



UGANDA NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF THE DEAF (UNAD)

Happy New Year 2022!

Our Members, Partners, Donors, friends and Well-wishers,

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Congratulations for navigating through 2021 and we sincerely thank you all for all that you do in support of our work of empowering deaf people in Uganda and beyond. We appreciate the government for providing an enabling environment which facilitates equal opportunities in accessing social services for the vulnerable members of society.

As UNAD, our work is to ensure **dignity for every deaf person**. We have been here since 1973 working as an umbrella organization for all deaf associations and groupings in Uganda. Our duty is to advocate for the rights of deaf people, promotion of Uganda Sign Language and building capacities. We work to look after the interest of all the deaf people in Uganda and also the wider disability fraternity, through various programs, projects and activities.

A snapshot into 2021 milestones...

During the year 2021, we have done influencing work on issues affecting deaf people, promoted research, published and disseminated information regarding deaf people, promoted Uganda sign language, empowered deaf people socially and economically, raised awareness on issues of concern to deaf people.

In 2021, we successfully organised the International Week of Deaf People (IWDP) in Arua City, presided over by the Right Honorable Lukia Nakadama Isanga, the Third Deputy Prime Minister. Activities included celebrations to mark the International Day of Sign Languages declared by the UN. The National Organizing Committee was chaired by Honorable Hellen Asamo, the Minister of State, Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development, the Secretariat being at UNAD. The IWDP 2021 theme was: ***“Celebrating Thriving Deaf Communities: We Sign for Human Rights”***. Sign language is the critical prerequisite to reach the full participation of deaf people in their communities and ensure the realization of their human rights. The events drew attention to the accomplishments of people who are deaf and raised awareness of their unique needs and concerns. The Celebrations attracted community leaders including among others delegations from Government Ministries, Departments and Agencies, Members of Parliament, Local Government Authorities, the disability fraternity, the local community and deaf community. **At the events, the government reiterated commitment to expedite finalization of the regulations to operationalize the persons with Disability Act 2019.** Commitments were also made for inclusion of Sign Language Interpreters in the Public Service and training of Uganda Sign Language in education. Modalities are underway to have these operationalized. Furthermore, groups of deaf people and their parents received special grants in their communities to enable them enter into self-employment.



Worldwide there is an increasing awakening on the role of safeguarding in ensuring safe programs that promote safety, protection and wellbeing of the people whom we serve. Our membership experience multiplicity of vulnerabilities, exclusion, powerlessness and in critical need to access services and information. With the support of an external expert, we developed safeguarding policy and guidelines for prevention of sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment (PSEAH). We stepped-up mechanisms toward achieving the **do no harm** principles and compliance to international safeguarding standards. All our board members, staff and volunteers underwent training during the year. This will continually enhance UNAD's capacity to fulfill its duty of care and meeting **our commitment to Zero tolerance to abuse, exploitation and discrimination** in all our operations there by protecting those that come into contact with UNAD services.

Additionally, we reviewed our policies and procedures notably the Finance Policy and developed a Board Charter. All this was done to strengthen our systems and align with local and international principles and standards. Our Board of Directors is committed to providing high level oversight to ensure policy compliance.

Working with government, we conducted Uganda Sign Language training to interested people including service providers especially health workers. UNAD continues to deliver Uganda Sign Language courses to communities leading to the award of a certificate in Uganda Sign Language. With Sign Language, deaf people are included in the development process.

Despite the disruptions caused by the Covid-19 Pandemic, **our Vocational Training and Resource Centre continues to offer hands on skills training** to deaf people in vocational trades including tailoring and fashion designing, knitting and weaving, ICT, Carpentry and Joinery. Due to public demand, we have added a new trade in saloon and hair dressing. The center has contributed to the alleviation of social and economic challenges faced by the deaf. Technical and business training enhances the ability of deaf persons to start their own business and to improve on the already existing ones. The Centre is fully registered with the Directorate of Industrial Training (DIT). Our previous batch of students passed with flying colors and have been supported to secure employment. Although, the center primarily targets the deaf community and hearing persons, about 90% of the beneficiaries are deaf people. **Registration of new entrants is ongoing up to 24th January 2022.**

A stronger membership translates into a stronger UNAD, thus, we worked to build capacities of our member district associations of the deaf. Trainings were delivered with a focus on leadership and management skills. **Our membership is always encouraged to tap into local resources and opportunities at district level to benefit individual deaf people.**

Challenges still remain...

Despite these successes, UNAD is still very far in reaching a big number of deaf members who continue to live a marginalized life. Every day, we receive requests for Uganda sign language training far and beyond, yet our resources are limited. A number of **communication problems** affecting deaf children, women and young people in rural areas calls for our intervention.

The Covid-19 pandemic has unearthed various gaps in delivery of health and education services to deaf people. It has brought new Challenges as well as new opportunities. COVID-19 has outstretched the health sector rendering access to health services very difficult for many vulnerable people including Deaf persons. Reproductive health (SRH) challenges have



increased. The delivery of SRH services to deaf people has been made complex by communication and cultural norms.

Additionally, there is an increasing drop out from school by deaf children. **Deaf children completing Primary education have underperformed. Online learning has also hit deaf people hard.** According to the recent results of the 2020 Primary Leaving Examinations, 51% of Deaf candidates were ungraded. The result which had a total of 218 Deaf candidates had none in First Division; 23 in second divisions; 38 in third division; 45 in fourth division and a huge 112 ungraded. More work ought to be done to translate available education and health literature into Uganda Sign Language. **We do call upon government to expedite passing of the national special needs and inclusive education policy to respond to some of these challenges.** Additionally, medics and teachers of the deaf need continuous sign language training.

Poverty still remains a major problem deaf people face in Uganda and thus **livelihoods support to deaf youth and women is pertinent.** This is coupled with the continuous need to address community attitudes, myths and stereotypes which contribute to vulnerability, low self-esteem and isolation.

Our Pledge for 2022...

For the year 2022, we will continue to establish networks and strategic partnerships as we strive to respond to the various challenges faced by deaf people. In line with UNAD's Strategic Plan, we will:

- Advocate for **inclusive gender services** & equality for deaf girls and women and other vulnerable groups like children, youth and the elderly.
- Promote the inclusion of deaf persons in **formal and non-formal education** in order to enhance their access to employment and participation in civic and economic processes.
- Work towards the realization of UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities (UNCRPD) and towards the achievement of the implementation Persons with Disabilities Act 2019 and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), **translating commitments into concrete actions.**
- Strengthen the ability of deaf persons, to make a viable living through **increasing opportunities and wealth creation.** With specific focus on skills for employment and entrepreneurship, microcredit as well as agribusiness.

We thank our members, donors and partners for building our institutional capacity and for being with us through thick and thin in our work as we strive to raise awareness, promote inclusion and empower deaf people. These partnerships offer renewed hope for the future as well as encouragement to push on with more determination for total inclusion in the longer term.

Wish you all a healthy and fulfilling New Year 2022.



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Executive Director - UNAD.

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