Deaf with outreach at night to other towns. At least three RC churches reach out to the Deaf. Five AOG churches also reach out to the Deaf, and one other charismatic church also has a Deaf ministry. Deaf ministries: 1 Baptist, 1 Methodist, 1 Presbyterian
Number Of Churches Comment	4 In one case there is a 'fellowship' within a hearing church. In the others there are interpreters who interpret the sermon, and have a get-together afterwards to explain the sermon again.
Is There A Translation?	The process of translating CBS in Malaysian SL began in February 2011 by a volunteer Deaf group.
Any Hindrance To Scripture Distribution?	More than 50% are unreachable since it is against the Malaysian constitution for the Muslims to be evangelized.

The Deaf of Malaysia

What Kind Of Missionaries
Are Needed?

The locals have begun to reach out. The major issues are lack of a Bible in sign language and spiritual growth of the Christian Deaf. However, some deaf leaders are aware of the challenges and have taken up the responsibility to translate the word of God.

The Deaf of Malaysia

Group Description

Population All Countries

World Population For This People
Comment

39,824 (Registered)

When we speak about Deaf people as opposed to deaf people, we're 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 Malaysia at the 2010 census was 28 million the potential number of those who would use Malaysian Sign Language if they were exposed to it is perhaps as many as 100 or even 200 thousand.

World Population (Date)

2010

World Population (Urban Percent)

90%

Geography & Environment

Location

The Deaf are found throughout the country of Malaysia. There are no known areas where the population is higher than normal/average. The Deaf tend to congregate in the cities to find work and to be able to socialize.

Ecosystem Type

Tropical Forest

The Deaf of Malaysia

Elevation	0-5,000 feet
Climate	Monsoons and rainy seasons, with the lowest temperature at sea level about 21degrees Celsius, and the highest up to 34 degrees Celsius
Comments	Tropical weather year round with April tending to be the hot test month. The most rain is usually November through March. It is reported the GEOLOGICAL TYPE is: Everything except plains and volcanoes'.

Language & Linguistics

Primary Language	Malaysian Sign Language
Comment	Malaysian Deaf do not agree that there are Penang Sign Language and Selangor Sign Language, since there has been no problem in communication. But there are some differences in 'dialect' due to different environment and level of exposure.
Attitude Towards Mother Tongue	Very receptive
Comment	Deaf children like all school children are taught Malay and English.
Comment	A Chinese language, or Malay for those who are hard of hearing.
Linguistically Related Languages	American Sign Language
<u>Literacy</u>	
Adult Literacy Percentage	50%
Comment	Some are somewhat resistant since it seems futile to many to read a language they do not know. Others are eager to learn.
Percent Literate For Men	50%
Percent Literate For Women	40%
Literacy Attitude	Somewhat resistant
Active Literacy Program	No
Publications In Vernacular	None
Comment	A brief literacy program was tried with the local kindergarten for the Deaf, but I ran out of time and did not pick it up again. However, many Deaf children go to school now, but in the past it was rare. Going to school and being literate cannot be equated since the school language is not their native language, and some Deaf claim they did not learn to read and write in school.

The Deaf of Malaysia

Economics

Subsistence Type
Comment

Industrial
Subsistence type includes artists, service industries, KFC, computer data entry, teachers of the Deaf, McDonalds and Seven-Eleven.

Average Annual Income

US\$3,600 to \$14,000. This is for full-time work. Part-time work would be about half the salary. This seems to me to be much lower than hearing people would earn for the same work. Those who have college degrees would be paid the same as hearing personnel.

Occupation

Batik painting, teaching other Deaf, fast food stores, computer data entry, etc. Some have an itinerant business selling toys to people in restaurants, or other places. Those with college degrees might work in graphic design, accounting, in clerical work or in factories.

Products / Crafts

Batik paintings, small handcrafts, such as toys or decorations.

Trade Partners

Some

Modernization / Utilities

Since most live in the city, they have modern facilities: electricity, running water, TV, DVD, Web cam, internet hand-phones, and many have cars (especially those with good jobs) and motorcycles.

Comment

Malaysia is no longer a third world country, so life for the Deaf is much like that in any western city.

Community Development

Health Care (Quality)
Comment

Good
Government clinics are basically free, and private clinics are available for most illnesses.

Diet (Quality)
Comment

Good
Balanced, as far as observed.

Water (Quality)
Comment

Good
Water quality is good, but needs to be filtered and/or boiled.

Shelter Description
Electricity

Usually city dwellings, with cement walls and tiled floors.
Available to all.

Energy/Fuel (Quality)

Good

Clothing

The usual western style except for Muslims. Transportation
Public buses and private cars.

The Deaf of Malaysia

Infant Mortality Rate	6.3 per every 1,000 births.
Life Expectancy	Male: 70.3; Female: 75.2
Leading Cause Of Death	Heart problems.
Comment	Malaysia is an industrialized nation now, so the incidence of illnesses is similar to that in other industrialized countries
<u>Society & Culture</u>	Fam-
Family Structures	Depends on the cultural group. The Deaf are found in every society.
Neighbor Relations	Deaf are friendly and get along with other Deaf regardless of the racial or religious background, but there may be communication barrier with hearing neighbors.
Authority / Rule	It depends on the cultural background. Malaysia is a multiracial, multicultural nation.
Cultural Change Pace	Rapid
Identification With National Culture	Distinct
Comment	Distinct, but try to be as integrated as possible.
Comment (Self Image)	Depends on the individual, but there is some tension between the hearing who want to control the Deaf and the Deaf who want to be as independent as possible.
Judicial / Punishment System	Again it depends on the culture. Some Muslims want to be under “syariah law” while others want to continue with the civil judiciary. Non-Muslims are under the civil judiciary.
Celebrations	There are public holidays for Muslims (End of Ramadan, New Year, Mohamed’s birthday), Hindus (Festival of lights), Christians (Christmas), Chinese (New Year), Kadazans (Harvest -State of Sabah), and Ibans (Harvest - State of Sarawak), as well as various state holidays.
Recreations	Going out to eat, church activities (for Christians), visiting, and sports (both formal and informal).
Art Forms	Batik ,painting, performing arts, handicrafts, dance, music.
Media	TV (some captioning in Malay), alternative media , internet.
Attitude To Outsiders	Very receptive
Attitude To Change	Very receptive
Comment	Within a year or so after smart-phones were introduced most (if not all) Deaf had bought one. Their greatest felt need has always been communication with one another.

The Deaf of Malaysia

Youth

Youth Problems (Teens)

Sexual harassment by teachers, and other abuses in hostel and on the playground.

Youth Greatest Needs (teens)

Moral and Spiritual guidance.

Education

Primary Schools

23 government and 2 registered private schools

Primary School Enrollment

Greater than 1,000

Secondary Schools

1

Secondary School Enrollment

400 - 500

Percent Of Eligible Students Enrolled

50%

Comment

There is one high school, and two vocational schools. To finish high school, the children go to Penang School for the Deaf. The language of instruction is in 'Manually Coded Malay', and the textbooks are in Malay. The secondary school teacher to student ratio is reported to be 1 teacher for every 12-15 students. Some go into special programs in standard secondary schools for hearing students.

The Deaf of Malaysia

Status of Christianity

Church Growth

Comment (Total Baptized)	Some 10 or more or less in each Deaf fellowship.
Lay Leaders	Not sure.
Bible Schools	0
Christian Clinics/Hospitals	0
Christian Literacy Centers	0
Comment	Less than 1% are believers.

Religion & Response

Religious Practices & Ceremonies	Varies from culture to culture.
Attitude To Christianity	Very receptive
Comment	Non-Muslims are receptive, and the Muslims are very resistant including some Buddhists and Hindus.
Attitude To Religious Change	Very receptive
Spiritual Climate And Openness	Open and searching.
Recommended Approaches	It is important for the Deaf that you are introduced by some one they know and trust. Some are very suspicious of hearing people because of thousands of years of oppression by hearing people.
Items For Prayer	The Deaf in Malaysia are largely un-evangelized. Pray that the Lord will raise up Malaysian Deaf to reach out to their own people. Pray for Malaysian CBS translation and the team.

History Of Christianity In Group

Year Began	October 1979
Comments	Started in YMCA KL Bible class for the Deaf by a member of Trinity Community Center. Later a Deaf ministry was formed in TCC by the same group. Church of God 1985. Catholics in 1989 in different areas by Roman Catholics. Sign of Love was formed in FGA in 1989.

Scripture

Translation Status	Definite
Comment	The ASL Bible is nearing completion. It is a related language but many Malaysian Deaf have difficulty understanding ASL Bible and are not interested in it.

Other Forms Of Gospel Available:

Literature	No
Recordings	No
Film/Videos	No

The Deaf of Malaysia

Missions and Churches

Organization Name Trinity Community Centre
Comment TCC started as a hearing church. A Deaf Ministry was developed later in the 1980's. A deaf pastor was installed on October 17, 2009, the first Deaf service commenced on October 24, 2009.

Year Started 1984
Number Of Adherents 30-35
Number Of Congregations 1
Number Of Expatriate Workers 0
Number Of National Workers 0
Number Of Local Workers 'A few'

Organization Name Church of God
Main Ministry Evangelism. Present pastor is hearing, cannot sign
Year Started 1985
Number Of Adherents Around 40
Number Of Congregations 1
Number Of Expatriate Workers 0
Number Workers Using Language 1

Organization Name Roman Catholic Church
Main Ministry Evangelism
Year Started Started first congregation about 1989 (Sabah), 1990 (West Malaysia), 1999 (Sarawak)
Number Of Adherents Maybe 200
Number Of Congregations 3
Comment Congregations vary in size from 4-5 in one congregation to about 60 in another, including children.
Number Of National Workers 0
Number Of Local Workers 0

The Deaf of Malaysia

Organization Name	FGA
Main Ministry	Church Planting
Year Started	1989
Number Of Adherents	20-30
Number Of Congregations	1
Comment	In addition there are 2 home fellowships.
Number Of Expatriate Workers	0
Comment	Occasionally there are visitors.
Number Of National Workers	2 (Part-time)
Number Of Local Workers	5 Deaf leaders (not full-time)