INCLUSIVE PRACTICES: COLLABORATING WITH PEOPLE WHO ARE DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING

People with disabilities are often some of the most marginalized; experiencing fewer economic opportunities, lower levels of education, poor health, higher rates of poverty and are at a greater risk of being exposed to violence. With one billion people, or approximately 15 percent of the world's population living with a disability;[1] accounting for communities and individuals with disabilities are critical to effective development programs. Furthermore, people with disabilities are incredibly diverse and inclusive projects should seek to understand and align with the unique abilities and needs of people with differing disabilities.

In particular, deaf and hard of hearing people are sidelined by lack of access to language at an early age, information, resources, education and employment. These forms of marginalization result in high risk for language deprivation, delay in development of communication and cognitive skills, and mental health problems. Yet, like others with disabilities, with appropriate access to resources and inclusive practice, Deaf and hard of hearing people can and do effectively work, learn and fully participate to influence change. This document describes best practices for inclusive international development programming, including; effective communication, budgeting, outreach and community building, staffing, internal capacity building and monitoring and evaluation.

Inclusive Practices

The following practices align with international standards, including the United Nations- Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and are essential components to developing, promoting and sustaining inclusive programming;

Effective Communication Practices. Deaf and hard of hearing people use a variety of methods to communicate.

Seven Principles of Universal Design

- **Principle 1**: Equitable Use
- **Principle 2**: Flexibility in Use
- **Principle 3**: Simple and Intuitive Use
- **Principle 4**: Perceptible Information
- **Principle 5**: Tolerance for Error
- **Principle 6**: Low Physical Effort
- **Principle 7**: Size and Space for Approach and Use

United Nations- Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

Rights of Deaf and hard of hearing individuals according the UN-CRPD;

- **ARTICLE 2**: Definition of Language- Spoken and Signed
- **ARTICLE 9:** Sign Language Recognition and Accessibility
- **ARTICLE 21:** Freedom of Expression and Opinion, and Access to Information
- **ARTICLE 24:** Education
- **ARTICLE 30**: Participation in cultural life, recreation leisure and sport

These can include sign language, listening and spoken language, written communication, gestures and/or lipreading. There are hundreds of sign languages around the world, each linguistically distinct from listening and spoken language, with unique spatial grammar and syntax. Interpreters can be hired to facilitate communication between signed and spoken language or subtitling using technologies such as Web Captioner or

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[1] World Health Organization, "Disability and Health." https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/disability-and-health. (Accessed June 2020).

Communication Access Realtime Transcription can be leveraged. This allows for all parties - both Deaf, hard of hearing and non-deaf - to feel comfortable and fully participate. When working directly with a Deaf or hard of hearing person, it is best practice and often most effective to ask how they prefer to communicate. They should be included in the decision-making process about accommodations and accessibility services. This is not only the most effective means to ensure they receive adequate services, it also ensures that organizational resources are not wasted, duplicated or misused. Once services are confirmed, the Deaf or hard of hearing person should immediately be informed. The 7 principles of universal design are also useful for maintaining communication, particularly for public presentations or products. Whether meeting in person or online, consider maximizing communication through multiple points of access and sensory modalities. For example, consider using visual images and PowerPoint slides for key points and discussion topics; conducting hands on activities; using captioning and an interpreter; and writing down questions and comments on paper, on a whiteboard or in a chat box. Be cognizant of factors which inhibit greatest accessibility in a physical space or teleconferencing. Consider enhancing acoustics with use of a microphone or blocking out disruptive sounds by closing a door. For greatest visual accessibility and easiest use, try a video conferencing platform with on-screen captions rather than a separate link for captions. When presenting, pause between PowerPoint slides so Deaf and hard of hearing participants can view the information and then watch the interpreter and/or captions.

Budgeting for Inclusion. Providing accessibility and reasonable accommodations may or may not entail costs; however, designating funds is a critical step in prioritizing and creating inclusive spaces and accessible information. Expenses while working with people who are Deaf and hard of hearing can include purchasing visual or tactile adaptive alarms/alerts, office supplies (such as portable white boards for written communication) and hiring interpreters and captionists for events, team and one-to-one meetings. It is also helpful to purchase sign language dictionaries in the local language and/or hang up posters with signs which can support all team members in communication.

Outreach and Community Engagement. Connections to the community foster entry-points for programming support, the chance to align programming with community interests and can raise the quality of services for diverse groups. They can support project design, budgeting, implementation and data collection. Potential partnerships should include both mainstream organizations advocating for greater inclusion and Disabled Persons Organizations (DPOs), such as national Deaf associations, Deaf clubs or Deaf schools.

> "Most deaf people lack access to entrepreneurship training and their economic status remains low, as well as income. More inclusive practices are required to create awareness and equal opportunities for them and other disabled people."
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> - Imalingat Deo, Uganda YLA

Staffing. Targeted recruitment and hiring qualified Deaf/hard of hearing staff are critical to running inclusive programs and is reflective of the project's values of inclusion. Local Deaf or hard of hearing staff can provide essential insights in serving their community, share lived experiences, foster deeper understanding and strengthen community connections. Best practices begin with including Deaf and hard of hearing people in the proposal stage and project design process, and then at project start-up and throughout the life of the project. Inclusive recruitment entails advertising for jobs through agencies for people with disabilities, consulting local Deaf and hard of hearing residents about where to post job ads or reaching out to DPOs, schools and universities to host Deaf and hard of hearing interns.

Internal Capacity Building. Attitudinal barriers can often be some of the most inhibiting for people with disabilities, thus providing internal training and capacity building resources for all staff is part of creating inclusive programs and supports collaboration with Deaf employees at the office. Training is a strategy to strengthen inclusive initiatives within the organization and proactively address internalized bias and stigma. When possible, capacity building activities should be led by local deaf and hard of hearing individuals and communities. Capacity building activities can include hosting classes on the local sign language or Deaf culture, lessons on how to caption videos, obtain accommodations, and work with an interpreter, and other activities to enhance awareness.

> "People with disabilities are vital to bring change in communities, countries and internationally. Their challenges are temporary and can be addressed if we all change the environment through inclusive practices."
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> - Imalingat Deo, Uganda YLA Intern

Monitoring & Evaluation- Disability data is significantly lacking worldwide, which both highlights and perpetuates social inequities. Project monitoring and evaluation efforts should involve all stakeholders including persons with disabilities, their families and communities, and collect data on their participation and experiences. Data can (1) identify number of participants with disabilities; (2) document how arrangements were made to promote accessibility, including how accessible the environment is and accommodations made to foster inclusive participation; and (3) document how the technical activity made an impact on participants with disabilities.

Case Study

Integrating Inclusive Practices in the Uganda Youth-Led Activity Project (2015-2020)

The USAID Feed the Future Uganda Youth Leadership for Agriculture Activity (YLA), implemented by Chemonics International, provides practical examples of disability inclusion practices. The project aims to enhance youth employability and income in Uganda through formal and non-formal training in entrepreneurship, leadership and life skills. Youth are the target demographic of the project, as 400,000 Ugandan youth enter the labor market each year, competing for a mere 80,000 formal jobs.[2] Despite a severe lack of data on disability within these numbers, it is widely recognized that people who are Deaf and hard of hearing are among the most likely to lack formal jobs or be unemployed. As noted by Uganda National Association of the Deaf's executive director, Ambrose Murangira, "the labor market in

Figure 1. Deo, a Deaf Restless Development intern working with YLA, presents to students at St. Anthony's School for the Deaf in UgSL.

Uganda presents multiple hurdles for the deaf and other people [with disabilities] to overcome if they are to be

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[2] Chemonics, "Feed the Future Uganda Youth Leadership for Agriculture Activity." www.chemonics.com/projects/creating-opportunities-youth-agriculture/ (Accessed May 2020).

absorbed into the job market".[3] He explains, "Deaf and hard of hearing people face discrimination in hiring procedures and in obtaining employment, specifically in public service jobs and mainstream organizations."

For YLA, in an effort to address the increasing rate of unemployment and provide a point of access for all youth in the labor force, the project determined through a Year 5 review that increasing inclusion of persons with disabilities in its final year would be critical to achieve its objective. The project pivoted towards a technical focus on disability inclusion under guidance of a new Chief of Party (COP) and prior Gender Equality and Social Inclusion Practice Director, Kelly Cronen. YLA subsequently connected with two disabled persons organizations (DPOs) for short term partnerships, established measures for inclusive internship positions and received grant funding for implementation.

In Year 4, YLA had partnered with Restless Development, a youth-led development agency, to expand capacity development by incorporating 16 youth, and in Year 5, they continued the partnership with an added emphasis on engaging interns with disabilities and from vulnerable communities (***Staffing***). Imalingat Deo was one Deaf intern who participated in the program. He worked at both a YLA regional office and the YLA home office. When asked about his experience, Deo said, "I was happy that I got an opportunity to be included with YLA. I learned a lot of professional skills such as [written] office communication and on the internet, teamwork, report writing, management, supervision and many others." Subsequently, YLA staff and leadership learned a lot from Deo. He explained what effective communication meant for him and taught basic Ugandan Sign Language (UgSL). Chief of Party Kelly Cronen purchased UgSL dictionaries and the staff gained experience using English/UgSL interpreters during meetings (***Effective communication practices***). Deo also connected with one YLA partner, St. Anthony's School for the Deaf. He visited the school with YLA staff and provided a presentation on workforce engagement and life skills to the students (***Outreach and community engagement***). During this event and later site visits, YLA staff applied the sign language they learned to connect with staff and students (***Effective communication practices***).

Connecting with St. Anthony's School for the Deaf was an intentional step by YLA to work toward inclusive programming (***Outreach and community engagement***). YLA first identified the school as a potential partner through collaboration with Catholic Relief Service (CRS), who later conducted a situation analysis and reviewed the school's operational business model. As a result of this analysis, YLA determined that through undertaking maize milling the school could diversify its business model and support income generation. YLA then applied for grant funding to support the conjoined business and school (***Budgeting for inclusion***). Once the school had provided a structure for the maize milling machine, food storage and electricity, YLA procured a maize milling machine and a computer for record keeping. The YLA grant also included an internship position for a Deaf, hard of hearing or hearing student in a deaf-related field from the United States to work alongside St. Anthony's in developing their business model, establishing organizational systems and providing training opportunities for their school and business (***Staffing***). Deaf youth at the school participated in UgSL-interpreted maize mill procedure trainings hosted by the school and computer literacy courses in UgSL by the YLA intern from the United States, as well as gained hands on experience with the maize mill once installed (***Effective Communication Practices***). The installation of the mill supported the project's objective by increasing a stable source of income for students'

[3] Jagwe, N. (December 22, 2016). "Chances of deaf getting employed 'very limited'." New Vision. Retrieved from www.newvision.co.ug/news/1442636/chances-deaf-getting-employed-limited. (Accessed May 2020).

education, as well as enhancing the employability of Deaf and hard of hearing youth through trainings and skill building activities.

Although inclusive measures enacted by YLA only began in the final year of the project, the outcomes of these inclusive efforts are ongoing. One of the most immediate impacts of this project is the realization of the possibility and necessity of inclusion among project staff, mainstream partner organizations, participating youth, and local community members. Engagement opened up space for new conversations about how to enhance the inclusion of Deaf and hard of hearing youth in development projects. Ultimately, inclusive practices broadened the reach of the project and extended opportunities to individuals previously marginalized by development programming and the workforce at large. For Deaf and hard of hearing individuals, YLA validated the significance of their work and generated greater positive visibility. At St. Anthony's school for the Deaf, which has already been creating accessible resources and employment opportunities for deaf youth, further sources of income were created to continue and reaffirm their work. Additionally, the school has the possibility to become a frequented and important community center to buy and sell maize, while simultaneously spreading awareness and supporting the potential of people who are Deaf and hard-of-hearing.

Figure 2. After turning on the maize mill machine for the first time at St. Anthony's School, the staff inspect the maize flour. One Deaf youth employee comments in UgSL that the odor of the flour is not quite right.

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