

## Illustrative Program Description<sup>1</sup>

### Building Human Capacity Among At Risk Deaf Youth

<b>Subject:</b>	Building human capacity among at risk Deaf youth through academic support.
<b>Target Group:</b>	At risk Deaf youth
<b>Period of performance:</b>	3-5 years
<b>Place of work:</b>	Deaf communities in Kenya, Ghana, Tanzania, Zambia, Uganda, Malawi, Namibia, Democratic Republic of Congo.
<b>Summary:</b>	Deaf students need Deaf teachers. The “Building human capacity among at risk Deaf youth through academic support” is an important project that will increase access to higher education and employment opportunities for young Deaf people in Kenya, Ghana, Tanzania, Zambia, Uganda, Malawi, Namibia and Democratic Republic of the Congo. This “Deaf to Deaf Education” project will empower Deaf youth to pursue their goal to become professional Teachers of the Deaf (TOD). Native Sign language fluent Deaf TOD are better able to teach Deaf students through a language that Deaf learners understand. This project builds the groundwork for long term improvements to Deaf education in selected developing countries. When young Deaf adults are allowed to attend college, become teachers, and gain employment at schools and vocational training centers for the Deaf, they will serve as role models for Deaf students, and guides for hearing teachers. They will become the leaders in revolutionizing Deaf education into the future.

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<sup>1</sup> In order to be as concrete as possible, this illustrative program description targets a specific country. This however doesn't answer a specific request from USAID.

## ***Creating a Cycle of Success Through Deaf to Deaf Education***

### **I. BACKGROUND**

Deaf children and adults in developing nations are typically relegated to a very low social status because of the stigma they face. They have few economic opportunities and encounter a series of formidable impediments. Deaf children receive little, if any, formal education. They are unable to communicate well with the hearing world, and are often subjected to the most horrible living conditions and abuse. This legacy of shame, abuse, isolation, and failure follows young Deaf children into their adult lives.

**LACK OF APPROPRIATE EDUCATION:** In developing nations, most teachers working in schools for the Deaf are hearing people. They receive traditional teacher training, but do not receive any specialization training in sign language or visual teaching methods that are critical for visual learners. Nor are they trained in facilitating language, social, and cognitive development in Deaf children. Since sign language is rarely used to communicate between teachers and students, Deaf students can't understand their lessons, and find it very difficult to learn. Most teachers of Deaf children resort to writing on the board and pointing as their primary means of communication. Upon school completion, unemployment rates are high amongst Deaf individuals. Commonly, Deaf students leave school around the 10<sup>th</sup> grade, but with written language skills that are at the 6<sup>th</sup> grade level or lower.

**LACK OF DEAF CULTURAL AFFILIATION:** In developing nations, ninety percent (90%) of Deaf children are born into hearing families where there is no exposure to sign language or to the existing culture of the Deaf. These Deaf children are typically deprived of the communication skills they need for social development, incidental learning, academic pursuits, and gainful employment. Typically, the vast majority of Deaf individuals in Africa live in rural areas and far apart from other Deaf individuals. Due to the infrequent contact with other Deaf people, they are unable to assimilate with the Deaf culture, learn the national sign language system and learn how to be a proud Deaf Community member. The lack of a reference group and feeling of belonging leads to a lower self concept and emotional coping skills. Contact with itinerant Deaf community workers and Deaf teachers provide the emotional support needed for a positive self image.

**LACK OF DEAF ROLE MODELS:** For Deaf children in developing countries, few if any positive adult Deaf role models or Deaf teachers or social workers available can communicate successfully and mentor isolated Deaf children to reach their full potential. Deaf children cannot visualize their potential for a successful future. Their self-esteem is characteristically low as a result. Consequently, most young Deaf students are doing poorly in their classes and are often behavior problems to their families. They view themselves as their society sees them: marginalized discards that have no future. Deaf children don't dare dream of attending secondary schools let alone college and becoming successful teachers and other professionals.

**The Need:** In some developing nations, Deaf leaders have organized non-formal English literacy classes that have prepared Deaf young people to pass matriculation requirements for entry into secondary schools or a vocational or other college. This is essential for the Deaf community to have access to secondary and higher education and professional achievement – and to assist their nation in becoming more competitive in the global economy. The “Building Human Capacity” project will address this need by implementing the proposed three-year Fast Track Program. It will include direct interventions with Deaf young people, capacity building for local teachers, and the promotion of sign language interpreters. Stakeholder meetings and baseline evaluations will be conducted prior to project implementation as a way to determine project effectiveness and to help each Deaf community establish their individual goals.

## **II. ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION**

### **Project Goal:**

Build human capacity of Deaf young people so they are able to participate more fully in the modern global economy. This goal will be achieved through:

### **Project Objectives:**

- Filling gaps in basic Deaf education at primary and secondary school levels
  - a. Promoting the national sign language through instructional materials
  - b. Providing update training to hearing and Deaf teachers
  - c. Advocating for Deaf-friendly educational policies
  - d. Addressing any gender imbalance in Deaf education
- Implementing a college-preparatory program for at risk Deaf young people
- Encouraging the creation of a corps of sign language interpreters
- Developing a cadre of Deaf mentors and social community workers
- Establishing partnerships to support Deaf youth through teachers college
- Furthering educational policy development with the local community
- Providing vocational training as an alternative to academic colleges

### **Guiding Principles:**

- Deaf community leaders and government involvement will create an enabling environment for successful service delivery and educational opportunities.
- Building a network of involvement, coordination and collaboration of Deaf community members for improved service delivery.
- Members of the U.S. Deaf education community will serve as Global Ambassadors to contribute their professional expertise to the project through providing ongoing mentoring and tutoring support to Deaf youth.

**Main Activities:**

The four project objectives will be met through main and related activities: A) In-country coordinators will tutor a select group of young Deaf students from each country interested in attending teachers college, B) mentoring relationships will be developed between U.S. interpreters and local hearing people in each country interested in becoming sign interpreters, C) support will be provided for the development of local education policies needed to allow Deaf people to enter teachers college and be employed by their government, D) scholarships and sign interpreters will be provided for Deaf people interested in attending teachers college in their own country. The proposed activities would have duration of three to five years.

**Activity A: The Fast Track Program - *Implementing a college-preparatory program for at risk Deaf young people***

The purpose of the Fast Track Program will be to provide Deaf young people with the ability to pass the national exam so they can matriculate into college. Most of the students who will participate in the Fast Track Program will have the desire to become a professional teacher of Deaf children but do not yet have the needed test scores to enter teachers college.

Following three years of intensive study, the Deaf young adults will take the necessary exams to gain entrance into a teacher training program. It is expected that the majority of Deaf adults will attain the level of competency in English and math required for college entry by the end of the program. In-country program coordinators will be responsible for program activities in each country participating in the program.

In-Country Program Coordinator: Country coordinators will be members of the American Deaf community and have experience as teachers of Deaf children and/or experience as social service providers for the Deaf. Their role would be to implement the Fast Track Program with the assistance of hearing teachers in the Deaf. This will strengthen Deaf education in the selected countries through personal coaching and support of hearing teachers with effective visual pedagogical methods for Deaf students. The in-country Program Coordinators will also foster relationships between Global Ambassadors and Deaf young adults, hearing teachers and aspiring interpreters. In addition to direct program work, the in-country Program Coordinators will also work closely with educators to reassess progress made, adjust to individualized learning plans and concentrate on making substantial advances through intensive study.

**Activity B: The Skills Support Program - *Interpreter training workshops and relationships with U.S. interpreter to develop a corps of sign interpreters***

Sign language interpreters will be needed to facilitate communications between members of the Deaf and hearing communities. They play a critical role in making it possible for the Deaf community to have equal access to education, employment and public services. Nonetheless, work needs to still be done to formalize and document so that interpreters learn and use a single,

native sign language. These efforts must be done concurrently to the work being done to prepare interpreters for service. Despite this difficult environment, it is important to take preliminary steps toward both preparing interpreters and institution building to empower Deaf citizens.

**Activity C: Policy Development - *support the development of local education policies that will allow Deaf people to attend teachers college and be employed by their government.***

In order for Deaf youth to have the opportunity to attend teachers college, be employed as a teacher upon graduation, and work in an environment that other Deaf youth can follow in their success, three main policies must be put into place: 1) realistic college entrance requirements for Deaf students, 2) government paid sign interpreters need to be hired, 3) priority placement of Deaf graduates as teachers in the Deaf schools.

The policy development is done in a four-stage process with support from local NGOs. Through advocacy, policy development, policy implementation, and policy follow through, processes can be put in place so that future Deaf students have a permanent opportunity to go all the way from 1<sup>st</sup> grade through teachers college without the traditional roadblocks to stop them.

**Activity D: The College Support Program: *provide support and resources for Deaf people to attend teacher training colleges in their country***

The College Support Program provides Deaf people with the opportunity to become a teacher at a Deaf school and a leader in their community. This program develops the partnerships needed to support Deaf people through teachers colleges in their own country by providing scholarships, interpreters, and local NGO support. Upon graduation from teachers college, these Deaf pioneers become life-time role models for Deaf youth, their parents, hearing teachers, and the community as a whole.

### **III. EXPECTED RESULTS**

The completion of the “Building human capacity among at risk Deaf youth through academic support” project will have a dramatic impact on Deaf young people, a percentage of whom will matriculate into college, receive college scholarships, and eventually become employed as teachers in schools for the Deaf. A stakeholder meeting and baseline evaluation will need to be completed with each Deaf community before exact deliverables can be given. As the young Deaf people graduate from college and become employed in schools for Deaf students, they will each impact hundreds of Deaf children during each year they work as teachers. Further, matriculation into college by this first group of Deaf students will put pressure on public institutions to make it easier for successive groups to enter. Policy change over time will create access to higher education for the entire Deaf community, leading to more Deaf teachers, Deaf social workers, Deaf administrators, and then Deaf policy makers.