

Project Hear Me Out

Group 7-09

Multi-year

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Introduction

a. Area of Concern

In Singapore, there are about 500,000 people with hearing loss, with about 50% of those 80 years and above being expected to have significant hearing loss. This number will increase as age-related hearing loss is becoming more prevalent. Generally, there is a lack of awareness and knowledge of the Deaf and Hard-of-hearing community. With the presence of communication barriers between the Deaf and Hearing, it may lead to unfounded prejudices, discrimination and a lack of understanding from the public, resulting in the Deaf facing problems such as unemployment. Without understanding or empathy from the public, it is unlikely assistance would be given to them.

The Singapore Association for the Deaf (SADeaf), established in 1955, has been serving the Deaf and Hard-of-hearing community for the past six decades. The number of clients has gradually increased over the years, and now there are more than 5,600 clients.

b. Challenges Identified

From a public survey conducted, we found that most members of the public were effectively unaware of the Deaf community, with them lacking knowledge on SADeaf and basic terms used in the community. Furthermore, they possess certain misconceptions towards the community. Thus, people have to be educated with the correct knowledge and skills to aid them in interactions with the Deaf. Through our focus group discussion with SADeaf, we realised that the community faces a multitude of challenges including: discrimination, social exclusion, and the lack of empathy from the public.

c. Underlying Problem

Given that there is a lack of awareness of needs of the Deaf and Hard-of-hearing community, arising from a lack of interaction and communication with them, how can we organize events that engage youths (in school) to learn about and interact with the Deaf, such that the Deaf may feel understood and included by society?

d. Plan of Action

Through interaction events, we gave volunteers and the Deaf precious chances to understand and forge bonds with each other. Through various online platforms such as Instagram, Padlet, and Google Sites, we have raised awareness for the Deaf/Hard-of-Hearing community to educate youths about the community and SADeaf.

Due to COVID-19, we had to cancel many physical initiatives including fundraising. We moved all physical interactions online to Zoom, and created online resources to spread awareness instead of physical exhibitions. We replaced our Escape Room initiative with an Online Deaf Simulator, allowing youths to experience how it feels to be Deaf.

Implementation of Project

Month	Activity	Objectives
January	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Recruitment of Organising Team ● Needs Analysis <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Public Survey ○ Focus Group Discussion at SADeaf (16 Jan) 	
February	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Cookie Sales (cancelled due to COVID-19) 	- Raise funds
April	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Online Package (Project-long from April) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 4-part learning process - about SADeaf, Deafness, Interaction Tips and Sign Language ○ Pen down messages for the Deaf community through a Padlet Board 	- Raise awareness
May	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Online Deaf Awareness Programme for volunteers (22 May) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Conducted for about 15 volunteers/OT members ○ Learnt important skills for future interactions with the Deaf ● Online Games Session (30 May) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 17 volunteers and around 10 Deaf children attended the 3-hour session ○ Interacted and communicated through games that require teamwork 	- Raise awareness - Interaction opportunity
June-July	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Online Peer Tutoring Sessions (7 June to 12 July, weekly) 	- Interaction opportunity

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o 5 Deaf/Hard-of-hearing students and 5 Hearing volunteers attended the sessions o Platform for consistent interaction to forge bonds and friendships 	
July	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Deaf Simulator <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Set of 5 edited audio clips to simulate what the Deaf hear o Allows the public to better experience how it feels to be deaf 	- Raise awareness
Year-long	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Social Media Awareness <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Update event happenings o Post short, simple facts o Misconceptions series to correct our viewers' misunderstandings 	- Raise awareness

Project Outcomes

a. Accomplishments

In total, we have reached out to over 1000 people from all walks of life, engaged with over 40 volunteers from various schools and ages. We have educated them on misconceptions, the Deaf community, and equipped them with interaction skills. This year, we have interacted with about 15 members of the Deaf community, better understanding them. As of 8 August 2020, we have accumulated 1036 followers on our Instagram.

b. Reflections

Before embarking on this project, we had many misguided misconceptions about the Deaf such as them being incapable of communicating well with others. However, after some interaction sessions, we realised that the Deaf use their both emotions and languages to effectively express themselves.

While interacting with the deaf through the sessions and educating the public, we have solved the issues of the Deaf facing social isolation and the public having misconceptions, but only in the short term.

However, we were not able to solve the core social issues such as the public's preconceived prejudices against the Deaf, which are deep-rooted. Such prejudices can only be corrected through long-term interaction with the Deaf. The lack of willingness among the public to interact with them still causes the social exclusion of the Deaf in the long term. We hope that future groups will continue our endeavour to help the Deaf integrate into an empathising and inclusive society.

c. Scope of the Project

Community impact: In a feedback form we collected on our online package, most members of the public learnt more about the Deaf community, SADeaf and interaction tips. Furthermore, they have begun to empathise with them. With knowledge and empathy, they can spread awareness and be more inclusive towards the Deaf.

Community involvement: We recruited 37 OT members and 11 volunteers from various schools and ages to assist in our various events. By organising the Deaf Awareness Programme, they are more knowledgeable and inspired to help the Deaf community, imparting their knowledge to others. The various interaction opportunities enabled them to have a first-hand experience of interacting with the Deaf.

Resolution of AOC/UP: We identified a lack of awareness towards the Deaf and Hard-of-hearing community, hence we reached out to around 1000 members of the public through online platforms with resources for them to learn more about the Deaf community. As there is also a lack of interaction between them, we also equipped volunteers with interaction skills, providing opportunities to forge bonds with the community.

References

(n.d.). Introduction – The Singapore Association for the Deaf. Retrieved August 12, 2020, from <https://sadeaf.org.sg/about-deafness/introduction/>

(n.d.). History – The Singapore Association for the Deaf. Retrieved August 12, 2020, from <https://sadeaf.org.sg/about-us/history/>