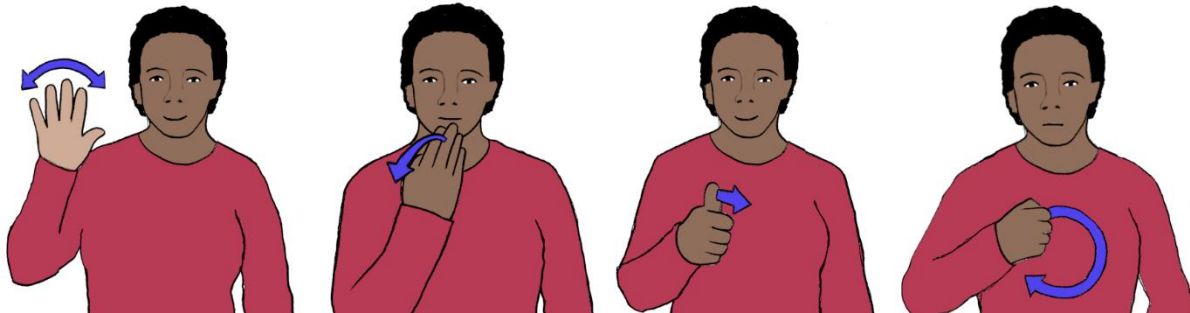


4c. Hearing impairment



Girls with severe or profound hearing loss

Children with severe or profound hearing loss will probably require more specialist help, although the strategies listed in Module 2a will also help them, especially those relating to sign language, lip reading gestures, pictures and body language.



What can you do to help girls with severe hearing loss?

- Seek the support of the parents/guardian since they have first-hand information about the girl. They may help you with information on how to initially communicate with her.
- Discuss with the girl the most appropriate position for her in classroom, so she is able to clearly see your facial expressions, gestures and lip movements.
- A circular seating arrangement may be helpful when learners are in discussion, so they are able to see all participants and contribute meaningfully.
- Talk to your colleagues about any girls with very little hearing. If their hearing impairment has not been formally diagnosed, they will need to be referred to a **health worker or educational assessment services**.
- You might also discuss whether it might be possible for you to learn sign language (see below).
- Talk to other Community Educators and school teachers who have experience of teaching girls with hearing impairment. They will be able to share with you the strategies that they have found to work well.

Girls who use hearing aids

Young people with hearing impairments may use hearing aids.

It is important to remember that hearing aids are not magical solutions to hearing impairment. Girls needs still need to be addressed and all the strategies listed above will help them. However, there are some additional points that are worth bearing in mind.

Be aware of 'distance' in your teaching. As a rule of thumb, hearing aid technologies work best for accessing speech at a distance of between one to three metres. You can discuss what works best with individual girl and in the particular circumstances and activities of the Hub.

Make sure the equipment is working, and plan 'checking time' into your day. It is important to know if the girl's aid is working before you begin your teaching. If possible, have a couple of spare batteries in the Hub as back up. Check the battery and that the aid is free from dirt. If the technology is broken, then contact the appropriate supplier or support agency. Encourage the girls to tell you if there are any problems with their hearing aids.

When talking to a girl who uses a hearing aid, speak at a normal pace and clearly. It can be tempting to shout or exaggerate your mouth movements, but this often makes it harder for them to understand you.

It is common for teenagers not to wear their hearing aids. Some girls may not like to be seen wearing them because it stigmatises them or they have been bullied about it. So, if you see a girl who is not wearing her hearing aid, be sensitive in how you discuss this with them. You will need to help them become confident in wearing their hearing aid[s] in the Hub to get the most benefit from them. This goes hand in hand with making the Hub a welcoming and safe place for all girls.

Sign language

Some of your students may use sign language to communicate.

Zimbabwean Sign Language (ZSL) is a language whose vocabulary and grammar is independent of any of the languages spoken in Zimbabwe, and there are regional variations. If you are not a signer yourself, it is very helpful to find someone in the community who is able offer support. Discuss this option with your school head and/or Hub Development Committee.

Having a student who signs in your class does not mean that you need to learn sign language. However, it is helpful to learn two things:

- a couple of simple greetings such as 'good morning' 'how are you' or 'my name is...'
- if one of your girls uses fingerspelling, then this can be very helpful in supporting your communication.

Your use of a few signs in this way is important because it also signals to all the girls that you are accepting of, and happy with, signing. This is important because signing can be stigmatising and a source of harassment for girls.

For any additional needs or modifications identified, please contact your School Head and/or Hub Development Committee.



References

Adapted from: Viv East and Linda Evans (2006 edition) *At a Glance – A practical guide to Children's Special Needs*, London: Continuum and

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Acknowledgements

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<http://www.open.ac.uk/about/international-development/projects-and-programmes/gate-girls-access-education>

<https://www.open.edu/openlearncreate/course/view.php?id=2579>

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