



Uganda National Association of the Deaf (UNAD)

Brief Profile:

Uganda National Association of the Deaf (UNAD) is a duly registered not-for-profit organization that represents all the deaf communities in Uganda. UNAD was established by deaf persons themselves in 1973 as an umbrella organization bringing together all the different categories of deaf people in Uganda. Since her formation, UNAD has grown from being a small association to a national one representing Deaf Associations in the various districts of Uganda.

According to the Uganda Bureau of Statistics national census (UBOS, 2014), there were approximately 1,083,964 Deaf people in Uganda. However, due to the inadequacies in data collection in addition to the fact that deafness is invisible, UNAD estimates the deaf population in Uganda to be much more.

The **vision** of UNAD is “Dignity for every deaf person”.

The **mission** of UNAD is “Building capacities, promotion of Uganda sign language, and advocating for the rights of deaf people.

Communication barriers faced by the Deaf persons prevent their integration, full participation in family, community and enjoyment of human rights entitled to all members of society. UNAD’s core competence, thus is the development and promotion of Uganda Sign Language so as to bridge the communication barrier between deaf people and hearing people. UNAD also provides technical skills that help to create economic and social opportunities to the deaf.

As one of its major thematic areas of our work, UNAD carries out advocacy and related activities to safeguard, promote and protect the rights of persons with disabilities and

enhance equalization of opportunities through access to education, economic opportunities, health and other services. The focus of UNAD is to help raise awareness of the problems and concerns faced by the deaf people and facilitate strategies that effectively address these concerns and challenges. UNAD also carries out capacity building for its members, safeguarding vulnerable deaf people, HIV/AIDS and gender awareness, influencing policies of government through advocacy and analyzing the available policies and initiating changes and networking with civil society with special focus on linguistic and related issues.

A major goal of Uganda National Association of the Deaf (UNAD) is full participation of all deaf people in the mainstream of life, particularly those who are the most marginalized and vulnerable especially in rural areas who form the vast majority of the country's disabled people's population.

UNAD is recognized both nationally and internationally. At the national level, the organization is a member of Uganda National NGO Forum and is consulted by the government as well as the civil society organizations on all matters related to deafness and disability. At the international front, UNAD is a member of World Federation of the Deaf who has consultative status with the UN. UNAD has been able in the past to mobilize funding from a number of international donors including Action Aid International, Swedish Handicap International Aid, Concern Uganda, Finland Association of the Deaf, Danish Deaf Association, Swedish Deaf Association. Action on Disability and Development (ADD) and USAID among others.

UNAD Values

1. Respect for our culture of Sign Language
2. Transparency and Accountability
3. Education and Diversity in Skills
4. Information Dissemination
5. Team work spirit
6. A supportive System of Management
7. Commitment
8. Flexibility
9. Time Management
10. Voluntarism
11. Humility and Humanity

UNAD Objectives

For the current strategic period, below are our objectives:

- 1) To promote Ugandan Sign Language as a legally recognized national language in its own right and to spread its use throughout Uganda via classes and outreach efforts.
- 2) Advocating and lobbying for reforms in laws, policies and programs that take in consideration the unique needs of deaf and disabled Ugandans in sectors of health, education, justice, employment, access to information and socio-economic empowerment.
- 3) To safeguard, combat marginalization, discrimination and exclusion of deaf persons from access to services and opportunities in the communities they live through awareness raising campaigns in all sectors.
- 4) To establish, represent support and empower District Associations of the Deaf and special interest groups like children, women, youth and elderly deaf persons.
- 5) To enhance livelihood security and independent living through access to formal employment, knowledge and skills for self-employment and Income Generation activities start up support.
- 6) To promote formal and non-formal education of the deaf through various interventions including translation of learning materials into sign language, empowerment of deaf learners through delivery of life skills programs, capacity building of parents, teachers and other education service providers.
- 7) To enhance the institutional capacity of UNAD to implement the strategic plan and address her member needs ably.

Governance and Management:

UNAD is currently governed by an 11-member Board of Directors as the decision making body of the association. All the board members are deaf persons. The Board of Directors is elected for a period of five years by the General Assembly. The General Assembly consists of delegations from the 4 regions of Uganda that have representatives from each of the Districts of Uganda. The Executive Director who heads the Secretariat is an ex-officio Secretary to the Board. The executive Director is also a deaf person.

UNAD has a well-structured secretariat led by the Executive Director who has a Master's degree in Social Sector Planning and Management. The organization has an accounts department headed by a qualified Finance and Administration Manager. The accounting and financial functions are well documented in a financial and accounting manual/policy with all the necessary systems and procedures in place. The accounting procedures of UNAD are in line with international standards. Independent Auditing is done by qualified certified Auditors. The organization has also successfully accounted for grants provided by many organizations.

Thematic Program Areas:

- i. **Gender:** To advocate for inclusive gender services & equality for deaf girls and women and other vulnerable groups like children, youth and the elderly.
- ii. **Education:** To 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.
- iii. **Advocacy and communication:** Towards the realization of UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities (UNCRP) and towards the achievement of the implementation Persons with Disabilities Act 2019 and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), UNAD Mobilizes government, international organizations, civil society, the private sector and other stakeholders to support deaf/disability community in Uganda translating commitments into concrete actions.
- iv. **Secure Livelihoods:** To 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.

Current activities and achievements:

Throughout the years, we have registered the following achievements among others:

- Sign language training, development and use in line with the needs of the deaf people.
- HIV/ AIDS awareness, counselling and psycho-social support.
- Gender mainstreaming in all programs.
- Sensitization, advocacy, lobbying and networking with Organizations of Disabled People (OPDs) and other partners to influence policies and laws, secure their implementation and access provision of services and resources from government and CSOs.
- Strengthening, establishing and supporting district associations of the deaf, groups of Deaf women, Deaf youth, Interpreters and the elderly.

- Development of programs and systems for enhancing effective management of human resources.
- Fundraising and resource mobilization which has enabled UNAD and its members generate funds for poverty alleviation programs and administration.
- Strengthening and developing financial policies and procedures for effective management of funds in line with donor requirements and international management standards.
- Monitoring and evaluation of program activities to assess their impact on the community in line with the organization's mission.
- Contributing to the emancipation of African and world-wide Deaf and disability communities by actively participating in programs that contribute to the empowerment of all persons with disabilities.

By implementing the above interventions UNAD has been able to register a number of important achievements for the Deaf people including:

- ✓ Succeeded in securing the inclusion of Sign language in the national Constitution of the Republic of Uganda. (Cultural objective XXIV (c)). Uganda is one of the few countries in the world where Sign Language has been written into the constitution. Finland, South Africa and other countries followed.
- ✓ UNAD researched, compiled and produced the first ever Uganda Sign Language manual in use. This Manual However needs review to align with the emerging developments.
- ✓ Together with the Uganda National Institute of Special Education (now a national university), UNAD played an important role in developing the first ever Sign Language dictionary in Uganda.
- ✓ UNAD has been able to train Sign language instructors who are currently training Sign Language in the country. The demand for sign language training is however huge as compared to the available resources.
- ✓ UNAD has built the capacity of many Sign Language interpreters. These are helping the deaf people in accessing services like Education, medical services and information.
- ✓ UNAD has established Deaf Associations covering most districts in the whole country.
- ✓ With support from the Ministry of Education through the department of Special Needs Education, UNAD has been able to train teachers of the Deaf in Sign Language.

- ✓ UNAD was able to set up Deaf drama project to sensitize the public about the rights, needs and raise the awareness of the value of Sign Language to Deaf People through theatrical activities.
- ✓ UNAD has trained parents of the deaf children in sign language to ease communication at home with their deaf children.
- ✓ UNAD succeeded in persuading the Government and Kyambogo University to start Sign Language research and professional Sign Language Interpretation program at Kyambogo University.
- ✓ UNAD in 1996 sponsored and successfully campaigned for the world's first Deaf Member of Parliament who uses Sign language. There are Deaf Councilors in local Government. Emulating Uganda's example, the South African Deaf community also recently secured a Deaf MP.
- ✓ UNAD acquired a piece of land which was used to set up a Resource and Vocational Training Centre and an income generating venture for the deaf.
- ✓ UNAD has been generating income from the sale of t/shirts, sign language dictionaries and from sign language training.
- ✓ UNAD led a coalition of Organizations of Disabled People to draft the persons with Disabilities Bill and pushed for its enactment into Law by the parliament. This became the PWDs Act 2020.
- ✓ Taking into account the above achievements the World Federation of the Deaf (WFD) which has consultative status with the United Nations (UN) awarded UNAD the "*Premio Vittorio Le ralla*" Grand Award. The award is the highest of its kind in WFD and is given to one country over 5 years in recognition of its outstanding contribution (achievements) in the field of protection and promotion of Sign Language and Human rights of the Deaf people. Uganda was the first African country to get such an award.

Current challenges:

Despite these successes, UNAD is still very far in reaching its big number of deaf members who continue to live a marginalized life. Every day, we receive requests for sign language training and capacity building to deaf people yet our resources are limited. Also a number of problems affect deaf children, women and young in rural areas which need our intervention. The challenges which remain and which need our continues intervention include:

- Sign language training to deaf children, family members and service providers in rural areas. Many interested individuals and organizations still need our training services.

- Livelihoods support to deaf youth and women. Poverty still remains a major problem deaf people face in Uganda.
- Safeguarding deaf people's rights, limited awareness and Community attitudes, myths and stereotypes which contribute to vulnerability, low self-esteem and isolation.
- Illiteracy amongst majority deaf people. There is an increasing drop out from school by deaf children. Additionally, teachers of the deaf and their parents need continuous sign language training.
- Inaccessible information and communication which makes deaf people miss out on important information across sectors.
- Limited geographical coverage, only few Districts where visible activities are carried out due to resource constraints.

Conclusion:

UNAD primarily strives to enhance the performance and ability of its members' groups to deliver high-impact, cost effective, and innovative programs in order to bring about equitable and sustainable socio-economic development in Uganda. UNAD works towards realizing this by facilitating capacity building and learning within the organization to improve efficiency of services being rendered, promote cooperation and synergy between members and also with wider civil society. Through networking and partnerships, UNAD strives to ensure dignity and best quality life for every deaf person. To meet our duty of care towards the people we serve, our partners and communities, UNAD has a policy and guidelines for prevention of exploitation, abuse and harassment. We integrate safeguarding in our ways of work and commit to maintaining a safe environment for all.

Contacts:

The Executive Director,

P.O. Box 7339, Kampala - Uganda

Tel: +256 414 532 875 / Mob: +256 782 974891

Email: unad@infocom.co.ug / bobnkwangu@yahoo.com