

Deaf camps



Important things to think about when organising and running a residential camp for deaf children and young people

Who is this document for?

This document is for practitioners who work with or plan to work with deaf children in low income communities.

Ninety-percent of deaf children are born into hearing families and are often the only deaf person in their family, school and community. A residential camp can be a valuable place for deaf children to meet peers, develop their deaf identity and build their understanding of deaf culture and the deaf community.

Deaf children often have gaps in their knowledge compared to hearing children of the same age. This is because they may have missed out on information shared through spoken language. At camps, deaf children can benefit from face-to-face learning in a deaf-friendly environment. For example, they can learn how to keep themselves safe from sexual abuse and exploitation as well as natural hazards such as snakes.

The most successful camps our partners have run have always been well prepared. This means the organisers have thought carefully about the purpose of the camp and who it is for. Here are some of the questions you should consider when planning for your camp:



Demonstration method is a good method through which they can easily learn.

Reflection from a camp organiser



Why?

Why are you holding the camp? What will the topic or theme be? For example, we know camps that have focused on:



transitioning to primary or secondary school



intensive language development



skills training including social skills.



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Other questions you might want to ask yourselves include:

- How many sessions will there be?
- What will happen in each of the sessions?
- What educational materials are required to make the camp a success?
- Who will be designing and delivering these sessions? Are they deaf? Are they experienced in designing and teaching deaf-friendly sessions?



We enjoyed it a lot. We used to study and also have fun. [They] would take us in a bus to see the mountains. I would feel really good seeing the mountains.

Reflection from a young deaf participant

Who?

- What age groups will you be inviting?
- What levels of deafness do those children have?
- What language levels will the deaf children have?
- Will families be invited? If not, who will be chaperoning the children and how will families be assured of their safety? If families are invited, can you take this opportunity to teach them about deafness? Will only parents be invited or can siblings come too? What about wider family members such as grandparents, uncles, aunts and cousins?
- Will deaf children with other disabilities be invited?
- Are you sure all the children invited are deaf or is it possible they are non-verbal for other reasons?
- If you are teaching sign language, will the teacher be deaf? If not, why not? Have you tried to find a deaf native sign language user?
- Who will be translating between spoken and signed language? Are they fluent users of both languages? What is their experience?
- What is the ratio between adults and children? Do you have enough capacity to deliver the camp well?



In the camp children learned more actively and participated in every activity with more confidence.

Reflection from a camp organiser

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What?

- What will be the role of deaf adults, deaf role models and the wider deaf community?
- What safeguarding procedures and policies do you need to have in place?
- How will you vet all the adults attending?
- What languages will you use at the camp and why?
- What will the financial cost be to the family? Can they afford it? Will they need to be encouraged to prioritise paying for this camp?



The children can freely express their views to their friends, and their friendships became stronger.

Reflection from a camp organiser

Where?

- Where will the camp be hosted? Can families easily get to the location? Will you provide the transportation or is there public transport?
- What safety requirements will be necessary? Are safety procedures accessible for deaf people? For example, if there is a fire, how will both hearing and deaf people be informed and know what to do?

When?

- Will the camp clash with important national or cultural festivals, heavy rains or busy harvest times?
- Will it take place during the school year or school holidays?
- Will you host more than one camp over the year?
- When will you conduct a full safeguarding audit of the camp space, residential stay place and the activities? (This must happen before the camp takes place.)
- Do you need to notify a government authority or apply for any permits?



Greater preparation was made before the camps so that staff could improve their skills of preparing teaching and learning materials and adapting lessons.

Reflection from a camp organiser

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How?

- How will participants be identified and selected?
- How will they get information about the event beforehand?
- How will you reflect on how the camp went and make any changes for the future?
- How will you measure improvement in an academic sense, for example with a baseline and endline?
- How will you make sure deaf children's feedback is part of the reflective process?

Don't forget to:

→ **Have fun!** Children and their families enjoy a mix of activities.

→ **Keep it relevant:** think about how you can best achieve the purpose of your camp by preparing and using relevant materials.

→ **Leave a lasting impression:** camps are somewhere deaf children can create lasting memories and friendships. Improved confidence and communication skills are key to this and are often great topics for a camp to focus on.

'Nothing about us without us'

If you are creating a camp for deaf children we urge you to involve the deaf community as much as possible. Deaf leaders could help with planning and advise on accessibility. Deaf teachers could lead the sessions and design the materials. Many deaf people strongly feel sign language teachers must be deaf themselves.

We also urge you to consider deaf children and young people's opinions on what they would like to learn. After the camp, make sure you include them in a session on what went well and what could be improved.