



PRESS RELEASE:
INTERNATIONAL DAY OF SIGN LANGUAGES (IDSL).

The United Nations General Assembly Resolution A/C.3/72/L.36/Rev.1 recognizes 23rd September each year as International Day of Sign Languages (IDSL). IDSL seeks to raise awareness on the importance of sign languages and strengthen the statuses of sign languages. The overall goal of resolution A/C.3/72/L.36/Rev.1 is to deepen global awareness of the importance of sign language in the full realization of the human rights of individuals who are Deaf and hard of hearing. This year's theme is ***"We sign for Human Rights"***

According to the World Federation of the Deaf, approximately 72,000,000 Deaf people live in the world of which 80% come from Lower and Middle-Income Countries, including Ghana. Across the world, 80% of Deaf children are denied access to formal education due to stigma, discrimination and most importantly, lack of access to the sign language.

The past few decades have seen remarkable efforts by the international community to grant legal recognition to the linguistic rights of the Deaf community. Thanks to the positive obligations on state parties to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. As of August 2021, approximately 60 of member countries of the United Nations, prominently in Europe, Asia and America, had recognized sign languages and prioritize sign language services for the Deaf community.

In Ghana, the majority of persons with disabilities are stigmatized, marginalized, and lack access to essential resources for their development. In the case of Deaf people, communication as the major barrier, has limited their access to quality education, which has also negatively impacted on their access to employment and healthcare, including mental healthcare services. These barriers exist because of lack of legal recognition of the Ghana Sign Language as the native language for Deaf people in Ghana.

As a national organization of the Deaf, GNAD wishes to state emphatically that, in the context of the Deaf community, government efforts at disability inclusion can only be achieved when the state recognizes Ghanaian Sign Language as one of the native languages and prioritizes the use of the Ghanaian Sign Language in the provision Services. For example, Ghana's efforts at implementation of the inclusive education policy will remain meaningless for Deaf people unless the Ghanaian Sign Language is legally recognized. Legal recognition of Ghana Sign Language and the subsequent formulation of modalities for its use for the provision of services for Deaf will thus improve on the socio-economic conditions and quality of life of the Deaf community in Ghana.

On the occasion of International Day of Sign Languages, GNAD wishes to draw the attention of the government to the fact that the revised Persons with Disability Act, Act 715, and its accompanying legislative instrument, are yet to be submitted to parliament. The implementation of the Act holds key to disability inclusion in Ghana and any delay in its passage, will deny persons with disabilities their right to enjoy their rights to dignity as citizens of Ghana.

We therefore call on the state to expedite action towards the review and passage of the provisions of the Act, which will lead to the recognition of Ghanaian Sign Language. We also call on the Ministry of Education and Ghana Education Service to expand access to quality basic and secondary education to as many Deaf children as possible through the expansion of existing schools for the Deaf, allocation of one of the newly constructed Senior High Schools to the Deaf, and the engagement of qualified Sign Language Interpreters in some Senior High Schools to improve access to Inclusive Education at the Senior High School Level.

The GNAD has over the years invested in the training of qualified Ghanaian Sign Language Interpreters to provide services to the Deaf community as part of its contribution towards improving access to quality healthcare, including mental healthcare. We therefore call on the Ministry of Health and the Ghana Health Services to facilitate the employment of these trained Sign Language Interpreters, particularly at the regional hospitals, so that they can help improve upon healthcare delivery for the Deaf community.

ABOUT GHANA NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF THE DEAF

The Ghana National Association of the Deaf (GNAD) is the national organization of Deaf People in Ghana. GNAD is the mouthpiece of Deaf people working to ensure that every Deaf person in Ghana enjoys the right to a life of dignity. GNAD seeks to achieve an active and productive Deaf community with access to education and information and steady economic activities that can sustain and maintain quality and security of life. GNAD achieves its vision through mobilizing of members, removing communication barriers, creating awareness on Deaf issues, and advocate for equal opportunities for the Deaf People.

GNAD is registered with the Registrar General Department and Social Welfare. The association is affiliated to the World Federation of the Deaf (WFD), the largest International Non-Governmental organization, West and Central Africa Secretariat of the WFD, Ghana Federation of Disability Organizations (GFD) and the host organization for WFD West and Central Africa Secretariat transnational Capacity Building Project.

Further details about GNAD can be obtained from www.gnadgh.org or via;

[The Executive Director or National President,](#)

Ghana National Association of the Deaf

P.O. Box AN-7908, Accra-North,

Office Loc: Accra Rehabilitation Centre, Barnes Road opposite National Museum, Adabraka, Accra,

Telephone: +233 (0) 302 680100/0208764407

Email: gnadeaf@yahoo.com

Facebook: [gnad official](#)

Twitter: [original_gnad](#)

Youtube: [nadoriginalpage1](#)