

SIGNIFYING HANDS

ROUND 1 SOCIAL INNOVATION GENERATION

A. Social business idea

A1 Mantra

Signs for all: Online sign language learning by an inclusive community.

A2. Contributions to UN goals

Mission: To create a Mexico where communication is accessible to everyone, regardless of their hearing abilities, and where people can fully participate in society.

Vision: To be the leading platform nationwide in teaching and promoting sign language, providing tools and specialized resources to improve the communication and inclusion of deaf people in different environments.

This is why we consider the importance of 4 Sustainable Development Goals, which are:

- **SDG 3 Good Health and Well-being.**
By implementing our project, we seek to improve communication among all people, promoting the psychological well-being of those with hearing disabilities to engage in society.
- **SDG 4 Quality Education.**
By providing a learning method for society, it facilitates deaf people to integrate into the educational system without the need to exclusively attend a specialized school, as any teacher can be trained within our platform.
- **SDG 10 Reduced Inequalities.**
By offering a new tool for people to interact with those with hearing disabilities, institutions will achieve the training of their staff. It is important that in companies, customer service personnel are knowledgeable about the topic for effective and inclusive communication with them, providing them with quality service.
- **SDG 16 Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions.**
By promoting communication, institutions are strengthened to become more inclusive, helping them to join in providing people with equal opportunities along with respect for diversity without leaving any citizen behind.

B. ESG preparedness

B1. Target issues

In Signifying Hands, we address and deal with various social issues comprehensively:

- Social exclusion. In Mexico, approximately 2.3 million people have hearing difficulties, and in Veracruz, between 500 and 600 thousand people are deaf. The lack of access to sign language limits their participation in society. By integrating sign language in different sectors such as education, employment, and public services, social inclusion is promoted, and the inequality gap is reduced.
- Inequality of opportunities. 28% of deaf youth between 15 and 29 years old have not had any type of education, reflecting the inequality in access to education. Training teachers in sign language and developing accessible educational content will expand educational opportunities for deaf people.
- Access to public services. Training officials in sign language improves the accessibility of public services for deaf people. This contributes to a more inclusive and equitable society by ensuring that everyone has access to basic services such as health, public safety, and social services.
- Health and well-being. Effective communication between deaf and hearing people improves their emotional and psychological well-being. Furthermore, training health personnel in sign language improves deaf people's access to health services, thus improving their quality of life.
- Culture of inclusion. Encouraging a greater number of people to learn at least basic levels of sign language from primary education promotes a culture of inclusion and respect for sign language in society. This creates a more inclusive and equitable environment for deaf people.

B2. Root causes

The problem of the lack of inclusion of sign language in learning has deep historical roots, but its urgency is exacerbated by the current need to improve the quality of life of deaf people. In contemporary society, where social interaction and access to services are fundamental, it is crucial to consider how we could treat them fairly as a society.

Children and young people who fail to access basic education cannot be economically independent in the years to come. To ensure this, we must adapt new teaching models, adapting environments to meet all their needs as human beings.

There are not enough teachers who can communicate with them through sign language or interpreters to cover every school in Mexico. While some people attend school and obtain their school certificates, they face problems when solving arithmetic operations. As an example, CAM 61 only teaches preschool and primary school, limiting the students' learning.

B3 Current solution landscape

Carlos Slim Foundation

Through its online platform “Capacitate para Empleo”, offers the course "Mexican Sign Language," aiming for participants to learn sign language and understand its importance in building inclusive societies. In this training, students will learn Mexican Sign Language applicable to Mexico City, which shares a structure with the sign language of other states in the country but has slight variations. They will also practice:

- Distinctive features of Mexican Sign Language.
- Finger-spelling and ideograms.
- Basic vocabulary for sentences.
- Analysis of phrases.

The course is free and is aimed at the general public. It consists of 4 levels divided into several lessons, which are taught using infographics, videos, and practical activities. At the end of each lesson, there is a test to evaluate your performance.

<https://fundacioncarlosslim.org/capacitate-para-el-empleo-ofrece-el-curso-lengua-de-senas-mexicana/>

IncluSor

The Center for Social Inclusion of the Deaf, A.C. is a center in Mexico City where deaf and hearing people work together daily towards inclusion. Founded in 2013, this civil society organization aims to integrate the deaf community of Mexico City into the hearing society, eliminating barriers based on associations, age, gender, sexual orientation, beliefs, as well as socio-economic and educational levels.

IncluSor A.C. is not for profit and is not involved in partisan, political, electoral, or religious proselytism. Open and welcoming, IncluSor offers a space for more deaf and hearing people to come together, contributing ideas, activities, and efforts for the common good.

They offer services such as job inclusion programs, counseling, awareness talks, specialized conferences, and Mexican Sign Language courses, both for companies and institutions and for deaf and hearing individuals.

CoPeSor

The Coalition of Deaf People, founded in 2008 and formalized in 2012, works to reinforce the rights of deaf people, particularly linguistic rights as a gateway to other rights. Its goal is to build a more equitable country that provides true opportunities for inclusion in different areas of social life, collaborating in intersectoral dialogue spaces, influencing public policies, promoting a culture of respect for human rights, expanding alliances with other organizations, and producing knowledge through research and analysis.

CoPeSor aims to be a counterbalance, challenging and exerting pressure against measures and policies that are contrary to the interests and rights of people with disabilities.

GENERAL LAW FOR THE INCLUSION OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES.

Its purpose is to regulate, to the extent necessary, Article 1 of the Political Constitution of the United Mexican States, establishing the conditions under which the State must promote, protect, and ensure the full exercise of the human rights and fundamental freedoms of persons with disabilities, ensuring their full inclusion in society within a framework of respect, equality, and equal opportunities.

Accessibility: the relevant measures to ensure access for persons with disabilities, on equal terms with others, to the physical environment, transportation, information, and communications, including information and communication systems and technologies.

Communication: It shall be understood as written language, oral language, and Mexican Sign Language, text visualization, Braille system, tactile communication, large print, easily accessible written or auditory multimedia devices, simple language, digitized voice media, and other modes, means, systems, and augmentative or alternative formats of communication, including easily accessible information and communication technology.

Article 12. The Ministry of Public Education shall promote the right to education of persons with disabilities, prohibiting any discrimination in educational institutions, centers, nurseries, or in the teaching or administrative staff of the National Educational System. For these purposes, it shall carry out the following actions.

Include the teaching of the Braille Writing System and Mexican Sign Language in public and private education, promoting the production and distribution of free textbooks in Braille, large print, and audible texts that complement the knowledge of students with disabilities.

Article 14. Mexican Sign Language is officially recognized as a national language and is part of the linguistic heritage of the Mexican nation. The Braille System, the modes, means, and accessible communication formats chosen by persons with disabilities shall be recognized.

B4. Solution to implement

We will develop a website that will offer access to different courses according to people's interests (education, employment, and public institutions). It will have adapted learning levels to their needs using specific vocabulary from the areas involved, where they can see how to perform the signs on the page along with learning forums that will allow them to express their experiences and doubts with sign language.

B5. Solution uniqueness

In the educational field, we will collaborate with institutions to train teachers and school staff in sign language, facilitating communication with deaf students and promoting their inclusion.

In the workplace, we will work with companies to offer sign language training to employees, especially those who interact with the public.

Regarding public institutions, we will collaborate to train officials in sign language, especially in areas such as health, public safety, and social services.

This platform will include an interactive forum where users can practice what they have learned, ask questions, and participate in discussions. It will also involve interpreters and deaf individuals who will contribute to the forum, thus promoting the practice of sign language.

Additionally, we plan to develop a feature where we will use the device's camera. This feature will utilize augmented reality (AR) technology to overlay animated images onto the real-world view captured by the device's camera. Users will be able to select a word or phrase from the vocabulary they are learning and activate the AR mode. The app will then superimpose a virtual image onto their hands, showing them the exact movements and gestures required to form the sign for that word.

As users watch the animated image on their device, they can mimic the movements with their own hands, effectively practicing the sign language in real-time. This interactive feature enhances the learning experience by providing visual guidance and immediate feedback, helping users refine their signing skills with precision and accuracy.

Furthermore, this AR functionality will be integrated into the learning platform, allowing users to access it seamlessly while taking courses or practicing on their own. It will be an innovative and engaging way to learn sign language, making the process more immersive and effective.

C. Stakeholder engagement

C1. Engagement strategy

In Signifying Hands, we seek the support of teachers at CAM 61 to establish essential vocabulary for basic conversations in sign language. We have also considered taking a class with their teachers to learn how to introduce ourselves in LSM.

Furthermore, it is crucial to have the backing and participation of the deaf community. We want them to guide us and provide their expertise to ensure that our programs and activities are truly inclusive and relevant to their needs.

Another key point is the dissemination of our project through social media and the university. We aim for students from the Faculty of Accounting and Business to be willing to participate in simple talks in small groups to facilitate their learning on the subject. Subsequently, we will visit the faculties located in the Veracruz area to establish a strategic alliance with CRIVER. This collaboration will allow their specialists to visit the Universidad Veracruzana monthly to give learning talks.

We are convinced that collaboration with the deaf community and the support of various sectors of society are of utmost importance to achieve our inclusion and sign language education goals.

Financially, we are interested in having various sectors, both public and private, invest in the project to get it up and running. We believe this collaboration will be essential to ensure the sustainability and reach of our programs, benefiting the community and gradually reducing existing inequalities.

Once the website is operational, we plan to finance it through a pay-per-course model where users who wish to access the full course content will need to make an initial payment. Additionally, we will establish strategic partnerships with companies and schools to integrate the platform into their activities, contributing to the financial viability of the project. Upon completion of the course, a certificate will be issued to those who participate and achieve a satisfactory grade.

D. Learning curve

With all the information gathered from various sources such as interviews, books, and the internet, knowledge was acquired about the situation experienced by people with hearing disabilities as well as their families. In addition to the number of people in the country who have this condition, on the other hand, we learned about existing alternatives that support the cause and tried to improve and integrate new processes.

At the beginning of our project, we were aware of the existing inequalities in society regarding the inclusion of deaf people. However, as we immersed ourselves in research and interaction with the deaf community, we have discovered the true extent of the implications and issues they face daily.

Interacting with deaf children, their families, and teachers has been a deeply moving experience for our team. We have been able to witness firsthand the challenges these individuals face and how the lack of access to sign language and inclusive education limits their opportunities for development and participation in society. We have also witnessed the emotional and psychological challenges they face due to lack of understanding and acceptance by society.

One of the situations that has impacted us the most is the lack of information and support that parent and relative of deaf individuals face. We have realized how overwhelming it can be for them to deal with this situation without the necessary

resources. This realization has further motivated us to seek ways to support and guide these families on their journey.

Additionally, we have learned to value the importance of nonverbal communication and sign language as legitimate forms of expression. Sign language is not just an alternative communication system, but also a fundamental part of the identity and culture of deaf individuals. This learning has led us to promote and respect sign language as a fundamental right of deaf people.

By witnessing up close the difficulties faced by deaf individuals and their families, as well as the barriers they must overcome daily, we feel a responsibility to continue striving for positive change. We are driven by the desire to contribute to the creation of a more equitable and understanding world, where all individuals have the same opportunities for development and participation.

We are committed to continue working with passion and dedication to make our project a reality that benefits the entire community.