

Samoa Hearing Services

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Services in Samoa

- Samoa is a group of islands in the South Pacific with a population of around 200,000
- Children with hearing loss are usually identified by parents, teachers and medical staff as there are no audiologists on the Islands
- There is one school for children with disabilities where most hearing impaired children attend called Loto Taumafai
- The SENESE Resource Centre for Inclusive Education supports deaf students by supporting teachers and teachers aids in mainstream schools.
- In 2007, there were no children in Samoa fitted with hearing aids



Background information

- Twenty-one visits of a week's duration have been made by Australian teams to Samoa to fit assess hearing and donated hearing aids to children in the period 2007-2018.
- This initiative was initiated after a request from Donna Lene, principal and teacher of the deaf at the SENESE Resource Centre in Samoa in 2006.
- The present director, Marie Bentin has continued this initiative.
- Funding for our work has come from those involved in the work, from Attune Hearing, Rotary, the Royal Institute for Deaf and Blind Children, Sonova, Cochlear Ltd., the Carabez Alliance and other sources



Visiting audiologists

- Genelle Cook and Sarah Love from the Jim Patrick Audiology Clinic at RIDBC, Simone Punch from Australian Hearing, Suzi Marcos from Attune Hearing and various other audiologists have joined us from time to time.
- A Macquarie University postgrad audiology student (Meagan McDonell) carried out a project at Senese and an audiologist (Kerrie Bray) was supported on a 9 month attachment via the Australian Youth Ambassador scheme.



Simone Punch

- A paediatric audiologist with Australian Hearing called Simone Punch is a who has a bilateral severe hearing loss and wears hearing aids joined us on our more recent visits.
- The Samoan children were surprised to see someone with a hearing loss like theirs, wearing hearing aids, able to speak well and holding down a demanding job.
- The teaching staff were pleased to use Simone as a role model for the pupils.



The clinic

- The children are fitted with new Phonak and Unitron hearing aids, as well as other donated hearing aids provided by Attune Hearing and other sources.
- They are fitted using a laptop and a Noahlink or Hi-Pro interface and a Madsen Auricle and MedRex equipment via AusAid funding for the hearing aid fittings



The new hospital in Apia

- An Ear Nose and Throat specialist, Dr Sione, has recently been appointed to the new hospital. Prior to this, there was a lack of ENT support.
- The hospital was built with assistance from the Chinese government.
- Our clinics are now held in the new hospital which is really good, but we suffer from an over-efficient air conditioning system.



In between our visits

- There is continuous ongoing support from local teachers of involved with the deaf, teachers and teacher aides in between visits
- A really important feature of the program is the liaison with the parents of the deaf children
- Two staff members from SENESE have spent 4 weeks at Phonak in Australia and are capable of repairing hearing aids. Prior to that everything had to be sent back to Australia.
- Bay Audiology in New Zealand and National Hearing in Australia have begun to make an annual visit to test children and adults and to fit hearing aids.



Modes of instruction

- SENESE encourages children to wear their hearing aids, and staff carry out minor repairs and maintenance.
- Sign language is used (the local sign language is similar to Auslan and British Sign Language).
- Sign language interpreters are used when children attend mainstream schools
- Efforts are made to promote the acquisition of oral language, although this is difficult due to the late identification and fitting of many of the children.
- Many children have profound losses.
- Visits are made by Australian staff every four months



Cochlear implants in Samoa



Cochlear Ltd
have donated
softbands and
refurbished
older model
BAHA's



Activities

- On a typical visit
 - 47 hearing assessments were carried out
 - 35 children were seen for hearing aid appointments
 - 22 hearing aids were fitted
 - 39 impressions taken for earmoulds
 - 4 instant ear moulds were made
 - 6 hearing aids sent for repair



Activities to date in the course of our visits



- 457 children seen for hearing assessment
- 401 children seen for hearing aid appointments
- 267 hearing aids fitted
- 76 hearing aids repaired or replaced
- 423 earmould impressions taken
- 57 instant earmoulds made
- 81 ears needed wax removal
- 8 bone-anchored hearing aids (BAHAs) fitted on softbands



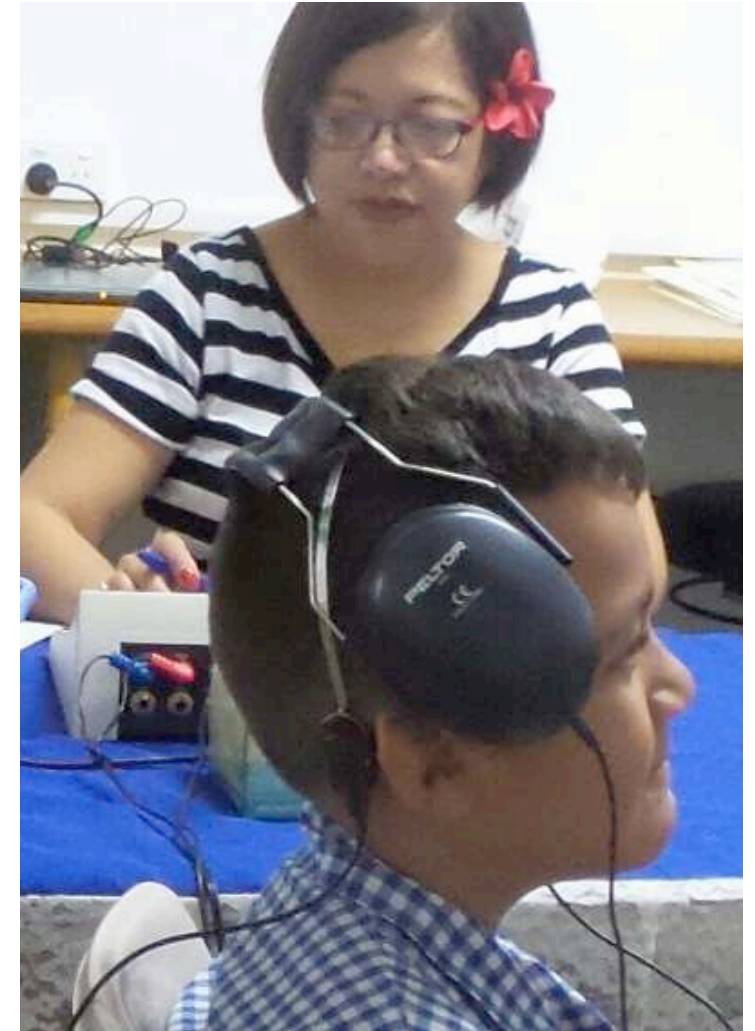
Upolo and Savaii

- Western Samoa is divided into two islands. We have been working in Upolo but recently made a visit to Savai'i which is larger but has a smaller population.
- We have obtained a Rotary Club grants and we are applying for a \$30,000 Rotary Global grant shortly. This will enable us to set up a clinic in Savai'i with the help of a local GP and the local hospital.



Establishing a hearing aid service 1

- Contact must be made with a local group with appropriate skills, or at least the motivation, to assist with the work.
- They need to be prepared to co-operate and acquire further skills.
- It must be realized that, in a very small country like Samoa, there may be no local training programs for teachers on the deaf or audiologists.
- Visitors will find themselves working with few relevant skills.
- Local in-service training programs will be needed in many areas.



Establishing a hearing aid service 2

- Are there appropriate overseas staff available to visit on a regular ongoing basis?
- Is there a continuing supply of serviceable hearing aids, batteries and repair services?
- Can earmoulds be produced on an ongoing basis?
- Is funding available for travel costs and accommodation for visitors?
- Is ENT support available locally?



Establishing a hearing aid service 3

- Are local health care providers willing to accept help?
- Will the families of hearing impaired children be involved?
- Are visitors sufficiently aware of local customs and modes of behaviour?
- Does the project fit into local health care service planning?





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