

Education of Deaf, Hard of Hearing and Deafblind People

Aims and Strategies



**Christoffel-Blindenmission
Christian Blind Mission**



| Table of Contents | Page |
|---|------|
| Education of Deaf, Hard of Hearing and Deafblind People | 2 |
| Guidelines for the Inclusion of Deaf and Hard of Hearing Students | 6 |
| Guidelines for Including Deaf and Hard of Hearing People within Community Based Rehabilitation Services | 9 |



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CBM Policy – Education of Deaf, Hard of Hearing and Deafblind People

1. Present Situation

1.1 According to WHO (2001) there are an estimated 250 million people with hearing loss in the world, of whom approximately 30 million are deaf. These figures do not include people with mild hearing losses. WHO classifications of levels of hearing losses are as follows: mild/ 26-40 dB, moderate/41-60dB, severe/61-80 dB, profound/ 81 dB+. There are few reliable statistics on the number of deaf, hard of hearing and deafblind children/adults being served in the world particularly in developing countries. Based on available figures, less than 1% of deaf, hard of hearing and deafblind children in developing countries have access to any form of education.

Deaf people can be defined as persons with a hearing loss of 81dB+ and/or choose to be members of the Deaf community.

Hard of Hearing people can be defined as all people who have a hearing loss and whose usual means of communication is by speech. (International Federation of Hard of Hearing People – IFHOH).

Deafblind people have a severe degree of combined visual and auditory impairments.

1.2 Mild and moderate hearing losses often go undetected. Careful consideration should be given towards the needs of people with mild/moderate hearing loss because lack of awareness of their special needs may lead to serious developmental, communication, learning and social/emotional difficulties.

1.3 Little is being done in relation to prevention of hearing loss and deafblindness even though a large proportion is preventable, particularly in developing countries. Rubella remains the major cause of non-genetic deafness as well as the major cause of deafblindness.

1.4 The education of deaf and hard of hearing children/adults is affected by controversies of philosophical and methodological nature. These can be divided into three basic groups:

Oral communication

Total Communication

Bilingual communication

1.5 The possibility of integrated or inclusive education for deaf and hard of hearing people is affected by the nature of the disability itself and is feasible under certain conditions. (See attached Guidelines on the Inclusion of Deaf and Hard of Hearing People).

1.6 The potential and capabilities of deaf, hard of hearing and deafblind people are severely underestimated in education, vocational training and employment.

1.7 Access to information is often limited due to the absence of a regional and/or national sign language and to a shortage of interpreters or communicators.

1.8 Most deaf, hard of hearing and deafblind people in developing countries do not have access to individual hearing aids, ear moulds, batteries, amplification systems or suitable educational materials.

1.9 Deaf and hard of hearing children with co-occurring disabilities (such as deafblindness and learning disabilities) generally do not have access to appropriate services and tend to be neglected within available structures.

1.10 The role and participation of family members in the education of deaf, hard of hearing and deafblind children is often underestimated.

2. Present Activities

2.1. Worldwide, in 2004, CBM supported 121 projects for the hearing impaired in 40 countries. This figure includes:

- 66 schools for the deaf
- 17 vocational training centres
- 15 training centres for teachers for the deaf
- 04 rehabilitation centres
- 06 workshops
- 03 CBR programmes/services
- 03 livelihood programmes
- 02 nursery schools
- 02 integrated education centres



01 production centre
01 home

13,611 deaf and hard of hearing children received education.
1,043 deafblind children received education.

2.2. At the present time CBM supports oral education, total communication programmes, bilingual programmes and tactile communication for deafblind people.

3. Aims and Strategies

Prevention of Deafness

3.1 To collaborate with the development of concepts and strategies for the prevention of hearing loss and deafblindness, with CBM's Advisory Working Group on Prevention of Hearing Impairment.

Early Identification

3.2 To collaborate with the development of concepts and strategies for Universal Neonatal Screening and other forms of early identification of hearing loss, with CBM's Advisory Working Group on Audiology and Speech Therapy. Deaf and deafblind people are likely to need additional medical and low vision services. It is recommended that projects regularly examine all deaf children for vision impairments and developmental delays.

Early Intervention

3.3 Before early identification of children with hearing loss can be effective, support systems and on-going training for families should be in place.

3.4 To establish parent-infant stimulation and pre-school programmes involving as many family members as possible.

3.5 To establish education programmes for parents and families of deaf and hard of hearing and deafblind children, which will develop coping, management, communication and parenting skills. Whenever possible, for chil-

dren under six years of age, placement in residential schools should be discouraged.

3.6 To offer audiological and educational intervention, which should immediately follow early identification and diagnosis.

Education Programmes

3.7 To implement educational programmes which will meet the needs of deaf, hard of hearing and deafblind people in each region, including non-formal and formal education, home-based programmes, community based programmes, outreach programmes, integrated programmes, inclusive programmes, day/residential schools for deaf and deafblind children, units in mainstreamed educational settings.

3.8 Encourage schools for deaf children to be used as resource centres for the development of outreach services (i.e. units attached to regular schools) to reach those at present too distant to profit from services.

3.9 To help the parents, family and community at large learn to communicate with the deaf, hard of hearing and deafblind children and to participate in the various educational settings.

3.10 To develop communication skills for deaf and hard of hearing children. To recognise the importance of sign language as the language of the Deaf community. To encourage the development of communication skills in order to develop language competencies in deaf and hard of hearing children at an early age.

3.11 To offer tactile sign language as the principal means of communication to deafblind people.

3.12 To provide oral education for children who can benefit from this approach.

3.13 To work with associations of the Deaf to promote a co-ordinated programme for the advancement of indigenous sign languages.

3.14 To encourage governments to recognise Sign Language as an official language of the country, to recognise interpreting as a profession and fund their employment.

3.15 To establish and support interpreting services for the Deaf community and to formalise an independent registry of interpreters to guar-



antee their right to access information. Deaf teachers should teach indigenous sign language courses.

- 3.16 To teach basic communication skills to CBR workers and classroom teachers using deaf adults whenever possible.
- 3.17 To help deaf, hard of hearing and deafblind students receive appropriate vocational training, which will assist them in finding meaningful employment compatible to their abilities within local job markets.
- 3.18 To network with existing services in the local community in order to ensure access to educational, vocational, medical, spiritual and social care.
- 3.19 Establish teacher training programmes closely attached to model educational services for deaf, hard of hearing and deafblind people, which provide formal certification, skills for CBR workers, continuous education and in-service training. Deaf, hard of hearing and deafblind people should be encouraged to be trained as educators and support staff.
- 3.20 Sensitise all regular school teachers to the special needs of deaf, hard of hearing and deafblind children.

Guidelines for the Inclusion of Deaf and Hard of Hearing Students

1. Definition of Inclusive Education

Inclusion refers to the educational process that wishes to extend to the maximum the opportunity of deaf and hard of hearing children to attend regular classrooms. It involves providing necessary Special Education services under the responsibility of the general classroom teacher. Inclusion does not mean to take children with special needs to regular classes without the assistance of a special education teacher, or to ignore the specific needs of the child. Integration should not be confused with inclusion.

Integration: is the selective placement of a deaf or hard of hearing student in a regular classroom, requiring that this student has the ability to participate in the school programme.

Inclusion: is to offer services to deaf and hard of hearing children in a regular school near their home, ensuring that all the support systems are in place. In Inclusion it is the school's responsibility to ensure education for all children.

2. Elements of Inclusive Education for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Students

Some or all of the following will be required, not necessarily full time, depending on the needs of the individual:

- 2.1 Deaf and hearing staff: Regular school teachers, Special education teachers/consultants, Note takers / Transcribers, Audiologists, Speech Therapists, Psychologists, Social Workers, Sign Language Interpreters / Captionists/ Instructor, Oral Interpreters, and sometimes: Physiotherapists / Occupational Therapists.
- 2.2 Total access to communication in school.
- 2.3 Use of educational technology: computers, closed captions, distance education, teletext devices, amplification devices, including individual hearing aids.
- 2.4 Access to all school and extracurricular events.



- 2.5 Support of Deaf culture, Deaf associations, sporting events, religious and other activities.
- 2.6 Deaf adults as role models (teachers, tutors, pastors and other professionals).
- 2.7 Alternative evaluations, such as extended time allowances, interpreters, oral interpreters.
- 2.8 Appropriate acoustic environment to reduce background noise and limit reverberation.
- 2.9 Attention to respectful language, culture and the hidden curriculum issues within the school.
- 2.10 Fatigue management amongst deaf students and support staff due to simultaneous communication.
- 2.11 Preferential seating, adequate lighting and visual accessibility to classroom, classmates and teachers.
- 2.12 Create a deaf-friendly school and classroom environment by sensitising peers.
- 2.13 Knowledge about second language instruction.
- 2.14 Curricular modification with extended school year, subject content (Sign language as a subject) and exemption to certain subjects, wherever possible.
- 2.15 Efficient communication with parents and caregivers.

3. Limitations of Inclusive Education for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Students

At the time of the Salamanca Document (1994) a word of caution was included relating to the Inclusion of Deaf students:

"Educational policies should take full account of individual differences and situations. The importance of sign language as the medium of communication among the deaf, for example, should be recognised and provision made to ensure that all deaf persons have access to education in their national sign language. Owing to the particular communication needs of deaf and deaf/blind persons, their education may be more suitably provided in special schools or special classes and units in mainstream schools." (Section II. A. 21)

Deaf students are recognized as a linguistic and cultural minority that use a gestural/visual language as their basic learning form and that they need trained and experienced professionals. They also need to associate socially and academically with other deaf students to understand and identify Deaf culture and the construction of their self-esteem. (Baldwin, 1994)

Another word of caution comes from Giorcelli (2000) suggesting that it is important to take in to consideration the excessive number of adults over a deaf child and the impact that this has on the child: loss of space, loss of personal control, interference in relationships with peers and loss of risk - taking ability.

In general the possible adverse effects on the Inclusion of deaf and hard of hearing children are related to isolation, negative social experiences, identity and cultural problems, power issues, hidden curriculum, lack of deaf role models, and the culture of silence.

Inclusive schooling should be supported whenever this represents the best option for the deaf or hard of hearing student provided appropriate support systems are ensured.

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Guidelines for Including Deaf and Hard of Hearing People within Community Based Rehabilitation Services

1. Present Situation

- 1.1 CBR is defined as "a strategy within community development for the rehabilitation, equalisation of opportunities and social integration [and participation] of all people with disabilities. CBR is implemented through the combined efforts of disabled persons themselves, their families and their communities (networking) with the appropriate health, education, vocational and social services."

United Nations (1994), "Joint Position Paper on CBR For and With People with Disabilities" issued by the International Labour Organisation (ILO), United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) and the World Health Organisation (WHO).

- 1.2 Culturally deaf people do not see themselves as disabled, but as members of a linguistic and cultural minority.
- 1.3 There are very few non-formal educational services for hard of hearing and deaf people.
- 1.4 CBR concepts can be extended to programmes for and with deaf and hard of hearing people.
- 1.5 CBR strategies include measures for the prevention of disabilities including hearing loss. At least half of all the causes of hearing impairments are said to be preventable.
- 1.6 The majority of Community Based Rehabilitation (CBR) programmes do not adequately serve deaf and hard of hearing people because of communication difficulties. The use of an interpreter, a signing sibling or use of gesturing and demonstration can help in the absence of a signing fieldworker.
- 1.7 Few CBR field workers have adequate sign language skills. Deaf adults usually possess natural fluency in Sign Language and can become effective CBR field workers to assist deaf clients. This concept is currently termed Deaf-led CBR or Deaf Community Based Rehabilitation. DCBR has been demonstrated to be sustainable with minimal inputs from the CBR programme.

2. Strategies

- 2.1 To encourage existing CBR programmes and especially to include deaf and hard of hearing people in their array of services.
- 2.2 To promote the prevention of hearing impairment.
- 2.3 To increase enrolment of deaf and hard of hearing students in an inclusive or integrated educational setting and promote the establishment of self contained classrooms.
- 2.4 To provide CBR partners with guidelines for serving deaf clients and with theoretical and practical information that will assist them in developing and sustaining services for deaf clients.
- 2.5 To provide a source of useful and affordable materials and assistive devices for use in the rehabilitation of deaf and hard of hearing clients. Also to provide information, materials and equipment used for the prevention of hearing impairment.
- 2.6 To train CBR personnel in the following areas: detection and assessment of hearing loss, early intervention techniques, working with families, audiological management, speech therapy, indigenous sign language and interpreting skills, deaf leadership training, promotion of deaf culture and vocational rehabilitation techniques.
- 2.7 To provide assistance to organisations of/for the Deaf for leadership development and other related activities.



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