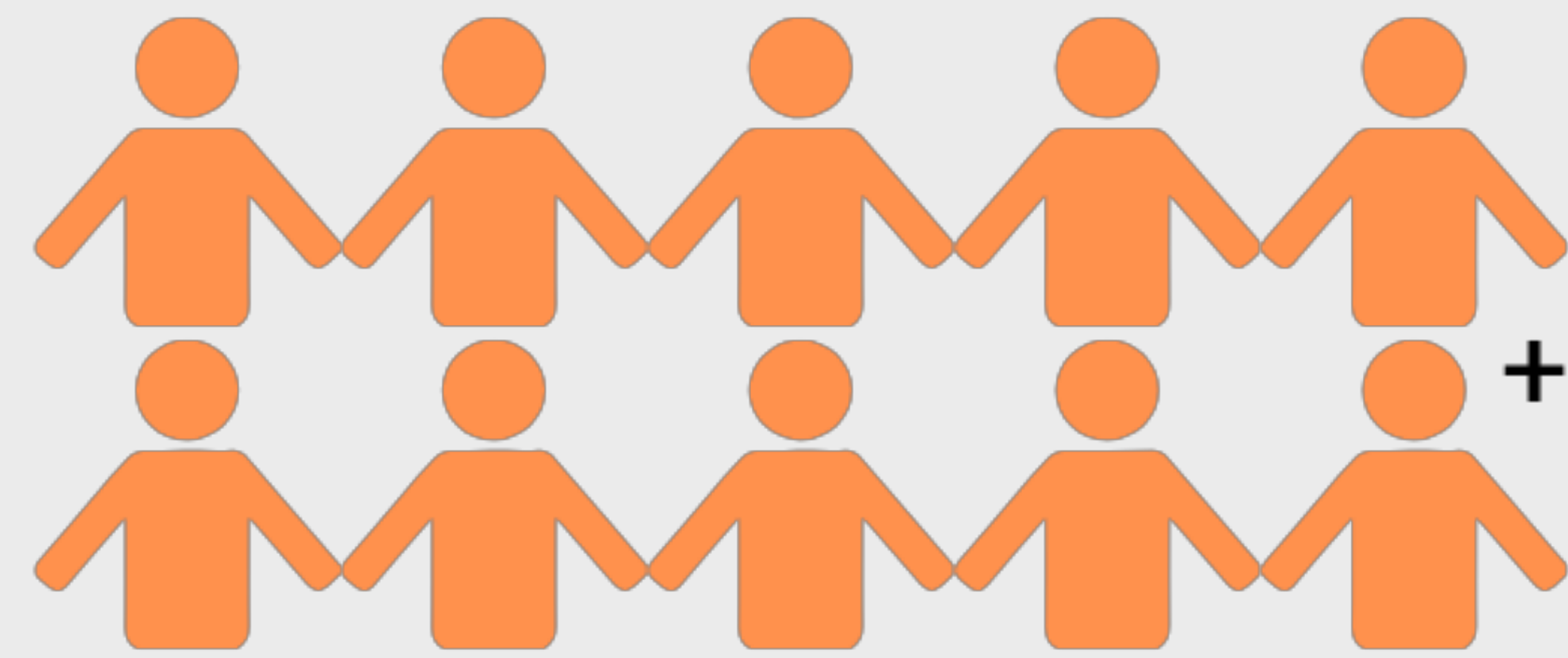# The Raw Experience of Establishing the Ethics and Professional Interpreter's Code (EPiC) by a Collective Community (Deaf Leaders and Sign Language Interpreters) in India.

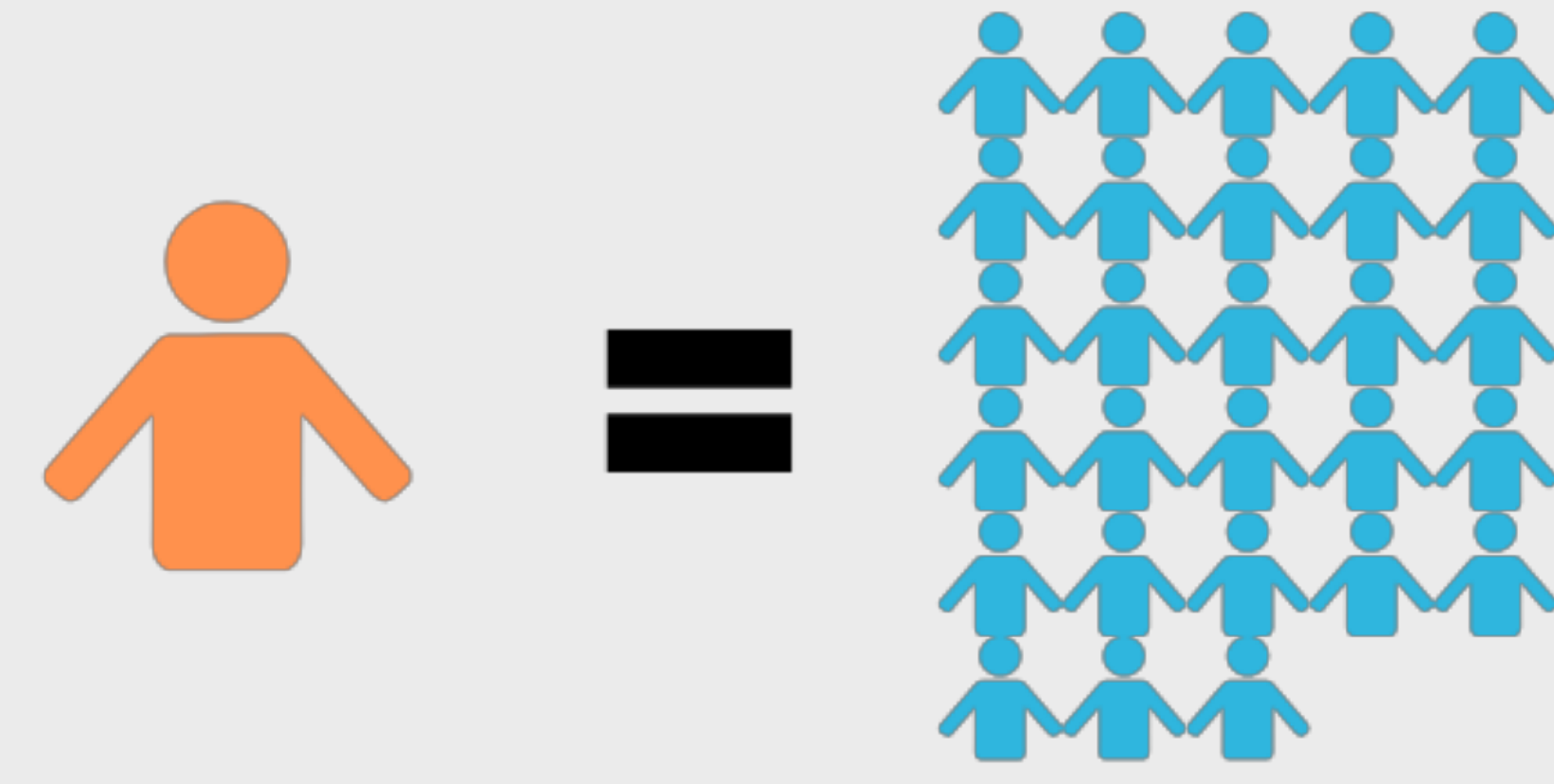By Dr. Alim Chandani, Mr. Saurav Roychowdury, and Team

WASLI 2019 – Paris France

Facts

More than 10 Million (1 Crore) Deaf Individuals are living in India

(👤 = 1 Million)

(🧍 = 1 Interpreter) = (people = 1000 Deaf Individuals)
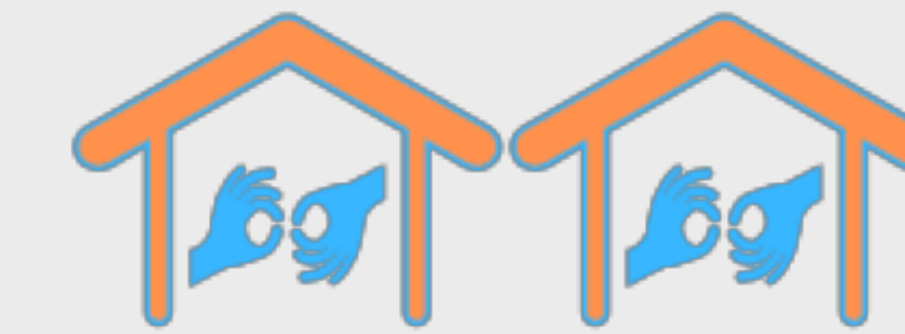
350 "qualified" active interpreters in India

Seven Training Institutes offer a diploma course in Indian Sign Language Interpreting

One-Year; Starting August 2019, it has changed to two-year course

1995 – Sign Language Interpreting Service started

Two Interpreting Associations established in 2006 and 2008

Prior to that the profession was viewed more of as a helper category.

Rights of Persons with Disabilities (RPWD) 2016 Act mentions, "sign language and sign language interpretation." Chapter VII of the RPWD Act strongly lays emphasis on accessibility at all establishments.

Problem Statement

- Communication barriers for the Deaf community due to lack of access services.
- Lack of advance interpretation trainings for Sign Language Interpreters.
- Sign Language interpreters don't have clarity of their roles and responsibilities.
- Deaf users are not familiar with the role of interpreters.
- Sign Language interpreters and Deaf users unaware of the Ethics interpreters must follow.
- Lack of mentorship from experienced interpreters and Deaf community.
- Lack of collaboration between the Sign Language interpreters and Deaf community and often even power imbalance.
- Concept of Deaf interpreters remains relatively new.

Results

A series of workshops were hosted where the core committee and various working groups worked in tandem with each other to develop EPiC. It was concluded by hosting the EPiC summit. The summit witnessed comprehensive discussions, feedback, scenarios, and role plays, presentations from National and International experts. The intense deliberations between the Deaf leaders and interpreters led to the development of the 5Cs- Culture, Collaboration, Commitment, Competency and Confidentiality.

5 C's
- Collaboration
- Conduct
- Competence
- Commitment
- Confidentiality

Next Steps

- Spread awareness about the importance of interpreting ethics throughout India such as to Government, education institutions, companies, organizations/NGOs, etc.
- Offer intense training sessions on "Dos' and Don'ts to local Deaf communities and interpreters
- Develop a series of videos on various scenarios to be shared.
- Create a virtual interactive course on EPiC guidelines
- Advocate for making EPiC an official document in India with the support of National level organizations.
- Need to establish a neutral organization/Board who will be responsible to oversee the EPiC such as gathering grievances, make modifications, etc.

Website: www.india-epic.com

Social Media
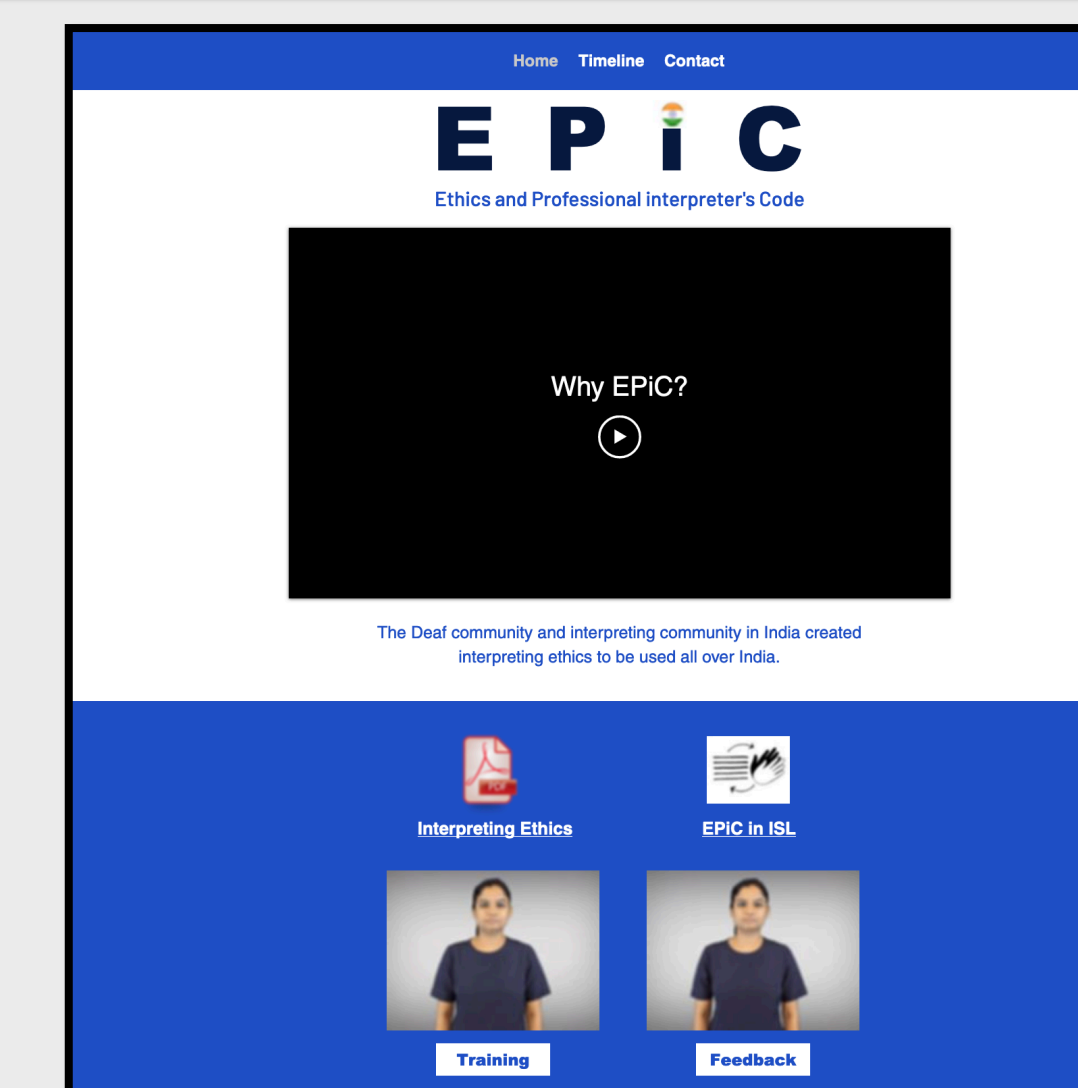
@indiaepic2018

epicindia2018@gmail.com

Method

A collective community involved creating the comprehensive and illustrative interpreting ethics. It is critical to connect with the national and local organizations and bring their lived experiences, feedback and suggestions. Also, important to create surveys to collect experiences from the Deaf users as well as interpreters of what they seek for in the future of this field.

EPiC Summit 2018

Timeline

January 2018 : First ISL Interpreters Retreat New Delhi, India
- Invited experienced interpreters, representatives from CODA community, and Deaf leaders.
- Foster healthy discussions on how to identify challenges and enhance the quality of interpreting services.

February 2018: Unity Conclave -Jaipur, India
- Invited Deaf Leaders from national and local organizations from all over India
- Identified that *Accessibility Services* is an important issue
- Wanted more training on *how to work with the interpreters* as well as understanding the ethics of interpreting.

March 2018: Bilingual Survey for Deaf Users and Interpreters in India
- Collect data from two communities – the Deaf and Interpreters on the job.
- Collected about 300 responses together.
- Clear indications that they more workshops/ trainings on advancing their interpreting skills and interpreting ethics.

May 2018: Independent Ad-hoc committee
- Formed an independent *working group* of 20 selected individuals (both Deaf and Hearing) from different parts of India along with five *international mentors*.
- Purpose was to have a collective community to create an updated and comprehensive interpreting ethics. **WhatsApp** was the primary platform for discussing and exchanging ideas

October 2018: EPiC Summit - 6 Days; Invited over 80-90 selected individuals
- Guest presenter – Mr. Howard Rosenblum, CEO of NAD USA.
- First three days of the Summit was only for the Deaf audience. Focus on providing the foundation of why ethics were needed for the interpreters and awareness on "Audism."
- Last three days, Deaf leaders and interpreters in multiple groups to deliberate and develop the EPiC.

December 2018: First Draft of the EPiC
- Shared the first draft of the Ethics and Professional Interpreter's Code (EPiC); to gather feedback from the expertise individuals from abroad such as from NAD-USA, WASLI, senior interpreters, etc.

January - March 2019: Bilingual Survey to Deaf Users and Interpreters
- Created a bilingual survey (total of 140 ISL videos and contents) for gathering feedback of the 2nd draft from the EPiC Summit participants.
- Collected 50 responses with suggestions and feedback.

June 2019: EPiC website launch –Accessible in Written English and ISL everyone to use in India.
- An ongoing process of collecting feedback and suggestions from the community
- Workshops and training on ethics also offered by connecting with local deaf organizations and interpreters.