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**Declaration of
Competing Interests**
Paige Stringer is the
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Let's Start Spreading the News

Children with hearing loss can learn to listen and talk. Yet, most of the world is unaware of this potential. The World Health Organization (WHO) reports that hearing loss is one of the most common disabilities globally, yet one of the least supported. Gaps in hearing healthcare and education resources for these children are particularly magnified in developing countries. Hearing screening, follow-up therapy, and education support is not widely available. Just one in four people in developing countries that need a hearing aid receive one (WHO). Much of the developing world provides children who are deaf or hard of hearing with just a secondary level education – if at all. All of these factors limit the future employment opportunities and quality of life for these children, and they often end up dependent on society for support. This significant financial burden for the developing world is so unnecessary

because it can be overcome. Half of all cases of hearing loss are avoidable through prevention, early diagnoses, and management (WHO). We need to get the word out.

Many organisations work globally to address the issue of paediatric hearing loss. We would be well served to work together on a cohesive and well-funded international campaign, highlighting what can be done. Increased awareness and investment in newborn hearing screening, affordable hearing instruments, and access to trained education and therapy professionals would make a significant difference in so many children's lives. With such resources and support, children with hearing loss could develop the cognitive and spoken language skills they need to join their hearing peers in school. They could grow up to become independent, contributing members of their hearing communities – no matter where in the world they live. ■

The Global Foundation For Children With Hearing Loss

The Foundation is committed to providing deaf or hard of hearing children in developing countries with the technology and education they need to achieve their full potential.

In collaboration with Thuan An Centre and Ho Chi Minh City University, Vietnam, we are conducting a multi-year Deaf Education Programme. The programme prepares teachers, families, and medical teams to help children with hearing loss develop listening and spoken language skills in the first six years of life. Our team of volunteer professionals in audiology, speech pathology, and deaf education share their expertise with teachers and families representing 35 schools across 20 Vietnam provinces during Summer Training Workshops and Mobile Missions to participating schools during the school year. Our audiologists also draw on our Hearing Aid Program to fit hearing aids on children who need them. We are expanding to Vietnam's hospitals to train medical teams about audiology and early intervention support. Participants in our program share learning with others, making our efforts multiplicative and sustainable. We plan to extend our model of training and hearing aid distribution to other developing countries. ■



Foundation professional demonstrates an auditory verbal teaching technique.

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