



## GENDER AND DIVERSITY

### Deaf Women Entrepreneurs

#### 1. Deaf restaurant in Gambia: Tulkuya Signs Restaurant



Tulkuya Signs is The Gambia's first Deaf owned restaurant established by Gambian Deaf Women's Society as a social enterprise to help reduce unemployment among Gambian Deaf Women. It is an income generating project set up by The Gambian Deaf Women's Society to help deaf women lead sustainable lives. Deaf women in Gambia were tired to be rejected from employers. They solved their unemployment problem by creating their own job: a deaf restaurant in Gambia. In 2017, the Gambia Deaf Women Society started the restaurant to employ deaf women. Tulkuya means deaf in the local mandinka dialect. All staff at the Tulkuya Signs Restaurant, including the owners, are Deaf women. They have taught sign language to customers. Meanwhile, customers at the deaf restaurant in Gambia have learned that deaf people can be good workers. Tulkuya Signs is also an advocacy center for the staff, where they discuss about their rights. The Treasurer of the Gambia Deaf Women Society comes to the restaurant every day to supervise the staff.

Visit their Facebook here: <https://www.facebook.com/Tulkuya/>

Read an article by The Chronicle Gambia: [Tired of Rejection from Employers, Gambia's Deaf Women Create Their Own Job - The Chronicle Gambia](#)



### **Deaf women entrepreneurs in Ethiopia: Teki Bags**



Deaf women entrepreneurs in Ethiopia are solving two problems with one business: one challenge is that many deaf women experience barriers to employment. The other is that there is too much plastic waste in the country. Deaf women entrepreneurs in Ethiopia employ Deaf women at Teki Paper Bags. They also help restaurants and shops stop plastic waste by using paper bags. Today, the Teki Paper Bags business employs 27 staff, including 17 Deaf women. The woman who founded the business, is herself a Deaf woman. They also solve the plastic waste problem with paper bags. In other words, they sell the bags to restaurants, hotels, and shops. Thus, their clients can use paper instead of plastic bags. Teki's paper bags have replaced more than a million plastic bags.

Visit their website: <https://www.tekipaperbags.com/>

### **2. Projects and Programs for Deaf Women**

#### **Deaf Women Economic Emancipation Program (DWEEP)**

A project in South Africa empowers Deaf and hearing women to become self-employed. The main objective of the Women Economic Emancipation Program is to empower Deaf women and young women who aspire into becoming social entrepreneurs. It provides training in business management and planning, marketing, financial management, ICT skills, and more. Furthermore, the project mentors the 50 participating women. It is targeted at unemployed Deaf and hearing women.

#### **Gender-Based Violence programs for Deaf Women**

If you are looking to set up a Deaf-friendly Gender-Based Violence program for Deaf women, learn how other programs did it. No woman should have to experience violence, including Gender-Based Violence (GBV). But if a woman is targeted for abuse, then she should be able to get help. Unfortunately for Deaf women, many women's shelters and service agencies are not accessible. Thus, they have no one on staff who can sign. They also do not know where or how to hire a qualified sign language interpreter.



## **Deaf Kenyan women's rights: GBV, humanitarian relief, justice**



One organization in Kenya, Federation of Deaf Women Empowerment Network in Kenya (FEDWEN) is working to improve the situation of Deaf Kenyan women's rights. FEDWEN-K's primary focus is to ensure that deaf women have access to education and employment opportunities, are aware of their human rights and are fully included in community policies and programmes.

This Deaf women's organization in Kenya gives voice to survivors of gender-based violence. Deaf Kenyan women experience profound human rights violations. For example, people target them for gender-based violence. During emergencies, accessibility barriers stop them from receiving humanitarian relief help. Accessibility barriers also stop them from pursuing justice in the court system. For example, a deaf woman missed out on food distribution in her neighbourhood as she could not hear the public announcements. Thus, deaf women are at higher risk of sexual and gender-based violence during disasters and in armed conflict. One member of FEDWEN lost four custodial cases in court due to lack of a sign language interpreter in the proceedings. Another member was subjected to sterilization without consent while another adult woman was forced by her parents to have an abortion. These violations have led the women to become more aware of their sexual and reproductive rights, and to advocate for them.

Visit their Facebook here: <https://www.facebook.com/FedwenK>

Read more here: <https://media.ifrc.org/ifrc/2017/01/19/deaf-womens-organization-in-kenya-gives-voice-to-survivors-of-gender-based-violence/>

## **Coalition Building to Prevent Gender-Based Violence (GBV)**

One project in Kenya has helped service providers learn basic Kenyan Sign Language so they can communicate with Deaf women experiencing gender-based violence. This initiative is one part of a larger project to improve access to justice and services for deaf women who experience gender-based violence. An organization of women with disabilities in Kenya led the project. The organization, Women Challenged to Challenge, built a coalition with community leaders, police, nurses, people with disabilities, and others.



### **Access to information in Sign Language: Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights in Sign Language**

If a Deaf woman in your country wants to know how to protect her health, how does she find this information? Many mainstream health education programs exclude Deaf women. For example, they may not understand that deaf women need to receive information through sign language. Meanwhile, families might not teach deaf daughters about their health either. Many hearing families do not learn sign language, so they do not know how to communicate with their deaf children.

All deaf women have a right to protect their health—including their sexual and reproductive health. They also have a right to freedom from violence, including sexual violence. In Zimbabwe, [Deaf Women Included produced a video to teach them](#). Thus, the video explains their right to access sexual and reproductive health services. It also explains that they have a right to privacy. Deaf women also have a right to avoid unsafe sexual practices or forced marriage.

See the link here: <https://fb.watch/3C3YJJH-kk/>

Programs in Chile, Argentina, and Zimbabwe are teaching Deaf women how to care for their own health. A series of videos use Chilean Sign Language to teach Deaf women about HIV/AIDS. Another series of videos use Argentinean Sign Language to teach Deaf women about their health, being a mother, and raising children. Meanwhile, an organization in Zimbabwe has produced Facebook videos to teach Deaf girls about menstrual hygiene and about sexual and reproductive health rights.

### **Menstrual Hygiene, by Deaf Women Included: Menstrual health for deaf girls in Zimbabwe**

Inaccessible information can be dangerous for deaf girls. For example, sometimes no one teaches menstrual health to deaf girls in Zimbabwe. Thus, [Deaf Women Included \(DWI\) produced a video to teach them](#). The video explains that some girls use cow dung or old newspapers to manage their menstruation. But this is dangerous because it can cause infection. Instead, the video explains safe menstrual health for deaf girls. For example, they encourage girls in Zimbabwe to make and wash their own reusable sanitary napkins.

### **Deaf Chilean Women learn HIV/AIDS Information via Videos**

A series of videos in Chilean Sign Language and Spanish captions is helping Deaf Chilean women learn HIV/AIDS information. The videos also have captions in Spanish. They explain how to get tested for HIV. The videos also teach deaf Chilean women how to protect themselves from HIV. Furthermore, the videos speak frankly about sexual behaviours. For example, the videos use drawings to show the correct way to put on a condom. In social media, the videos use the hashtag #FNZpruebasHIV. The hashtag encourages Deaf women in Chile to be tested for HIV. The organization, Fundación Nellie Zabel (FNZ), disseminates the videos online. Women who participated in FNZ's first Leadership School for Deaf Women



in Chile produced the videos. They want to help Deaf Chilean women learn HIV/AIDS information.

### **Deaf women making health and motherhood decisions**

A project in Argentina helps Deaf women making health and motherhood decisions through videos and workshops in Argentinean sign language. Many Deaf women do not have access to information about women's health, being a mother, or raising children. An organization, Canales creciendo enSeñas, created videos and training workshops in Argentinean sign language. The videos and workshops helped Deaf women learn about health, pregnancy, and raising children.

### **Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights SRHS provided by DESK**

DESK conducts capacity building activities related to SRHR. They participate in strategic regional and global networks that work to strengthen civil society and advance the field of preventing violence against Deaf women and girls. They work towards making the Deaf woman and girl know their rights on matters concerning sex and reproduction. It includes the enhancing the independence in making decisions on who to love, where and how; how many children to have, with who and even the family planning method to use.

DESK is also building evidence-based interventions designed to prevent violence against deaf women. They examine the policy dimensions of violence prevention by evaluating the impact of and challenges to existing legislation (laws) and using their findings to advocate for the implementation of these laws and bridge the gaps that may be existing.

Examples of activities that they have conducted:

#### ***“SILENT NO MORE”***

DESK held a 3-day workshop “SILENT NO MORE” on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights – SRHR in Embu town, Kenya. The Deaf ladies were empowered on their rights and advised never to keep quiet in case of any unusual incidence. 50 Deaf ladies were gathered for this empowerment.

#### ***TV PROGRAMME***

The idea of national TV Talk-show was born because they believed through it the SRHR information/awareness would be amplified due to a wide viewership. This was broadcasted in one of Kenyan national TV, the Kenya Broadcasting Station.

#### ***DUTY BEARERS***

DESK held a one-day workshop for about 20 duty-bearers. Among the empowered were security and health officers. It was aimed at sensitizing and empowering them with vital information to position them better in serving the Deaf community.



## Impact

All of them that participated in the capacity building in one way or the other are direct beneficiaries of SRHR awareness.

The participants in the SRHR activities became our ambassadors in their different regions hence increasing the impact.

The TV talk-show reached many Kenyan Deaf community all over the nation and beyond. The duty bearers were enhanced in their perception on the Deaf community hence changing their negative attitude. Their colleagues benefited from their empowerment.

There is more awareness and increased visibility on the Deaf community which will create more opportunities for the Deaf.

See the link here: <http://deskkenya.org/index.php/what-we-do/sexual-and-gender-based-violence-preventive-initiative>

## Delhi Foundation of Deaf Women (DFDW)

The Delhi Foundation of Deaf Women (DFDW) is a Deaf women's rehabilitation center in India. Meanwhile, they offer self-employment activities such as crafts and tailoring. They also provide vocational training such as IT or secretarial skills. Other activities include leadership training and campaigns to raise deaf awareness. They also provide sign language classes for hearing professionals. Various activities of Delhi Foundation of Deaf Women include: 1. Self-employment schemes, such as book binding projects, workshops, leather crafts, tailoring and doll making; 2. Technical education such as typewriting, secretary skills, computer skills; 3. Social rehabilitation such as leadership training, deaf awareness campaign, dramatics, and culture; and 4. Activities/events such as national sports festival of deaf women, national cultural festival of deaf women and deaf girls' day.

Visit their website: <https://dfdw.net/>

## **Empowerment sessions for deaf women**

Deaf enabled Foundation organises seminars, workshops, and training programmes for deaf women in which they are given information on Universal Human Rights, Gender related issues, Sexual Harassment, Domestic Violence, and the like. They go through group exercises that help develop self-awareness and motivate them to work towards a better life.

<http://def.org.in/womens-leadership/>

Empowerment and awareness raising deaf organisations:



### **Deaf Empowerment Society of Kenya (DESK)**

It is a registered Non-Governmental and non-profit organisation of deaf persons in Kenya. It was established in 2013 and became fully operational in 2015. DESK seeks to ensure equal opportunities of deaf people in Kenya and improve their standard of living. It was established due to discrimination and prejudice against deaf persons, in addition to the fact that there was no organisation or program specifically targeting the needs of those people. They focus on human rights advocacy, education and training, and political, social, and economic empowerment.

They have different projects, such as: **1. Leadership and Capacity Building Program** where they organize and facilitate leadership training for deaf leaders to equip them with leadership knowledge, skills, and experience; **2. Education, research and development Program**, where they promote and support access to education for deaf children and youth; inclusive education in deaf schools, preschools and other centers of learning; **3. Sexual and reproductive health rights Program** where they empower deaf women and girls on their sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR); **4. Deaf Livelihood Development Program**; **5. Kenyan Sign Language Training Program** which offers basic and advanced training to the members and deaf awareness campaigns; **6. Human Rights and Justice Program** to create public awareness of legal rights affecting the rights of deaf people **7. Fellowship Church Program** which believes that deaf people should be leaders of their own churches; and **8. Mr. and Ms. Deaf Kenya pageant**, which aims to create public awareness about HIV/AIDS, drug and alcohol abuse, poverty and addresses the rights of deaf people in the society.

*The mission:*

DESK advances deaf persons' independence and empowerment in Kenya by increasing access to economic resources and entrepreneurship, education and training, leadership, human rights and decision-making as well as health, sexual and reproductive health rights. See their website: <http://deskkenya.org/index.php>

### **Deaf Link Uganda**

Deaf Link Uganda promotes the well-being of deaf and hard of hearing people in Uganda. For example, they provide services that help deaf Ugandans to become self-reliant citizens. Thus, deaf people can contribute to community and national development. The organization also supports inclusive societies that recognize and celebrate deaf people's diversity. They support deaf youth in overcoming social and economic barriers. And they also operate a Learning Center for the Deaf that teaches families of deaf people and their local communities. For example, the Learning Center raises awareness about deaf people.  
<http://www.deaflinkuganda.org/>



### **Deaf Enabled Foundation (India)**

The Deaf Enabled Foundation in India promotes equal access for Deaf people in every area of life. Their mission also includes providing educational facilities, promoting social and cultural awareness, and barrier free communication. The organization additionally provides many services. These services include job training, teaching advocacy skills, training sign interpreters, empowering deaf women, and more.

Visit their website at <http://def.org.in/>

<https://wfdeaf.org/our-work/human-rights-of-the-deaf/>

<http://wfdeaf.org/our-work/crpd/>

<https://www.globaldisabilityrightsnow.org/tools/overview-sustainable-development-goals-sdgs>

<https://www.globaldisabilityrightsnow.org/tools/human-rights-instruments-women-disabilities>

Deaf women experience double discrimination: Both as Deaf people and as women. Thus, they need at least two human rights treaties to help them. You might know about the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). The CRPD protects the rights of Deaf people in more than 180 countries. But did you know there is also a women's rights treaty that can help Deaf women? This is the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW).

[Deaf-Friendly Videos for Deaf Women > Mill Neck International](https://www.millneckinternational.org/resources/elementor-10899)  
<https://www.millneckinternational.org/resources/elementor-10899>

<https://www.millneckinternational.org/resources/deaf-women-health-rights>

[Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights in Sign Language](#)