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PRESS RELEASE

DEAFNET CENTRE OF KNOWLEDGE

DeafNET Centre of Knowledge (DeafNET), a Non-Profit Organisation and a Trust, was established in 2006 to exchange and disseminate knowledge and skills in order to empower Deaf persons on the African continent to achieve their full potential. It was envisaged that this objective will be achieved by facilitating and promoting education, development, training, communication access via the promotion of Sign Language and the utilisation of assistive devices, social services, as well as spiritual and mental well-being to African Deaf communities.

Over the last 15 years, many successes have been achieved. The network of African countries affiliated with DEAFNET has grown to almost 50. Network and organisational structures including the Africa Contact Group for Mental Health and Deafness with its 6 Regions, the DeafNET Africa Committee, and the DeafNET Africa Quadrennial Conferences have been established and strengthened. Knowledge and skills resources were built in Deaf committees across Africa with training and development projects and programmes in Deaf Education, Leadership and Management, Social Competence Development, Entrepreneurship, Scholarships, Promotion of Sign Languages and Deaf Culture. DEAFNET is inclusive and accessible for Deaf persons irrespective of age, social-economic status, gender, race, level of development, faith affiliation or disability.

De Stichting Vrienden van Effatha (SVE) in the Netherlands' had committed to sponsor DeafNET since its establishment but this support is now being phased out and will come to an end in 2021. Despite concerted efforts, DeafNET has not yet succeeded in getting new sponsorships to match the contribution by SVE. The result is that DeafNET is experiencing financial challenges and risks. Overhead costs of staff and services rendered by DeafNET e.g. multimedia and administrative support, will have to be reduced.

After an intensive process of analysing the financial realities and challenges and debating the different options, the DeafNET Board of Trustees and the DeafNET Africa Committee resolved that:

- DeafNET's vision, mission, and objectives will remain the same
- as DeafNET has developed a strong volunteer network and organisational structures in Africa the task of the office would change to that of a secretariat and coordinating functionary thereby cutting overhead costs
- a project approach be followed with appropriately qualified persons appointed for the project duration only. SVE has invited DEAFNET to apply for project funding in the future.

- tasks will be assigned to trustees in their areas of expertise to develop subject matter, policies and procedures, writing terms of reference, project proposals, marketing, and financial management and control, as well as research
- management tasks and responsibilities will be assigned to trustees in the vicinity of the office to function as a management committee of the Board of trustees
- all staff be retrenched due to the current financial crisis
- the DeafNET Executive Committee will be mandated to do the restructuring implied in the above and make interim arrangements for the functioning of the office until the secretariat and the coordinating functionary are in place.
- the Financial Committee is tasked to submit a new fundraising strategy and plan to address the financial challenges

The Board of Trustees and the DeafNET Africa Committee believe that with the support from its Network in Africa, and partners and friends in countries outside Africa the current challenges will be overcome with a positive outcome for the Deaf people of Africa.



A L Smit

Acting Chairperson

DeafNET Centre of Knowledge

April 2019