Everyone is in a state of confusion and panic because of the COVID-19 pandemic. The mere mention of its name, attack and fatality rates sends shivers down the spine and the number of infected persons keep rising by the day. This situation is putting governments and health workers on their toes all over the world, to ensure that citizens are safe from infection. Fortunately, the media houses are serving their purpose of acting as mediums for Public Health education, and the spread of information is so impressive that every Tom, Dick and Harry is seemingly in the know of this dangerous pandemic.

However, there seems to be a neglected few, the deaf community. In the case of Ghana, about 0.4 percent of the population is deaf, a figure translated by the Ghana Statistical Service as approximately 211,712 people. Unfortunately, our brothers and sisters of this community do not seem to benefit from the awareness that the general public is exposed to through media houses in this time of need. Our media houses fail to include sign language interpretation in their discussions and the health ministry or Ghana Health Service is not doing anything different either. In spite of these inadequacies, I would like to believe that the teachers, who mostly double as the health educators/promoters in the about 16 Schools for the Deaf in Ghana, have been able to satisfy this all-important need so far to the best of their abilities.

It is essential that we consider people with disabilities in this great fight. Thus, if we want to limit or truncate the spread of the COVID-19 in Ghana and everywhere in the world, everyone must be involved including the deaf community who also need equal privileges, just like everyone else. Thanks to the government of the day for releasing funds to make this fight possible but we stand to have a fruitless battle if there is a neglected group of our society. The various ministries mandated to ensure a safe populace must ensure that health education is an all-inclusive affair and must reach every nook and cranny of our society. This is the time for us to remain resolute and united at the frontline to fight a common enemy, no other as dangerous and lethal as this virus.

The visual media and press must involve stakeholders of the deaf community and employ the services of experts and even special education students from the universities who specialise in sign language, to help in the dissemination of information about the COVID-19. We must make good use of sign language interpreters, NGOs and other philanthropic organisations to help the deaf community and any other seemingly neglected communities (like the orphanages and prisons) to help in the fight against the COVID-19.
This fight has just begun and we must be armed to the teeth. The best cure for our panic situation at this moment is a constant flow of timely and wholesome information from our stakeholders. We must not ignore the possibility of this menace spreading out of our control and so must try our very best to work assiduously to keep everyone well informed even if they live in a hole. As a reminder, let us remember to always wash our hands with soap and water, exercise regularly, eat nutritious food with vegetables and fruits, avoid handshakes, hugs or kisses, practice good cough and sneezing etiquette, avoid crowded places and maintain good health in general.

Let me use this opportunity to encourage everyone who means well to try their hands-on sign language as it is quite a fulfilling experience. Let us always remember that, the deaf community also matters, just like everyone else. Ghana needs us all!!!