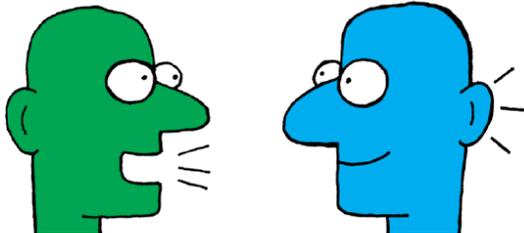


SPEECH & LANGUAGE DISORDERS

Produced as part of the *Toolkit for Disability-Inclusive Education - Fiji*

Issued Sept 2015



Every person has the right to early childhood education, primary and secondary education and further education (Fiji Constitution)

All children should be given the opportunity to learn together wherever possible, regardless of difficulties, disabilities or differences (Fiji Ministry of Education Policy on Special and Inclusive Education)

Speech and language disorders impact a child's ability to talk, understand, analyse or think about information. There are many different causes of speech and language disorders. Some of these include damage to the brain from an illness or accident, hearing impairment, chronic ear infections, autism, Down syndrome, cleft palate or cerebral palsy. Cleft palate should be treated surgically as early as possible.

With practice, patience and support, children's speech can improve. Many parents find it is tempting to finish children's sentences for them, or just read the child's facial expression. Be patient and allow time for your child to speak even if it is difficult. Speak clearly in front of and to your child – it is important for them to hear good speech.

Do not allow other people to tease your child about speech difficulties. This can make the child shy to keep trying. Be very supportive and encourage your child's speech. Many children enjoy using sign language at the same time as talking. Pointing to a board with pictures/symbols can help the child communicate to others.

Some signs of difficulties with speech and language are:

- Unclear speech sounds; stuttering
- Limited vocabulary
- Difficulty listening or following directions (may only do the last thing said)
- Immature speech
- Often only the parent or caregiver can understand what the child is trying to say
- The child uses non-verbal communication (pointing, facial expressions etc) and the parent becomes very good at anticipating what the child needs

Sometimes children learning a second language may experience some of these signs. As a general rule, if a child is having these signs ONLY in their second language, then they are unlikely to have a speech and language disorder.

It is important that your child's hearing is checked, to know whether hearing difficulties are part of the problem.

Who can help? CWM hospital and district hospitals for surgery referrals and hearing testing; Project HEAVEN (hearing testing). Hilton Special School and Early Intervention Centre for audiology and speech therapy services. Teachers, Community Rehabilitation Assistants.