

Press Statement - For immediate release

**UGANDA NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF THE DEAF CALLS FOR
ENACTMENT OF NATIONAL SIGN LANGUAGE LAW TO PROMOTE
RIGHTS OF DEAF AND HARD-OF-HEARING PERSONS**



Kampala, Uganda - September 22, 2025 - The Uganda National Association of the Deaf (UNAD) today urged the government to prioritize the enactment of a National Sign Language (UgSL) Law to promote, protect, and respect the rights of deaf and hard-of-hearing persons in Uganda.

In commemoration of the International Week of Deaf People and the International Day of Sign Language, UNAD is highlighting the urgent need for a comprehensive UgSL Law that recognizes Ugandan Sign Language as an official language and as a vital means of communication for the deaf community. Despite constitutional provisions and existing legislation, deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals continue to face significant barriers in accessing education, healthcare, and other essential services due to the lack of standardized and promoted sign language.

Why a UgSL Law is Needed:

- i. **Limited access to education:** Deaf and hard-of-hearing children face significant barriers in accessing quality education due to lack of sign language instruction and trained teachers.
- ii. **Limited access to healthcare:** Deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals face challenges in accessing healthcare services due to communication barriers.
- iii. **Social exclusion:** Deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals are often excluded from social and economic opportunities due to lack of accessible communication.
- iv. **Erosion of UgSL's integrity:** The absence of standardization and protection has led to UgSL being diluted and lacking standardization, compromising the cultural identity and linguistic rights of the deaf community.

- v. **Lack of effective implementation and guidance:** The absence of a comprehensive UgSL Law has resulted in inadequate guidance and oversight, hindering the effective implementation of sign language services in key sectors, including public service, healthcare, education, and media.

According to the Uganda Bureau of Statistics (UBOS 2025), approximately 1,979,613 persons aged 2 and above have difficulty in hearing, equivalent to a prevalence rate of 4.7 percent. This significant population of deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals faces numerous challenges in accessing essential services, highlighting the urgent need for a comprehensive UgSL Law.

"We appreciate the government's efforts to mainstream disability inclusion and recognize the importance of sign language in promoting the rights of deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals," said Robert Nkwangu, Executive Director of UNAD. "However, we believe that a comprehensive UgSL Law is necessary to ensure equal access to opportunities and services for all Ugandans, regardless of their abilities."

The proposed UgSL Law would establish a Uganda Sign Language Board to standardize, promote, ensure quality and regulate the use of UgSL, ensuring equal access to opportunities and services for deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals. It would also provide a framework for UgSL training programs, increase funding for UgSL promotion and protection initiatives, and enhance the overall well-being and rights of the deaf community.

"As we celebrate the International Week of Deaf People under the theme 'No Human Rights Without Sign Language Rights,' we call upon the government to take concrete steps towards enacting a comprehensive UgSL Law," added Nkwangu. "This law is critical for promoting inclusivity, accessibility, and equal opportunities for all Ugandans, regardless of their abilities."

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