# Improving the welfare of the deaf by meeting their critical needs: A case of the city of Bulawayo in Zimbabwe

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*Abstract:* **It is a general trend in cities that the deaf people roam the streets in cities. While governments, charity organizations and churches have sought to provide them with shelter, food handouts and education in special schools they still remain without permanent shelter and work. They also suffer marginalization and exclusion from the mainstream hearing community. Current literature and studies only confirm the status of these, but they have not provided a solution. It is the objective of this study to investigate the critical needs of the deaf people in the city of Bulawayo so that they are appropriately capacitated to manage their lives. Data was collected using structured questionnaires and in-depth face-to-face interviews. The participants in the study revealed that the community and society at large do not understand the deaf culture because there is no interactive language. They highlighted that it is the inability of the mainstream hearing society to interact with deaf people which results in their social exclusion. The analysis of the questionnaires and interviews show how significant it is for the deaf people to be integrated to the hearing world by exposing hearing people to SL and involving them in community projects for the deaf.**

*Keywords:* **participatory needs assessment, deaf, communication barriers, connection, capacity building and empowerment, Sign Language (SL), capacitate, deaf, Hearing impairment.**

## I. INTRODUCTION

Despite concerted effort by churches, the government and welfare organisations to improve the livelihood of the deaf people in Zimbabwe particularly in Bulawayo they remain one of the most needy people groups. Marginalization, communication barrier, poor academic performance and compromised livelihood are global challenges to the deaf community. Brueggemann, (2004); Wauters, van Bon, & Tellings, (2006) among many other writers seem to testify that universally most deaf high school leavers barely manage to achieve a fourth-grade reading level. Zimbabwe also faces these global challenges among its deaf people. The early missionaries dealt with the challenges of the deaf by establishing special schools to which these children would stay there while studying. These schools are Henry Murray in Masvingo and Emerald Hill in Harare was the first school of the deaf that were established in 1947. Later the Jairos Jiri association in 1968 established Naran. Munhuweyi, P. and Barchan, L. (1998) observed that in Zimbabwe, the teaching deaf children was considered more of a moral and religious obligation than a right. The education of such children was done without national coordination and direction. These schools and many others that have been set up are still contributing much to educating the deaf, yet they seem to have perpetuated exclusivism of the deaf by removing them from community. Barchan, L. (1998) argues that whatever service was provided by missionaries was in exchange for adopting Christianity. Later the Zimbabwean government encourages inclusive learning in which the hearing-impaired children learn together with the hearing. Despite the move towards inclusivism some parents still send their children to special schools because they are better equipped than the mainstream schools. Furthermore, the constitution of Zimbabwe seems favorable to the people with disabilities including the deaf. According to the Zimbabwean constitution,(2013) the state must ensure that People With Disabilities and the deaf included are self-reliant, are not exploited and provided facilities for education. It was not until 2013 that SL was officially acknowledged as a natural language for the deaf people. In Zimbabwe the Ministry of Education Sports and Culture in collaboration with the Zimbabwe National Association of the Deaf (ZIMNAD) developed a two-volume SL Dictionary. However in spite of these developments the domestication of Sign Language in Zimbabwe appears to be slow, the deaf are still marginalised and their livelihood is still compromised.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

In this paper deafness and hearing impairment are used synonymously. The World Health Organization (WHO)(2020) defines hearing impairment as the loss of hearing in one or both ears. This can mean a complete or partial loss of the ability to hear from one or both ears. The impairment can be mild, moderate, severe or profound. They often use SL for communication.

### The Need to Communicate

The need to communicate with other people seems to be the greatest of all needs of deaf people. The absence of hearing impacts negatively on their ability to communicate. The deaf people use varied means of communication namely SL, written, Signed English or a combination of all these. It has been noted that parents are the first language teachers to their children and that is the case even with the deaf people. Lederberg and Everhart (1998) examined the interaction of 40 children and their mothers and they found that hearing mothers of Deaf children did not communicate often or

effectively with their deaf children. On the other hand, Goldin-Meadow and Mayberry (2001) argue that children of deaf parents are more likely to have their hearing losses identified early in life and thus are more likely to be placed earlier into appropriate educational environments. Deaf parents are often able to provide social and emotional support within the family and to teach their deaf children SL from babyhood. On the contrary deaf children born to hearing adults have a limited range of communication  and are not likely to get the needed emotional support and language acquisition needs because they are born within a different culture from that of their parents.

It has been observed by many scholars that the literacy abilities of deaf children born to deaf parents are superior to their hearing peers. If the deaf children born to deaf parents do not get early intervention their cognitive development may be affected. Barbara Gerner de Garcia (2003) sees language acquisition and literary development as closely connected processes, especially in the education of deaf students. Therefore, learning to read is a language process, and children do not learn to read if they do not have a language in place.

The world is made up of both the hearing and the deaf people. Megan A. Jones argues that the deaf must learn to function as a member of the family and the community. Exposing the deaf child to the deaf culture alone would be unfair because later in life they have to survive in the wide community which is made up of the hearing and the deaf people. Lane and Padden & Humphries observe that deaf people have a feeling of separation from hearing community despite exposure to both cultures hence they cannot be fully integrated into the mainstream (Lane, 1992; Padden & Humphries, 1988; Wilcox, 1989).  In order to experience full integration into the mainstream community in Zimbabwe the child has to learn both SL which is their native language and English spoken or written. This process is known as bilingualism. Marschark, M. and Spencer,P.E. (2012) assert that bilingual education means that the child's natural SL is modelled and expected to be the child's first language and primary means of communication; it also serves as the classroom language and provides a bridge to learning literacy in the hearing community's spoken language.

Mweri seems to concur when he says:

> The deaf learners like any other learners would definitely learn faster and much easier since they would be using their mother tongue (MT) as a building block for learning. ..., the deaf can only learn spoken languages, for example, English and or Kiswahili for purposes of being able to read (silently) and write not to speak them. There is no doubt that the use of MT (KSL) has benefits to the user.

Therefore deaf people must be exposed to both the hearing and the deaf cultures if they are to integrated into and function in the mainstream hearing community.

*Responsive Homes*

The deaf children need homes that will respond to their need to be taught SL and other components of deaf culture from babyhood. Unfortunately Mweri, G. J. (2016) has observed that generally research has shown that 90% of deaf children are born and bred in an environment that does not expose them to SL. Many deaf adults seem to have been raised by hearing parents. These usually do not adequately understand the deaf world and do not have a native proficiency in SL. The parents comprise the first adult world to which the child is exposed. Mweri,G. J. (2016) further assets the rest 10% of the deaf children have the privilege of having deaf parents and are therefore able to acquire SL naturally from their deaf parents at home. This suggest that for the 10% the ability to articulate the home language enables them to bond with siblings at home, integrate with community and to perform well at school. While the 10% are so advantaged however, the 90% who are the majority grow up in a predominantly hearing and speech culture, hence disadvantaging them. Concerning deaf children who grow up not having learnt their mother tongue at times usually because parents are hearing, Mutswanga, P and Sithole, C. (2014) have remarked:

> ...they have language gaps which culminate into educational gaps...Although an interpreter may be assigned for people who are deaf, it still leaves language gaps for people who are deaf because they lack enough background or basic information about things and issues from babyhood.

It must be noted that the deaf child learns SL in a real life setting as they interact with their parents or some family member. If a child is found to have been born deaf, then the communication needs to continue in every way the parent can think of. Hearing parent who his cover that their child is deaf may at first be shocked and unprepared for the responsibility of raising the child. early intervention is called for under such circumstances in order to avoid gas in child development. Mastering a language is a practical exercise that is interwoven with the life of the child. Humphries,T. (2019) and others advise that

> the parent can play, cook, do gardening, laundering, sports and all activities involved in enjoying life together...Parents should actively engage their deaf children in everyday life, even if it requires some additional effort or adjustment, because this investment will pay off for the deaf adults they become and for their families in the long run."

What the child becomes in their future is closely linked with how parents responded to child's hearing lose. Parents may not be so good in sign language yet their contribution in developing linguistic abilities of the deaf child will contribute to the healthy development of the child. After the parents have laid the foundation then the school takes over to build on the foundation laid by parents in the home. However, a study was conducted by Sibanda P. (2015) which concluded that

teachers(trained) of the deaf in the ten schools in Bulawayo were not proficient in SL. One wonders how the teachers would teach the deaf if they are not proficient in SL. If these were trained teachers they must have been taught SL but if one lacks continual exposure to deaf people these signs would naturally be quickly forgotten.. Some deaf children have been unfortunate to be raise in a home, and learn at a school where both parents and teachers are not natural signers. The home and school are key to the language development and academic achievement of the child.

### Social Acceptance

The deaf people seem to be the most segregated and marginalized among people living with disabilities probably because theirs is an invisible disability. This has rightly been noted by Ademokoyain Nigeria when observing one deaf school child. He commented, "Those who suffer from deafness do not readily get the sympathy and support from able bodied persons as those with blindness."

Kiyaga, B. K. and Moores, D. F. (2019) have commented that "beliefs about deafness particularly in African societies range from acceptance and protection to rejection, including considerations of infanticide." Some beliefs have the unfortunate effect of increasing the likelihood of isolation and marginalization of people who are deaf. In some societies the deaf are seen as burdens, dependent on their families and lacking the ability to be independent. They are also seen as less that human. It appears that a majority of African societies adopted the Charity Model of disability which insists that nothing can be done to empower these people other than simply providing for them. Sometimes they adopt tolerance which is paternalistic as the deaf are perceived as incapable of making independent decisions or to manage their own lives. Chimedza, R. and Peters, S. (1999)further say the children with disabilities are considered as unnaturally conceived, bewitched and neither fully human nor part of community. As a result of the breakdown of the extended family system there is limited family support hence the disabled are locked-up in houses or placed in institutions.

### Employment/ Work

Like all other human beings, the deaf need employment so as to lead decent lives. Literature is replete with research studies recording how most deaf people loom the streets of cities doing street vending as a means of earning a living. This phenomenon was note by Asikhia (2010) in India among deaf students. He wrote:

> Due to the shortage of financial resources, deaf individuals are forced out of school and made to engage in hawking, selling packaged drinking water and the like in order to save money for their school expenses making them vulnerable for exploitation. Most often they cannot afford instructional material and are always at the mercy of examiners during examination time

He has said that the deaf resort to hawking for a living. Hlatywayo et al,(2014)also undertook a study to find out why the deaf loom the streets of Harare. They found that employers are reluctant to employing deaf persons for fear of losing clients and even exposing them to dangers of factory accidents. This may explain why most of the deaf people are in informal employment.

Maposa (2015) also confirms the presence of the deaf in the streets of Bulawayo. Moreover he adds that some disabled vendors have speech, visual and hearing impairments and as such can hardly communicate with customers. This has rendered them losing out on business since they cannot compete with their hearing counterpart vendors in marketing their commodities or even convincing customers to buy. It was also noted that the hearing would prefer buying from hearing vendors than from the deaf.

### III. METHODOLOGY

The researcher used the Participatory Needs Assessment (PNA) design. According to Codrina Şandru (2014) it is a research design whereby the community members are asked how they see the most important needs or problems of their community. The PNA is a mixed method approach: questionnaire-based inquiries and in-depth interviews were used. The population of the study included 500 deaf people. The sample size was 106 which is above the recommended 10% sample size. The researcher used the snowball sampling because of unfamiliarity with the deaf people in Bulawayo. Johnson, (2014) says "snowball sampling is used to locate hidden populations. This method relies on referrals from initially sampled respondents to other persons believed to have the characteristic of interest. The 100 were sampled using the slow ball sampling and 80 responded to the questionnaire."There were also 5 participants in in-depth-interviews. The 2 of them are deaf and the 3 are teachers who have long been in deaf education. Of the 2 deaf participants, one is male and he gives responses from a male perspective and the other is female and gives her responses from a female perspective. Since the research is concerned with the deaf people the researcher selected the deaf in order to acquire first-hand information. The questionnaires were distributed and collected back within a period of 9 days.

### Objective of the Study

This study seeks to:

- Identify the unique needs of the deaf people in the city of Bulawayo.

- Suggest appropriate ministry programs for the deaf.

### Data Presentation

Data that is being presented is both from the questionnaires and in-depth interviews.

Table 1: The Demographics of the Sample Population

| Variable | Group | | Number | Percentage(%) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Sex | Male | | 40 | 50 |
| | Female | | 40 | 50 |
| | Total | | 80 | 100 |
| Age | 18-26 years | | 6 | 7 |
| | 27-33 years | | 21 | 26 |
| | 34-40 years | | 27 | 34 |
| | Above 40 years | | 26 | 33 |
| | Total | | 80 | 100 |
| Employment Status | Formal | Male | 9 | 11 |
| | | Female | 25 | 31 |
| | Informal | Male | 31 | 39 |
| | | Female | 15 | 19 |
| | Total | | 80 | 100 |
| Educational Qualification | Primary | | 31 | 39 |
| | 'O' Level | | 34 | 43 |
| | Tertiary | | 5 | 18 |
| | Total | | 80 | 100 |

The Table 1 above shows data of the demographics of the deaf people sampled from their population in the city of Bulawayo. The ages 18 to 40 comprise the majority and have a cumulative percentage of 67%. The participants that are above 40 years are 33%.

Table 2: Unique Needs of the Deaf People

On the above questions the responses that we collected can be summarized as below:

| | Frequency | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| 1.Communication | 35 | 45 |
| 2.Employment/Work | 26 | 32 |
| 3.Social Acceptance/Inclusivity | 10 | 12 |
| 4.Responsive Homes | 9 | 11 |
| | 80 | 100 |

*Communication Needs*

The above findings show that the most expressed need was communication, showing that this is the greatest need of the deaf. This is fundamental as the ability to communicate helps an individual to navigate their way into all the processes of life. The findings of this study is supported by literature showing that it is a human need cutting across locations and nationalities. It was interesting to note that there was no bias on this need as it was seen to be a generic need over riding all the demographic characteristics. Furthermore, the findings in this study confirmed previous studies that insist that when the parents lay the foundation at home through teaching SL it leads to good academic achievement and later, meaningful life in the community.

*The Need for Employment / Work*

The second popular need of the deaf is employment which would either be formal or informal. The deaf people indicated that informal employment to them is far better than being formally employed as this will give them independence to work on their own and avoid the challenges of communication that can be found in work areas. The need to be informally employed was more frequent on the males while the females were comfortable being formally employed. The very fact that a majority of deaf people have vocational skill makes them viable for self-employment. Those who choose to be informally employed need to be empowerment through skills so that they are able to be self -reliant and be independent. Once this need is fulfilled it will give them self-actualization as elaborated by Maslow in his hierarchy needs model. The deaf people indicated that empowerment to them is far better than being employed as this will give them independence to work on their own and avoid the challenges of communication that can be found in work areas.

*Social Acceptance*

According to the study social acceptance ranked third in the list of the needs of deaf people. The deaf strongly believe that they are marginalized because they are not able to articulate their needs. These cannot receive information or communicate what they need and as a result the hearing will never know how to respond to their needs. The deaf people are usually excluded from programs in the society since they are seen as humans who cannot do anything other than being objects of charity. The findings in this study confirm previous literature which also states that social acceptance is a need of the deaf thought it goes beyond communication as a cause to African tribal beliefs that they are incomplete beings.

*The Need for a Responsive Home*

The fourth need of the deaf people which is too often overlooked is a responsive home. Having noted that the communication need of the deaf is the most urgent and that would call for early intervention so that early in life the child is taught language in the home. If the child is not well grounded with linguistic skills by the time they start formal education they are without the age-appropriate vocabulary hence their academic performance will be retarded. It was noted with concern that 94% of the deaf respondents to the questionnaire in Bulawayo were born to hearing parent. It usually takes time for them to respond to the deafness of their child since they must first come into terms with this unexpected tragedy. The deaf world into which their child is born is alien to them. they have to make may adjustments in their lives including having the whole family learning SL with the deaf child so that they interact with them. Infact, it is not the case with a deaf child who is born into deaf parents. The findings of this research confirm previous research which insists that the few deaf children born to deaf parents have better academic achievement than those who are raised by hearing parents as observed by Mweri(2016)

The foregoing paragraphs seem to list some of the universal needs of deaf people. The need for communication though negatively impacting on all deaf children it is worse off to deaf children born to hearing parent. All the cited writers seem to think that the other needs of the deaf people namely acceptance, employment and responsive homes especially to deaf children result from communication barriers.

## IV. RESULTS OF INTERVIEW

On the question, what do you consider to be the greatest needs of the deaf people? The following table was used to capture their responses and derive the themes emanating from these responses.

| Participant No. | Responses of the participants (Translated into English Language) | Emerging Themes |
|---|---|---|
| P1 | They come to school with a limited vocabulary which makes it difficult for them to express themselves and to understand some concepts. Use SL as medium of instruction. Community has not developed leaders among the deaf. They are often excluded from most of the programs that are done. I believe that these people must be included in community programs from planning phase up to implementation. Instead, they are usually invited into programs that have already been planned. These people have the slogan "nothing for us without us." They do not feel part of any programs in which they are not included. Even the church has not adequately engaged the deaf people in its programs. | 1. Communication 2. Leadership development among the Deaf 3. Inclusion in Community & Church Programs |
| P2 | Many in my church seem to love me as evidenced by their cheerful greetings before and after services. But these will not go further than greetings because of linguistic limitation. They can only greet in SL and cannot go beyond that." Much of what is done in church services is meaningless to us except for the interpreted service yet some of the sermons are so long that one loses track of what is being said. I like church and I have my friends there. I do not enjoy the worship style of the hearing. Me as a deaf person l like singing in SL. Empowerment begins with promotion of SL, the education of the deaf people on their rights as deaf people in the country, running programs that foster full inclusion of the deaf people in community life and promotion of skills so that they are self- reliant. When the deaf people are granted financial donations to do a project, they must be supervised by someone who is experienced in running projects if the business is to succeed. Tell them they will have to pay back the money once their project stabilizes. Such a stance challenges the deaf people to be responsible as they handle business. | 1. Communication 2. Adaptation of Church Services to the Needs of the deaf People. • Interpretation • Length of Sermons • Worship Style 3. Empowerment SL Promotion Human Rights Education Inclusion Programs Skills Promotion 4. Supervision of Self- Help Project |
| P3 | As a result of such limitation they tend to be good in practical subject in which they can acquire skills through the visual mode. During the time when they are doing their vocational programs most of them need toiletries and pocket money to cover minor expenses. Once they complete their vocational studies, they should be provided with tools to start on their project in the community." | 1. Skills Promotion 2. Empowerment to Transition from School to the World of Work |
| P4 | I took audiological tests which proved that he was deaf...At first l was in denial. I could not accept it but later I healed. As a family we took the pain of learning SL together with the child so as to facilitate bonding with the child as we interact with him. I observe that my deaf child is uncomfortable using a hearing aid especially when among his hearing peers. Even the adult world of the hearing is usually paternalistic to the deaf child. Such an attitude makes him feel out of place as they struggle to appear normal like any hearing child. Once the hearing people see the hearing aid in his ear, they identify him with deafness. He them feels awkward and embarrassed. | 1. Responsive Homes 2. Communication 3. Social Acceptance |
| P5 | I do not feel part of the church where I fellowship. They marginalize me. Only one service is interpreted but the rest are not. If may daughter is there, she helps by interpreting for me. If she is not there, I sit helplessly watching people doing programs which I do not understand. I have only 2 friends in church and they are close to me because they can use SL. Outside the church my only friends are those who can sign. The hearing people do not want to learn SL. During special days when we invite our deaf friends to church our hearing fellow Christian do not mingle with us. They keep away from us.Even during mealtimes, we eat alone as deaf people. | 1. Social Acceptance 2. Communication |

From the table the following summary of the needs was drawn out showing the most emphasised top five needs.

1. Communication
2. Empowerment /skills development
3. Social Acceptance/
4. Responsive Homes (Inclusion)
5. Employment/Work

*Communication Need*

All the five participants in the interviews point to communication barrier as the number one and most urgent need of the deaf in Bulawayo. These needs may appear to be distinct yet they are interrelated. It came up clearly that language development among the deaf people is slow. Their heart language is SL. It has been noted that the deaf children who are born to deaf parent get to school with a better vocabulary than the deaf children who are born to hearing parents. However, generally the deaf children come to school

with a limited vocabulary which makes if difficult for them to express themselves and to understand abstract concepts. The deaf people who were interviewed noted with frustration that in church and community at large when they meet with the hearing some express their love to them through cheerful and friendly greetings but they can hardly go beyond that in their communication because of linguistic limitation. It has also been noted in the study that deaf vendors can hardly communicate with customers. This has rendered them losing out on business whereas their hearing counter part are able to market their commodities, hence convince their customers to buy. The majority of hearing people seem to know only the basics in SL language such as signs related to greetings, names of colours and animals. It was noted in this study that their SL is not functional because they do not have enough exposure to deaf people so that their signs are reinforced through interaction with the deaf people. The participants indicated that their only few friends among the hearing people are those who can use SL. This confirms that there is a correlation between proficiency in SL and one's ability to build relations with the deaf people. It was found that the deaf would love to see the hearing people use SL. One participant in the interview said, "When the deaf people see you trying to sign they will do everything to facilitate communication including writing for you."

*Economic Empowerment/ Employment /Work*

The second need in the list seems to be economic empowerment. This kind of empowerment would eventually lead to employment which could be either formal or informal. The participants in the interview never mentioned the term "economic empowerment" yet the language they articulate seems to point to that as the need for deaf people. Economic empowerment involves the disadvantaged deaf people with education, training and skills that they need to find a job, earn an income and become self-supporting.

While they may have all the cognitive competencies of their hearing counterparts their academic achievement is retarded by communication limitations. It has been noted that the deaf tend to be good in practical subject in which they can acquire skills through the visual mode. The study revealed the need for financial support to deaf students as they do their vocational studies. They need to be helped to transcend from vocational education to the world of work. At this transitory period they need capital in the form of money and tools for starting their projects. It was also noted with concern that a majority of projects for the deaf are not sustainable. Among many reasons for the collapse of their projects these ones came up:

1. Community leaders have not developed leaders among the deaf people. In order to run their project leadership qualities are the prerequisites.

2. The donations for funding the projects have often been misappropriated resulting in collapse of the projects.

In response to the question on what can be done to run sustainable projects for the deaf, showed that majority of the deaf seem to lack the experience of running projects. It has been noted that community leaders have always excluded them from community project. The participants advised that the deaf people must not only be invited in programmes that are already going on but also in the planning phases. Furthermore, in order to ensure that the deaf take serious responsibility for the success of the project the it was noted in the study that donation must not be free it must be loaned to them. The conditions for payment should be clearly laid out for them.

Empowerment through skills will enable the deaf to be self - reliant and independent. Once this need is fulfilled it will give them self-actualization as elaborated by Maslow in his hierarchy needs model. The deaf people indicated that empowerment to them is far better than being employed as this will give them independence to work on their own and avoid the challenges of communication that can be found in work areas. The need to be empowered was more frequent on the males while the females were comfortable being employed.

On the question of what can be done to improve their livelihoods, the responses indicated that the deaf people should be allowed to shape and live their lives. They want to be empowered to be able to make decisions about their daily experiences. Places and spaces that are responsive to their needs should be established if they are to be fully incorporated into the communities they live in.

*Social-Acceptance and Inclusion*

The second popular need of the deaf is social acceptance and inclusion Social acceptance means tolerating the differences and diversity in the deaf people. The deaf people seem to be among the most excluded and marginalized people in the city of Bulawayo. They yearn for social acceptance despite their deaf culture which is widely different from the hearing culture. The hearing people seem to have not yet understood and accepted the deaf people and their culture. In the study the deaf participants pointed out that they feel unaccepted by the large hearing community. When asked what is it that makes them think the hearing people do not accept them several responses came up. Participants P5 complained, "I do not feel part of the church where I fellowship. They marginalize me... If my daughter who usually interprets for me in church is not there, I sit helplessly watching people doing programs which I do not understand." The deaf people are not treated like normal human beings by the hearing community. It was noted that sometimes they are offended when a deaf person enters their house without knocking. The deaf tries to communicate with them through SL they appear confused and embarrassed and when the deaf person notices that they even try to write the message for them, but they laugh at the written English that sounds broken. Participants further raised that the hearing do not normally mingle with them both in the community and

when they are in church. They seem to perceive the hearing people as paternalistic towards them and seeing them as objects of charity. The deaf expressed that their friends among the hearing are only those who can use SL and understand deaf culture. They added that they are not comfortable in the midst of the hearing people who are not familiar with their culture.

On the question of what can be done to promote social acceptance and inclusion of the deaf people it was suggested by one of the deaf that there should be promotion of SL. It has been noted that SL is best learnt when one is in the midst of deaf people. The signs learnt are reinforced as they interact with the deaf people. The findings of this research confirm previous research findings which appear also to confirm that a knowledge of SL by the hearing people will help them accept the deaf people hence integrate the hearing and the deaf cultures. . It has even been demonstrated that people identify more with people who speak the same language than with people who share the same familial background (Giles, Bourhis, and Taylor, 1977). .Mutswanga, P. and Mapuranga, B. (2014) seem to concur with this view as they argue that as hearing people learn SL the negative attitudes towards it and even towards deaf people themselves is dispelled.

The parents create the first world to which the child is exposed. They must create an environment that responds positively to the deafness of the child. The must ensure that the whole family takes the responsibility to learn SL because every family member should interact with the deaf child to facilitate bonding. If the child is taught SL at home, by the time they start formal education they will be having an age-appropriate vocabulary which enhances academic achievement.

The results show that communication appears to be the most urgent need of deaf people and many other challenges they face appear to result from it. While their IQ is as good as that of hearing people they are gifted differently. They are good in practical subjects. After discovering their child is deaf, they should create an environment in the home that responds to deafness so that the child becomes an adult who will be able to maneuver in a word which is made up of both the hearing and the deaf. The deaf people perceive the world in a different way from the hearing people. They are not satisfied with cheerful greetings and reception as they meet the hearing people, they yearn for intimate relations founded on quality time and communion with the hearing in SL. The deaf people suffer marginalization and exclusion from most of the community programs. A majority of them are not in leadership in the community and in church. Such a scenario does not the development of leadership qualities in them. It was also noted that the deaf people do have vocational skills and their compromised livelihood seem to result from the fact that they are possibly not helped to transition from school life to the world of work.

## IV. FINDINGS AND THE DISCUSSION

### The Need for Communication and Language

The study revealed that the communication need ranked first both among the questionnaire and the interview participants. Communication limitation among the deaf people in Bulawayo has led to their marginalization and failure to be absorbed in the community. These findings would suggest that in Zimbabwe these deaf people are exposed to education though its quality and accessibility still has to be improved. This kind of education they are exposed to retards their academic achievement. The results of this study seems to confirm the previous research by Padden and Ramsey (1993) which asserts that students who are deaf experience poor reading and writing performance in schools. Sibanda, P. (2015)in his study revealed that teachers of the deaf in Bulawayo schools lacked the required levels of SL proficiency. Furthermore, these deaf people are disadvantaged both in schools where they are taught by teachers who are not adequately proficient in SL and homes where a majority of them are raised by hearing parents. Leigh (2009) assets that hearing parents are not likely to readily help their children embrace deaf culture because their preference is the hearing culture.

Efforts should be made to promote writing and reading skills to the deaf while the hearing are taught SL. Community leadership should ensure that every program has a SL interpreter. There should be counselling and training of parents who happen to have a deaf child. Early intervention should be encouraged should deafness be confirmed.

### The Need of a Responsive Home

Humphries (2019) argues that parents should actively engage their deaf children in everyday life, even if it requires some additional effort or adjustment, because this investment will pay off for the deaf adults they become and for their families in the long run." Therefore, the role of the parent is vital in undertaking early intervention.

Barbara Gerner de Garcia (2003) explains:

> Those deaf children who have had early access to sign language are at an advantage, but they are the minority. Their parents, deaf or hearing, have signed to them from infancy, and they have had access to language in their home environment. Their language experiences, prior to school, has allowed the development of age appropriate cognitive and linguistic skills.

### Social Acceptance

All participants in the interviews seem to agree that the mainstream hearing community is not loving and accepting to the deaf people. It may be that when the deaf people were requested to complete questionnaires their hopes for receiving donations were raised. It could be that they chose to give a neutral response to avoid offending potential donor.

It was found that communication limitations lead to marginalization and exclusion of the deaf people by the hearing. Communication proves to be a barrier between the deaf and the hearing people making it difficult for the deaf to function within the mainstream hearing community. All the participants in the interview seem to concur that the deaf people long for intimacy and close relations with the hearing. Warm receptions and cheerful greetings in community meetings like in church are not satisfying to them. This finding is supported by the study by LaBelle et al,(2013 ) which seems to call for increased contact between deaf and hearing communities in order to improve communication between the groups. The deaf participants in the interview all admitted that their only friends among the hearing are those who can communicate in SL and also spend time with them. Such relations with the deaf people confirm that there is correlation between intimacy with the deaf people and one's proficiency in SL.  Jones (2002) seems to support this assertion when she contends that people tend to identify more with people who speak the same language with them those who share the same familial background.

*The Need for Employment / Work*

It was also found that communication barriers lead to a compromised livelihood among the deaf people since they cannot transact business with the hearing. In his study Maposa (2015) also confirms the presence of the deaf in the streets of Bulawayo when he says that some disabled vendors have speech, visual and hearing impairments and as such can hardly communicate with customers. This has rendered them losing out on business. They cannot compete with their counterpart vendors in marketing their commodities or even convincing customers to buy. It was also noted that the hearing would prefer buying from hearing vendors than from the deaf.

In a bid to find out what the deaf people are doing for a livelihood in Bulawayo the results showed that 55% are informally employed, 31% are formally employed,9% are doing piece-jobs,  and 5% are begging. The results of their study to discover the cause of this show that the prospective employers are sceptical of employing deaf person for fear that they will underperform resulting in business decline. This is closely linked to stigmas attached to the deaf people in hearing communities. As already noted Chimedza, R. and Peters, S (1999)further say the children with disabilities are considered as unnaturally conceived, bewitched and neither fully human nor part of community. However, this would also explain why there are more deaf people who are in informal employment than formal employment. It was also found in this study that only one out of the eighty (80) deaf respondents to the questionnaire passed "O" Level with a full certificate. Even the vocational courses that they did are of lower standard than that the ones done at tertiary institutions. Economic empowerment is the most viable employment for them. The other factor that seems to have forced the deaf people into street vending is the noted decline of industry in Bulawayo and the rest of Zimbabwe. This has resulted in the rise of the informal sector as provider of employment for many people including the deaf.

The formally employed are not in prestigious jobs as evidence by some who indicated that they do what they call "piece-jobs" which refers to something like moving around doing washing, filling potholes of dilapidated roads, helping those in farming as they do seasonal weeding, cultivation, harvesting and loading and unloading trucks in supermarkets. The earnings from these piece jobs are meagre. In addition, this kind of employment is irregular, and this results in financial instability. The findings in this research seem to concur with what WHO (2018) asserts when it states that

> *Even where persons with disabilities are employed, they may disproportionately face precarious situations in comparison to the general population. In most countries, for example, persons with disabilities are more likely to be employed in the informal sector and to be self-employed.*

Employers deliberately avoid employing the deaf permanently to avoid taking the responsibility of paying them decently and giving them their benefits. Some of the employers take advantage of the deaf people's ignorance about their legal rights as citizens of Zimbabwe. Once the deaf person is done with the seasonal job, they simply forget about them. In their struggle to maneuver in an environment characterized by segregation deaf people will do any job as a means of survival. Their livelihood is compromised because they are in "lower grades of employment."

The findings indicate that the deaf in the street of Bulawayo have vocational skills but they seem not to have been assisted to find their way to the world of work. After completion of their education they need capital in terms of tools. They also need skills of running projectsif they are not formally employed. Danek,M. and McCrone W.P.(1990) as quoted in Hlatywayo and Ncube (2014) state that the problem of the deaf people has to do with their transition from school to the world of work. Most of them learn in special school where the environment is supportive with many people who are able to communicate with them and the trained personnel who can handle them. After completing their education in the world of work within community there are few who can communicate with them and understand their culture. One of the participants in the interview who is a Carpentry instructor to the deaf students pointed out that when they complete vocational courses they need capital to start business including tools and if they fail to get these they resort to street vending as the only available alternative.

## V. CONCLUSION

The study has found that the unique needs of the deaf are communication; responsive homes, social acceptance and compromised livelihood. The most prominent among all the needs of the deaf appear to be communication. While it is

distinct from all other needs it is somehow linked to them in the sense that they emanate from it. Linguistic limitations appear to lead to retarded academic achievement, marginalization and exclusion from most of the community programs. It was concluded that the response to this need is promotion of SL. The study found that the challenge to learning SL is lack of exposure of the hearing to the deaf people so that the signs learnt are reinforced as the deaf people communicate with the deaf people. Secondly, the deaf people need social acceptance as they live in a marginalizing and exclusive mainstream hearing community. They long to be engaged in community programs from planning phases to implementation. It was also noted that deaf people are not satisfied with cheerful greetings and reception as they meet the hearing people, they yearn for intimate relations founded on quality time and communion with them in SL. Finally, it was found that despite having vocational skills the living conditions of the deaf people are still compromised. It was noted that the problem of the deaf people has to do with their transition from their special schools to the less supportive world of work. While the schools are helping to equip them with academic education and vocational skills it seems they do not adequately prepare them for life in the world of work where they have to manoeuvre in a predominantly hearing community that is largely not familiar with SL. When in the world of work if they are not formally employed they need to run their projects which may need supervision by one who is experienced in that. The world of work is less supportive than the school and consequently they find themselves doing any kind of work just to survive.

## VI. RECOMMENDATIONS

The study suggests the following as recommendations that can be done so that the deaf people are live independent and stable lives in Bulawayo.

Despite their proficiency in SL which is their native language they can be challenged to improve their reading and writing English because at the work environment these skills are a prerequisite. There should be promotion of SL among the hearing so that they are able to communicate with the deaf.

The deaf students who come from poor backgrounds need financial support as they do their vocational studies. The communitiesshould also help them in the transition from vocational education to the world of work. At this transitory period they need capital in the form of money and tools for starting their projects. Furthermore, those who start their self-help project need close supervision by experience people until these projects stabilize. It has been noted that many who desire to self-employment have never been exposed to entrepreneurial skills. Their supervisors should help them acquire special skillsfor running project and adaptation to the new normal.

The deaf people should be engaged in community programs from planning phases to implementation. This involvement should help unleash the leadership potential in them hence empower them to run their own projects.

The government through ministry of education should ensure that schools and all institutions of higher learning offer SL to students.

Community leaders should ensure that if a donation for a project has been granted there is close supervision in running it.

Those who seriously want master SL should be intentional in exposing themselves to the deaf people so that their signs are reinforced through interaction with them.It was also noted in this study that despite the learning of SL, acceptance of the deaf people by the hearing can be attained through running programs that foster full inclusion of the deaf people in community life.

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