



**PRESS STATEMENT BY THE GHANA NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF THE DEAF
(GNAD) ON WORLD HEARING DAY – 3RD MARCH 2026**

The World Health Organization (WHO) recognizes 3rd March each year as World Hearing Day (WHD), a global campaign aimed at raising awareness and encouraging action to prevent hearing loss and improve hearing care. The theme for World Hearing Day 2026 is “*From Communities to Classrooms: Hearing Care for All Children*” and it highlights the urgent need for inclusive educational environment for learners who are deaf and hard of hearing.

The 2021 World Report on Hearing reveals that 1 in 5 people globally lives with hearing loss, and 80% of them reside in low- and middle-income countries. The majority do not have access to essential interventions such as hearing aids and other support services.

In Ghana, the 2021 Population and Housing Census reports that 470,737 people have some degree of hearing loss. Out of this number, 385,794 experience some difficulty, 65,495 have a lot of difficulty, and 19,448 cannot hear at all. Additionally, 279,818 people nationwide have speech difficulties. These figures may even be higher due to stigma, which discourages many individuals from disclosing their hearing status.

Like many persons with disabilities, individuals with hearing loss, especially children, face stigma, marginalization, and limited access to essential services inclusive education that complies with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). It is estimated that over 80% of children with varying degrees of hearing loss in Ghana are either out of school or lack access to specialized teachers and appropriate interventions such as Ghanaian Sign Language.

Hearing loss, if not identified and addressed early, can have far-reaching consequences, including delayed language development, poor educational outcomes, and negative psychosocial effects. Evidence shows that many deaf children in Ghana are either unaware of their hearing status, denied access to formal education, or placed in classrooms without appropriate support services. It is estimated that one in three deaf children misses out on education during the first four years of schooling, significantly affecting their long-term development.

Early screening and timely referral to appropriate educational and support services can mitigate these challenges. However, negative societal attitudes and misconceptions about deafness discourage disclosure, limit access to medical intervention, and reduce family investment in the development of deaf children.

As Ghana joins the international community to observe World Hearing Day 2026, the Ghana National Association of the Deaf wishes to re-echo WHO's warning that hearing loss, if not identified and addressed early, can have far-reaching consequences. This may include adverse impacts on language development and psychosocial well-being.

We therefore call on the Ministry of Health and the Ghana Health Service to integrate newborn hearing screening into Ghana's routine postnatal care system to ensure early identification and intervention. We also call on the Ministry of Gender, Children, and Social Protection to collaborate with relevant institutions and organizations to implement comprehensive public awareness campaigns, in line with Article 8 of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), to combat stigma and promote understanding of hearing loss, and the Ministry of Gender, Children, and Social Protection and the National Council on Persons with Disabilities to expedite the submission of the revised Persons with Disabilities Act (Act 715) before Parliament and strengthen its implementation. Finally, we call on the Ministry of Education and the National Accreditation Board to ensure that schools seeking accreditation meet a minimum standard of accessibility, including facilities for admission and accommodation of deaf children in mainstream schools.

GNAD wishes to emphasize that deafness is not a barrier to learning and that deaf children can achieve greater heights in education and employment if given the needed support. The existence of hearing loss should never be a ground for denying a child the right to education. WHO recognizes age-appropriate sign languages as a key intervention for children with hearing loss. In Ghana, Ghanaian Sign Language is the appropriate and accessible language for deaf children, particularly in a context where advanced medical technologies and hearing devices remain expensive or inaccessible to many families.

ABOUT GHANA NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF THE DEAF

The GNAD is the national organization of Deaf people in Ghana. The GNAD is the mouthpiece of Deaf people working to ensure that every Deaf person in Ghana enjoys the right to a life of dignity. The GNAD seeks to achieve an active and productive Deaf community with access to education and information, and secure economic opportunities that can sustain and improve their quality of life. The GNAD achieves its vision through mobilizing members, removing communication barriers, creating awareness of Deaf issues, and advocating for equal opportunities for Deaf people.

The GNAD is registered with the Registrar General Department and Social Welfare. The Association is affiliated with the World Federation of the Deaf (WFD), the largest international non-governmental organization; the WFD Regional Secretariat for Western and Central Africa (WCAR); the Ghana Federation of Disability Organizations (GFD); and the host organization for WFD's WCAR transnational Capacity Building Project.

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

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