

# ISO 639-3 Registration Authority

## Request for New Language Code Element in ISO 639-3

Date: 2006-3-20

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Names, affiliations and email addresses of additional supporters of this request:

Associated Change request number : 2006-041

(completed by Registration Authority)

Tentative assignment of new identifier : afg

(completed by Registration Authority)

Do not be concerned about your responses causing the form text spacing or pagination to change. Use Shift-Enter to insert a new line in a form field (where allowed)

### 1. NAMES and IDENTIFICATION

- a) Preferred name of language for code element denotation:  
Afghan Sign Language
- b) Autonym (self-name) for this language:
- c) Alternate names and spellings of language, and any established abbreviations:  
Sometimes abbreviated as AFSL in publications, and referred to in sign language as Afghan Sign.
- d) Reason for preferred name:  
It seems to be the consensus among users, both hearing and deaf.
- e) Name of ethnic group or description of people who use this language and approximate population of users, if in use today:  
The Deaf of Afghanistan, crossing ethnic lines. The main centers are Jalalabad and Kabul right now. In Jalalabad is the only school for the deaf in the country, and the national association for the Deaf has its office in Kabul. Most of the students at the school are ethnic Pushtuns and so would probably constitute the largest number of Deaf Afghans who use AFSL. There would be deaf among all of the ethnic groups of the country, however, and AFSL users among the major ethnic groups, like Pashtuns, Tajiks and possibly Uzbek, Turkmen, Pashai, etc.
- f) Preferred three letter identifier, if available:

Your suggestion will be taken into account, but the Registration Authority will determine the identifier to be proposed. Language identifiers are not intended to be an abbreviation for a name of the language, but to serve as a device to identify a given language uniquely. With thousands of languages, many sets of which have similar names, it is not possible to provide identifiers that resemble a language name in every case.

## 2. TEMPORAL DESCRIPTION and LOCATION

- a) Is this a  Living language  
 Nearly extinct/secondary use only (includes languages in revival)  
 Recently extinct language  
 Historical language  
 Ancient language  
 Artificially constructed language

(Select one. See explanations of these types at <http://www.sil.org/iso639%2D3/types.asp>)

- b) Countries where used:  
Afghanistan

- c) Region within each country: towns, districts, states or provinces where used:  
Deaf would be found in all areas of Afghanistan. However, many Deaf have not been exposed to Afghan Sign Language as yet. The main centers are the city Jalalabad in the eastern Province of Nangarhar as well as districts surrounding Jalalabad; the city Kabul and surrounding districts in the Province of Kabul; the city Mazar-e Sharif; the city Herat; the city Kandahar.

- d) For an ancient or historical language, give approximate time frame; for a recently extinct language, give the approximate date of the last known user's death

## 3. MODALITY AND LINGUISTIC AFFILIATION

- a) This language is:  Signed  Spoken  Attested only in writings

- b) Language family, if classified; origin, if artificially constructed:  
Deaf sign languages

- c) Closest language linguistically. For signed language, note influence from other signed or spoken languages:  
American Sign Language. Afghan Deaf refugees were originally taught American Sign Language by well-meaning relief workers. This practice was ended after only a year or two. The basic indigenous vocabulary was then documented and expanded, sometimes with the help of vocabulary from American Sign Language.

## 4. LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT AND USE

- a) What written literature, inscriptions or recordings exist in this language? Are there newspapers, radio or television broadcasts, etc.?:  
There is a dictionary which currently has around 2,000 documented signs. There are plans to update this further in 2006 with about 400 new signs. There are also two editions previous to the current edition of the dictionary and some other materials prepared by UNICEF, which are not Afghan Sign Language, but Pushto or Dari using signs taken from Afghan Sign Language. If what is meant by literature can include sign language literature

(or visible literature), there is also at least one video cassette recording early attempts by Afghan Deaf to come to an agreement about a single, national way of signing certain concepts.

- b) Is this language officially recognized by any level of government? Is it used in any levels of formal education as a language of instruction (for other subjects)? Is it taught in schools?:

Yes, education is conducted in this language, though it is perhaps limited to one school and several small classes in the entire country. The SHIP school currently has around 150 students between KG and 10th grade. The 5 KG classes are all taught by native Afghan signers, all Deaf. All of the students in the school are native signers with limited ability in written Pushto and written Dari. Some Hard-of Hearing students can speak simple phrases in Pushto or Dari. Outside of KG, the teachers are all hearing. Therefore, the hearing teachers' signing is often more like sign with Pushto or Dari grammar and idiom. So while the education of the majority of these students is conducted in the vocabulary of the language, it is perhaps incorrect to say the education is definitely conducted in Afghan Sign Language, with all of its grammar, etc.

- c) Comment on factors of ethnolinguistic identity and informal domains of use:

There is also a significant number of the Deaf population participating in literacy clubs or even being taught literacy in government schools after hours or in "clubs". The Serve's SHIP and EMAD projects and the Afghan National Association of the Deaf have been organizing and running these programs in districts around Jalalabad and Kabul. The situation in the country is such that the government teachers who teach these deaf students after hours have little experience with Afghan Sign Language and can therefore not go beyond teaching the Pushto or Farsi alphabet and simple words.

## 5. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

You do not need to repeat sources previously identified in the form, "Request for Change to ISO 639-3 Language Code"

a) First-hand knowledge. Describe:

I have worked in the school for the past six months and have had contact with the school for the past year and six months.

b) Knowledge through personal communication. Describe:

There have been numerous other expatriates who have worked with the project over the past ten to fifteen years. SERVE Afghanistan has a website at [www.serveafghanistan.org](http://www.serveafghanistan.org).

c) Knowledge from published sources. Include known dictionaries, grammars, etc. (please give complete bibliographical references):

A Collection of Signs. SHIP, Comprehensive Disabled Afghans Program (UNOPS/CDAP), Hearing Impaired Foundation for Afghanistan (HIFA), 2000. -- A dictionary collection of around 2000 signs. There is also a very basic and brief explanation of sign language grammar in the introduction.

There are two editions of the dictionary previous to the one listed above. There was also a quarterly magazine produced by UNICEF through the Hearing Impaired Foundation of Afghanistan between 2000 and 2001.

### Please return this form to:

ISO 639-3 Registrar

SIL International, Office of Language Information Systems

7500 West Camp Wisdom Road

Dallas, Texas 75236 USA

ISO 639-3/RA web site: <http://www.sil.org/iso639%2D3/default.asp>

Email: [iso639-3@sil.org](mailto:iso639-3@sil.org)

An email attachment of this completed form is preferred.

### Further information:

If your request for a new language code element is supported by the Registration Authority as a formal proposal, you may be contacted separately by researchers working with the Ethnologue or with LinguistList asking you to provide additional information.

### Sources of documentation for ISO 639-3 identifiers:

Gordon, Raymond G., Jr. (ed.), 2005. Ethnologue: Languages of the World, Fifteenth edition. Dallas, Tex.: SIL International. Online version: <http://www.ethnologue.com/> .

LinguistList. Ancient and Extinct Languages. <http://cf.linguistlist.org/cfdocs/new-website/LL-WorkingDirs/forms/langs/GetListOfAncientLgs.html>

LinguistList. Constructed Languages. <http://cf.linguistlist.org/cfdocs/new-website/LL-WorkingDirs/forms/langs/GetListOfConstructedLgs.html>