



Deaf Children : What we need to know

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Deaf Zimbabwe Trust

- Established in 2012 and started operations in 2013.
- Programmes:
 - Deaf education
 - Access to health
 - Sign language development and promotion
 - Economic empowerment
 - Research, media and communication

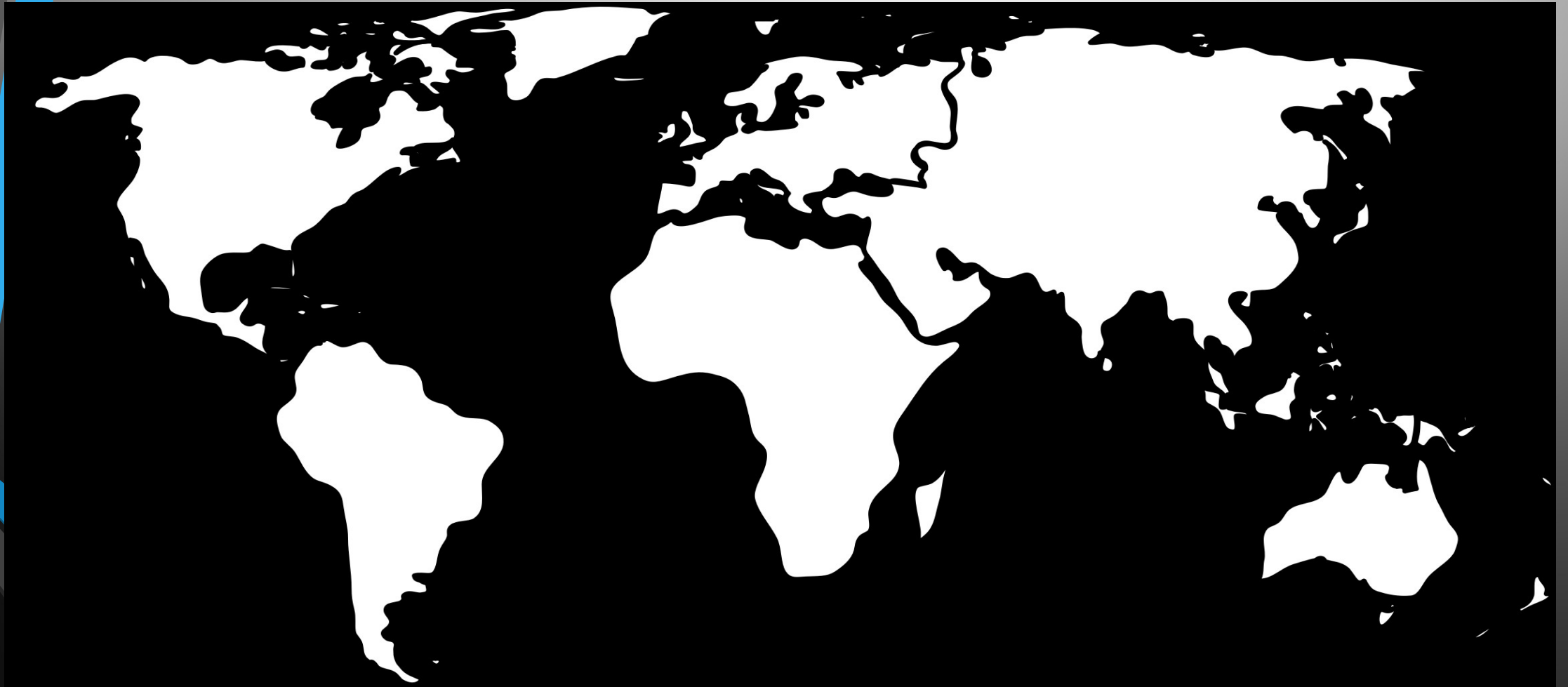
Successes to date

- Sign language now used during the main news: better access to information for the Deaf but not where we desire
- Increased visibility of Deaf issues in Zimbabwe
- 6 people who are Deaf are training as teachers
- 3 research projects on the Deaf community conducted, findings

Successes cont'd

- mobilised young people to litigate for increased access to information
- Mobilised parents to litigate for access to quality education for Deaf children
- A back to school programme began and 12 Deaf young people have enrolled

The Global Overview



Global overview of Deafness

The World Health Organisation reports that 60 per cent of hearing loss is preventable
Where it cannot be prevented, appropriate interventions need to be provided for children to live happy and independent lives

360 million people, about 5 % of the global population has a hearing loss

Nearly 32 million are children and the majority of these are found in developing countries

The most significant impact of hearing loss in children is poor language acquisition which affects the ability to learn

Factors that affect the impact of hearing loss on children

- Age of onset of hearing loss
- Degree of hearing loss
- Age of identification and intervention
- Environment

Causes of hearing loss

- Genetic factors which account for 40 per cent of hearing loss (unpreventable)
- Conditions at the time of birth- prematurity, birth complications, low birth weight
- Infections , rubella, meningitis, mumps, measles
- Diseases of the ear
- Noise
- Medicines; malaria treatment, treatment of drug resistant TB, treatment of neo natal infections
- 60 per cent causes of hearing loss are preventable

The African and Zimbabwean Story of Deafness



Late detection of deafness



- Late detection of Deafness in Zimbabwe
- The government of Zimbabwe has one audiologist working for them, the rest are in private practice and the costs exorbitant for most families
- Hearing is not one of the vitals tests that are done in Post natal clinics
- Hearing loss usually detected late at times when the child is 4 or 5 and sometimes when the child has

Location of deafness in the social fabric in Africa and Zimbabwe



- Deafness is located in the discourse of witchcraft and curses
- This results in shame for the family of the child
- Leads to stigma, bad attitudes and discrimination
- Families hide their children
- The child does not attend school and does not have the same opportunities as siblings
- The child is destined for a life of marginalisation

Lack of language choices

THE GREATEST IRONY:



- Lack of an early language start in the home
- Lack of support services for parents on communication alternatives available
- Inability to make choices sign language or oralism
- Poor language development affecting later educational outcomes
- Extreme leaning on oralism

Access to education



- In Zimbabwe over 90 per cent of children with deafness do not attend school
- The educational facilities do not support the education of Deaf children
- There are a few specialist teachers and the brain drain has impacted the education sector
- All languages in Zimbabwe have syllabi but there is no sign language syllabus

Access to health



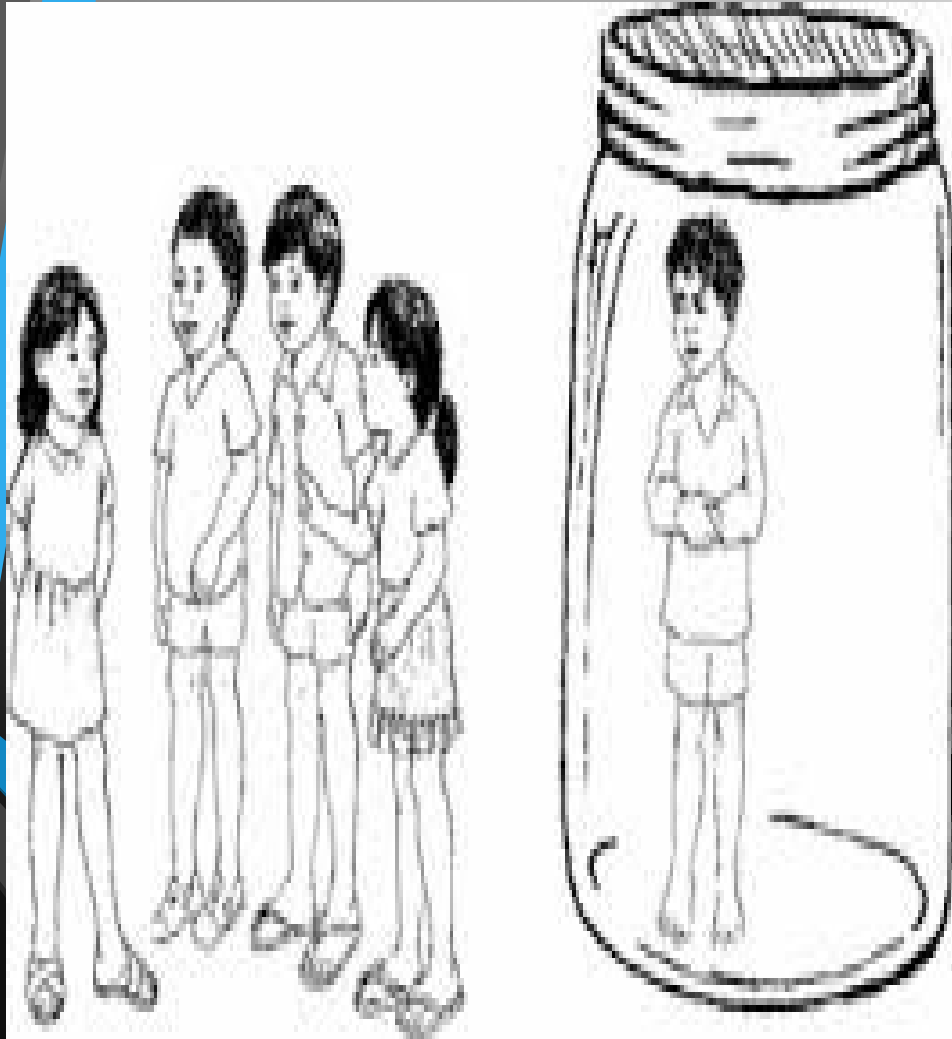
- Poor communication as inappropriate formats are used
- Facilities not Deaf friendly, no visual indicators
- Use of services becomes problematic and results in apathy
- Poor mental health services for children who are Deaf
- Under diagnosis and under treatment of chronic conditions
- Lack of access to sexual and reproductive health services
- Bad attitudes of health practitioners

Wellbeing in the family and community



- Neglect in the home and family
- Inability to participate fully in the family life and community
- Poor social skills for Deaf children as there are no opportunities for learning at home due to communication barriers
- Many children who are Deaf suffer

Wellbeing in family relationships



- Three factors that interfere with attachment with deaf infants:
- firstly the sense of loss and distress that many parents initially feel when they realise that their child is deaf
- secondly fear - fear of the unknown, fear for their child's future, fear of other people's reactions and, for a few, fear of the child itself

Changing the situation



- Early detection of hearing loss
- Psychosocial support through positive parenting for parents and families
- Changing societal attitudes of Deafness
- Giving Deaf children an early language start
- Building resources for Deaf education through training teachers who are Deaf
- Development of inclusive education policies that guide practice

Changing the situation



- Developing professional interpreter training, certification and registration
- Ensure programmes are inclusive in the real sense not just window dressing
- Provide disability specific interventions for the various disabilities that children have not a one size fits all approach

Thank you

