

## **SUCCESSFUL ENGAGEMENT: CBM'S HOLISTIC APPROACH TO INCLUSIVE EDUCATION FOR LEARNERS WHO ARE DEAF, HARD OF HEARING OR DEAFBLIND.**

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ABSTRACT:

***Purpose:*** CBM is an international Christian development organisation, committed to improving the quality of life of people with disabilities in disadvantaged societies. CBM aims at achieving this in partnership with local organizations and in cooperation with stakeholders at regional and international levels. This presentation aims at sharing CBM's holistic approach for successful engagement in the work of quality education for learners who are deaf, hard of hearing or deafblind. There will be a brief overview of CBM's Global Programme Strategy<sup>i</sup>, participatory methods of planning and implementation, with reference to guiding documents. The presentation will include field examples of challenges and opportunities in providing quality lifelong education opportunities for learners who are deaf, hard of hearing or deafblind in low- and middle-income countries (LMIC) reflecting the post 2015 agenda and the CRPD (2006)<sup>ii</sup>. ***Conclusions:*** CBM's holistic approach to work in the area of ear care; deafness; hard of hearing and deafblindness includes intervention at all levels of health care provision, education, Community Based Rehabilitation (CBR), Audiological services, Speech Therapy and other interdisciplinary services. The presentation reflects CBM's specific strategic planning and results, together with lessons learnt while working towards sustainable engagement for quality educational field work.

INTRODUCTION:

This presentation will reflect on the diverse needs of learners who are hard of hearing, deaf or deafblind in low- and middle-income countries (LMIC), particularly in respect of quality, lifelong opportunities and inclusion. Examples will be given of challenges and opportunities.

TERMS:

In this article the following terms are used:

- **persons with hearing loss:** persons with varying degrees of hearing loss
- **persons who are hard of hearing:** persons who use speech and can utilise residual hearing for use of amplification e.g. hearing aids;<sup>iii</sup>
- **persons who are deaf:** refers to persons with a sensorineural hearing loss and who predominately choose to communicate using sign language.
- **persons who are deafblind:** persons who have a dual sensory hearing and visual impairment which can be from mild to profound. Those with severe to profound visual impairment rely on signed tactile forms of communication.

For the purposes of this article, the term 'deaf' will apply to all persons who are hard of hearing or deaf, unless otherwise noted.

#### **CBM IN BRIEF:**

This presentation demonstrates CBM's partnerships, activities and experiences of working towards strengthening its global efforts and networking for achieving inclusive education for all for the post 2015 United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goals.

From its founding days to the present, CBM has a long history of working to improve the quality of life for persons with disabilities. Services are provided in more than 60 low-and-middle income (LMIC) countries via a wide network of offices, associations, local partnerships, and alliances with other organisations, networks and movements. Partners on the Global level include IDA (International Disability Alliance), IDDC (International Disability and Development Consortium) members, WHO (World Health Organisation), UN (United Nations) bodies, the Global Campaign for Education (GCE), and professional associations.

#### **CBM's Vision:**

An inclusive world in which all persons with disabilities enjoy their human rights and achieve their full potential.

#### **Education at CBM:**

Education is recognised as the main pillar in human development conditioning pathways in life. Education is one of several areas of expertise within CBM taking a human rights based approach to disability and inclusive development, believing that a person with a disability has a right to be included and to participate as a full member in society, as defined by the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD, 2006)<sup>iv</sup>. This means that CBM's work includes initiatives to support the full inclusion and participation of persons with disabilities supporting and advocating for inclusive education as the most appropriate option for learners with a disability. This approach requires specialist support, is often linked with inclusive education resource facilities and requires development of local skills and capacity. CBM believes that all children should be in school. Inclusion begins at birth. Therefore access to inclusive early education and care is essential for any child, particularly for the most marginalised: boys and girls with disabilities. CBM also recognizes that complementary or alternative models (where existing) may be the best choice depending on the situation e.g for learners who are deaf.

The 2006 UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) was a highly significant document for persons with disabilities.<sup>v</sup> Article 24 declares that all persons with disabilities have the right to an inclusive, quality and free primary and secondary education. Here it is recommended that governments and educational institutions meet the communication needs of learners who are deaf or deafblind. Therefore, their education should be provided for using the most appropriate modes of communication, by qualified educators using fluent sign language communication as needed as well as the provision of assistive devices such as hearing aids.

Providing quality lifelong learning opportunities is particularly important given the challenges of accessing education in LMIC for learners who are deaf.

#### **GLOBAL FACTS AND FIGURES:**

### **Disabling Hearing Loss:**

The World Health Organisation (WHO) estimates that there are 360 million people worldwide live with Disabling Hearing Loss<sup>vivii</sup>, which is approximately 5.3% of the world population. Thirty two million of these are children (under 15 years of age) of whom 80% live in LMICs. Fifty per cent of all causes of hearing loss are preventable through public health measures. The current global production of hearing aids meets less than 10% of the global needs. Potentially there are 72 million hearing aid users worldwide. In LMIC less than 3% of people who need a hearing aid are thought to have one.

### **Education:**

The 2014 Education for All Monitoring Report estimated that there are nearly 57 million girls and boys who are not attending school<sup>viii</sup>, most living in LMICs. The 2011 World Report on Disability (WHO and World Bank) notes that in a survey of 51 countries only 47.8% of adults with disabilities aged 18-49 years in LMICs have completed primary school.<sup>ix</sup> Though the scarcity of reliable data makes it challenging to be accurate about how many children with disabilities are in school, combining these global figures suggests that approximately 50% of children with disabilities currently aged 0-14 years will either not begin their primary education or will not progress beyond primary. In Iraq, it was shown that 19% of children who were deaf, and 51% of children with psychosocial or developmental disabilities, had never been to school.<sup>x</sup> Compounding these estimates is the disproportionate numbers of learners who are deaf affected by lower enrolment and completion rates with an estimated 90% of children who are deaf are out of school.<sup>xi</sup> Adults who are deaf have a much higher unemployment rate than their hearing peers. Worldwide, there are an estimated 2.5 million persons living with deafblindness, most of whom experience high levels of poverty and social exclusion with extremely limited access to health care, education and social welfare support<sup>xii</sup>.

### **Priorities in providing quality inclusive education practices for learners who are deaf, hard of hearing or deafblind need to consider the following:**

- Advocating for mainstream educational programmes and services to be accessible: There is much work involved in breaking down barriers of: attitude, communication, environment and organizational culture systems. This requires educators and the local community knowing sign language, capacity building of specialists, having access to audiological services and hearing aids, the employment of professionally qualified, trained and experienced sign language interpreters; audiologists, speech and language therapists, specialist teachers etc. as a basic human right so that persons who are deaf have access to information, as their right. Otherwise, they are excluded in an inclusive setting.
- Supporting disability-specific initiatives that facilitate participation in all aspects of society. This involves both strategies that strengthen the ability of persons who are deaf themselves, their parents and family members as well as associations of the deaf to effectively self-advocate and participate in developing strategies that reduce / eliminate the effects of a person's impairment and addresses the preventable causes of impairment. These to be addressed through educational, CBR and medical related programmes. A person-centred approach to reducing the effects of impairment that addresses not only individual ability but also inclusion, participation and self-advocacy is key to a human rights-based approach.

CBM's involvement with the deaf community and those at risk of hearing difficulties includes supporting the types of services people access through our partner programmes. In addition CBM cooperates with national and international organisations including the World

Federation of the Deaf (WFD), International Federation of the Hard of Hearing (IFHOH), Deafblind International (DbI), Kentalis International, Sound Seekers, Deaf Child Worldwide, Coalition for Global Hearing Health (CGHH); World Wide Hearing (WW Hearing); the Society for Sound Hearing (Sound Hearing 2030); Government ministries as well as other Non-governmental Organisations (NGO) (e.g. National Association of the Deaf, Parents of Persons who are Deafblind) as alliance partners internationally and regionally in order to achieve key mutual objectives.

## **CBM'S WORK IN THE AREA OF HEARING IN RELATION TO ITS GLOBAL STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK:<sup>xiii</sup>**

A key objective is to improve the quality of its programme work. The programme strategy also aims “to mobilize resources in other organisations for Inclusive Development”, setting terms for engagement in Advocacy and Alliances engagement in CBM's programme countries in LMIC.<sup>xiv</sup>

Key objectives for our target groups are:

- Communities at risk have improved access to health and re/habilitation services to prevent and treat conditions leading to disability;
- Persons with disabilities have improved access to healthcare, education and livelihood. Access being defined to include physical, communication, and social and economic access to facilities, services, training, and livelihood;
- Persons with disabilities have a strong voice & participate
- Policy & programme commitment to disability in development has improved

Enabling the above includes ensuring that:

- Partnerships are professionally managed. ‘Partnership’ is central to CBM's work. Local partner organisations have knowledge and expertise to make long term difference. A set of agreed performance measures are discussed and used to guide service delivery as part of Project Cycle Management. CBM can support capacity building, technical and professional input to make the long term difference;
- Partners have access to technical support through short term advisory support and / or expert co-worker placement. There are two CBM Advisory Working Groups (AWG) which guide the work in this area: one focuses on Ear and Hearing Care (EHC) and one in the education of persons who are Deaf, Hard of Hearing or Deafblind (EDHD). These AWGs include professionals who are hearing and deaf. CBM sees the educational and health aspects of the related activities in “hearing” and related areas of work, complementing and strengthening each other and facilitating the provision of their services in the field.

CBM is currently producing and/or updating several EHC and EDHD **documents** with the intention to share them with a wider audience. These include guidance through producing and sharing reference guides, technical guidelines and criteria of success documents;

- Monitoring, Evaluation, Research, Evidence and Learning processes are an integral part of CBM programmatic work, in order to improve programme quality, accountability and demonstrate the impact of its work;
- Work is focused on good practice projects and programmes.
- Resources are strategically allocated and efficiently used through CBM's compliance standards to ensure that limited resources are optimally used and transparent accountability to all stakeholders.

## CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR QUALITY, SUSTAINABLE EDUCATIONAL SERVICES:

Despite the best efforts from CBM and partners, a number of challenges remain in achieving quality, accessible education for all learners who are deaf. This following case study is an example of how one partner is finding solutions to some of these challenges:

### **Case study: Krousar Thmey, Cambodia<sup>xv</sup>**

Brief background:

Krousar Thmey first school for the deaf was established in 1997 to provide formal education to learners who are deaf or hard of hearing in Cambodia. There are now 5 Special Schools located in 3 Provinces, with two being in the capital, Phnom Penh. Whilst the schools are managed by Krousar Thmey (an NGO) the curriculum followed throughout is that of the Ministry of Education Youth and Sport (MoEYS). In 2011 MoEYS took over the salaries of all Krousar Thmey's certified teacher. Incentives are paid by Krousar Thmey. This has led to improved retention of staff and demonstrates the Cambodia's MoEYS's commitment to learners with disabilities. Krousar Thmey supports inclusion as follows:

- 1. Integrated classes:** These are classes in mainstream government schools. Learners who are deaf are supported by specialist staff from Krousar Thmey for in-class and technical support, school uniforms and transport. Mainstream teachers receive incentives and professional development opportunities. This means that educators from Krousar Thmey support learners who are deaf in mainstream classes and additionally provided specialist support at the special school.
- 2. Inclusion:** After 4-5 years of language and communication enrichments at Krousar Thmey schools, approximately 40% of learners who are deaf attend mainstream schools as part of the inclusive education provision. As above teachers from Krousar Thmey provide in-class and communication support and additional technical support after school. Sign language classes to public school teachers are provided to ease communication difficulties.

To support the inclusion, other activities are provided including:

- annual meetings with school's principles with representation from the special education department of the MoEYS;
- sign language books to mainstream schools;
- study visits to the special schools and overseas
- programme evaluation by MoEYS.

#### Why inclusion classes?

The MoEYS supports inclusion but also understand the special needs of learners who are deaf in supporting their equity in education, and increasing interaction between deaf and hearing peers. The Ministry values specialist provision as part of the continuum towards inclusion in education and society.

#### **Challenges:**

- Limited funds for expanding services;
- Poor data on the incidence of children who are deaf in Cambodia;
- Limited opportunities for learners to access education nationally, particularly in rural areas;
- Poor understanding of language and communication needs and accessible materials / resources for schools;
- Limited vocational training and livelihood opportunities for school leavers who are deaf due to communication difficulties;
- Most parents don't support their children with school work or learn to communicate in sign language;
- Limited in-country capacity building opportunities for professionals including; specialist teacher preparation, sign language interpreters, speech and language therapists, audiologists etc.;
- Early detection and early intervention services are lacking with the consequence that children start school late, losing vital years of language and communication development;
- Once detected, limited access to audiological services and hearing aid provision;
- Ensuring inclusion for learners who are deaf in the wider community is challenging e.g. participation in the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) initiatives.

### **Opportunities:**

- The MoEYS
  - takes full responsibility for teachers' salaries,
  - endorses inclusive education programmes with Krousar Thmey providing specialist services and input,
  - provides inclusive education and specialist guidance for including learners who are deaf or hard of hearing teacher preparation at pre-service and in-service,
  - supports sign language publications for schools;
- Mainstream teachers support inclusion with in-class support and on-going in-service training
- Cambodia ratifying the CRPD in December 2012, has led to an increase in initiatives to support inclusion and equity in education, and assistance for persons who are deaf people find livelihood opportunities;

### **Successes in education:**

- Learners who are deaf succeeding in education are helping to:
  - change negative attitudes amongst the public about their achievements,
  - promote inclusion,
  - increase livelihood opportunities,
  - improve communication and interaction in society generally.
- Educators who are deaf or hard of hearing are employed in educational services;
- Increased opportunities for accessing education from early years to higher education are being encouraged through government supported inclusive education services.
- By the end of 2015, Cambodia will see their first deaf University graduates gain Bachelor Degrees.

### **CONCLUSION:**

In spite of these known challenges, there are examples of innovative practices (more highlighted in the conference presentation).

Successes are underpinned with the commitment and partnerships developed with CBM over many years of collaboration. Continuing to build, or strengthen, alliances with other organisations, locally, nationally and internationally, Government and NGOs, Professional Associations etc. provides the potential to providing equity and quality education for persons who are deaf, hard of hearing or deafblind.

As the CBM's motto states: **Together we can do more!**

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### REFERENCES:

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<sup>i</sup> CBM Global Programme Strategy 2015-18 (CBM internal)

<sup>ii</sup> United Nations (2006)

<sup>iii</sup> [www.ifhoh.org/](http://www.ifhoh.org/) for further details on the definition of persons who are hard of hearing

<sup>iv</sup> <http://www.un.org/disabilities>

<sup>v</sup> United Nations (2006)

<sup>vi</sup> WHO "Millions of people in the world have hearing loss that can be treated or prevented".

WHO Press 2013 ([www.who.int/pbd/deafness](http://www.who.int/pbd/deafness))

<sup>vii</sup> Disabling Hearing Loss: Adults (15 years and older): Hearing loss greater than 40 dB in the better hearing ear. Children (0-14 years of age): Hearing loss greater than 30 dB in the better hearing ear.

<sup>viii</sup> UNESCO (2014 a), p.53

<sup>ix</sup> World Health Organization and World Bank (2011), p. 207

<sup>x</sup> UNESCO (2014 b), p. 9

<sup>xi</sup> [www.wfdeaf.org/wp.../06/Deaf-People-and-Human-Rights-Report.pdf](http://www.wfdeaf.org/wp.../06/Deaf-People-and-Human-Rights-Report.pdf) (p10)

<sup>xii</sup> Health and functional rehabilitation – Deafblindness <http://www.asksource.info/topics/health-and-functional-rehabilitation/deafblindness>

<sup>xiii</sup> <http://informahealthcare.com/idt> ISSN 1748-3107 print/ISSN 1748-3115 online Santana, D.; Tesni, S.: *Successful engagement: CBM's holistic approach to the work in the area of ear care, deafness, hard of hearing and deafblindness*. Journal of Disability and Rehabilitation – Assistive Technology.

<sup>xiv</sup> CBM Strategic Framework. CBM Internal

<sup>xv</sup> [www.krousar-thmey.org/](http://www.krousar-thmey.org/)