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Program: Deaf Education, Kenya

Contact In-Country: c/o TumuTumu School for the Deaf

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RPCVLA Connection: Sarah Beutel

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Project Title: Kenyan Sign Language & Deaf Issues Workshop

Project Description: To invite parents of deaf children and members of organizations serving the Deaf community to Tumu Tumu School for the Deaf to spend five days learning Kenyan Sign Language and discussing issues in deaf education.

Project Need

About 300,000 Kenyans are deaf (UNICEF 2003). The greatest barrier serving and working with deaf Kenyans is communication. Deaf Kenyans communicate using Kenyan Sign Language (KSL). Most deaf children are born to hearing parents who do not know KSL. Therefore, these children usually do not learn language until they are enrolled in a school with other deaf children and adults who teach them this manual language. While their language skills develop, communication remains a barrier at home as most parents do not acquire the necessary signing skills to effectively communicate with their children. Deaf students tend to have difficulty writing coherent sentences, and several parents do not know English (English is the second language deaf students learn in school). Thus, writing does not provide for a form of communication. This communication barrier strains the parent/child relationship. Not only do parents have difficulty providing guidance in issues affecting their deaf child (school, sex, dating, etc.) but they are unable to ask simple questions, such as, "How are you?" or "What did you learn in school?"

The Government of Kenya and Ministry of Education do not provide programs for parents of deaf children to learn sign language. A Kenyan Deaf organization has published a sign language book, but it is too expensive to the average Kenyan to afford. Two PCVs recently produced a Kenyan Sign Language CD-Rom. The CD includes a KSL dictionary, the Kenyan Manual Alphabet, a map of Kenya with the signs of several towns and villages, and information about Kenyan Deaf culture. This CD being a recent development, most parents are not aware of this tool nor do they have access to a computer.

Project Implementation

PCV Darcy White and her counterpart would like to host a workshop focusing on teaching KSL, demonstrating the KSL CD-Rom (the school has a small computer lab), and discussing issues affecting the Deaf in Kenya.

Kenyan schools are on break during the month of August. We plan to hold a week-long workshop mid-August. We will provide a letter to the parents inviting them to the workshop at the beginning of term two (May), when parents arrive to drop off their students. We will also send a letter inviting members from various organizations serving the Deaf community to participate, as we feel they will benefit from learning about issues affecting the Deaf and learning about the KSL CD-Rom.

PCV Darcy White, another Deaf Ed PCV and two teachers at Tumu Tumu School for the Deaf will conduct the workshop. We are still working on the format. Each teacher/volunteer will be assigned 1-2 topics to present. These topics include, but are not limited to, teaching the manual alphabet and basic KSL phrases, a KSL CD demonstration, issues in hearing parents raising deaf children, issues in Deaf education, and information about Deaf organizations in Kenya.

Indicators of Success

Having a basic foundation of KSL would allow parents to implement simple conversations with their deaf children once they leave the workshop. Consistent communication between parent and child will help build their sign vocabulary over time, therefore broadening the issues parents can communicate with their children about and vice versa. Not only will this strengthen the relationship between parent and child, but parents will be able to fulfill their role in providing guidance to their child.

In the future, the KSL CD-Rom will be available to the general public at an affordable price. Exposure to this new tool will make participants aware of a new resource for them to learn KSL from. Participants from organizations can expose this tool to the greater community in ways that can bridge the communication gap between the Hearing and Deaf communities. For instance, a staff person from a hospital in Nairobi that has many deaf patients can use this tool to teach hospital staff basic signs. Assessment Centers can introduce parents of deaf children to this tool and teach them how to use it.

Discussing Deaf issues will make parents more aware of issues affecting deaf children and what they can do to assist their child. For example, most Kenyans, parents included, tend to view the Deaf as unintelligent and, in words once spoken by a teacher at a school for the Deaf say, less human. Such stereotypes affect not only how the Deaf are perceived but how the Deaf perceive themselves and the opportunities hearing people are willing to grant them, particularly in higher education and the workforce. Raising awareness about these stereotypes will teach parents to battle these misconceptions among their own families and communities. Members from organizations can raise awareness and fight stereotypes in their workplace.

Key Community Participants

Approximately 100 parents will be invited to participate in the workshop. Members from institutions serving the Deaf community will also be invited. Such institutions include Nairobi

hospitals, the Ministry of Education, the District Education Office, Assessment Centers, and the Kenya National Association for the Deaf.

PVC Darcy White, her counterpart Richard Irungu (Deputy Headteacher at TumuTumu), another Deaf Ed PCV, and teacher Hellen Njeri (TumuTumu) will conduct the workshop. Someone from Kenyan Sign Language Research Project Program at the University of Nairobi and the Kenyan National Deaf AIDS Education Program will also be invited to lead a discussion.

Project Maintenance

TumuTumu School for the Deaf will continue to serve as a resource in providing information about issues concerning the Deaf, and parents will be welcomed to visit their computer lab to use the KSL CD-Rom. Information about Kenyan Deaf organizations will also be distributed during the workshop so that parents may use them as a resource. Members of institutions attending the workshop will receive a KSL CD-Rom for their institution to learn sign language from and to learn about Kenyan Deaf culture.

Project Beneficiaries

Project beneficiaries include the 100+ participants, the students at my school, and the general community who become educated by those who attend the workshop.

Budget

ITEMS	UNITS (ksh)	QUANTITY	TOTAL
Food	300	100	30000
Transportation	300	100	30000
Workshop Materials	4000	1	4000
Workshop Labor	1500	4	6000
Utilities	2000	1	2000
Boarding	800	6	4800
Subtotal			76800
Tumu Tumu School Contribution	12800	1	
Peace Corps Partnership Contribution	37300	1	
Total			26700

Total amount requested from Yamanaka Fund:

KSH: 26,700

USD (78/100 exchange rate): 342.31

Project Timeline

PCV Darcy White and her host school will begin preparing for the workshop in May. Letters will be printed and given or sent to parents and organizations at the beginning of May. In June, Darcy and her counterpart will decide the specific topics to be discussed, and who will present them. They will also decide which Deaf presenters they want to invite to speak. In July, materials will be gathered or made (brochures about Deaf organizations, copies of the manual alphabet, notebooks and pens for parents to take notes, etc.). In August, the food will be purchased. During the workshop, participants will present their travel receipts and be reimbursed these expenses. In the few weeks following the workshop a report will be written up and sent to RPCVLA.

Best Method of Transferring Money

PayPal is the easiest way for me to access the money. If this application is accepted, Sarah Beutel has my paypal information. If RPCVLA would prefer to go through Peace Corps, I will pass on information on how to do that.