

PWDs CoP

Event Report

April 2023



IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DISABILITY ACT: BREAKING BARRIERS AND CREATING OPPORTUNITIES FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

Venue:
Laps New World Hotel, Jabi, Abuja

Date:
27th-28th April, 2023

ABBREVIATIONS & ACRONYMS

1. CBO Community-Based Organizations
2. CoP Community of Practice
3. CSO Civil Society Organization(s)
4. FAAN Federal Airport Authority of Nigeria
5. FCT Federal Capital Territory
6. FGD Focused Group Discussion
7. GDP Gross Domestic Product
8. GESI Gender, Equity, and Social Inclusive
9. IDI In-Depth Interview
10. MDAs Ministries, Departments and Agencies
11. NCAA Nigerian Civil Aviation Authority
12. NGOs Non-Governmental Organizations
13. NINE Network of Incubators and Innovators in Nigeria
14. NOA National Orientation Agency
15. OPD Organizations of Persons with Disabilities
16. PWDs Persons with Disabilities
17. RBO Religious Based Organizations
18. SMART Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time-bound
19. UN United Nations

PARTICIPATING ORGANIZATIONS

CoP Members

1. Centre for Ability, Rehabilitation and Empowerment (CARE)
2. MotherHen Development Foundation (MDF)
3. Disability Advancement Initiative (DAI)
4. Foundation for Societal Empowerment and Rejuvenation (FOSER)
5. Disability Not A Barrier Initiative (DINABI)
6. Physically Challenged Empowerment Initiatives
7. Spinal Cord Injuries Association of Nigeria (SCIAN), Bauchi State Chapter
8. The Albino Foundation (TAF), Plateau State Chapter
9. National Association of Persons with Physical Disabilities
10. Haly Hope Foundation
11. SafeHost International Initiative
12. Albinism Network Association

Government

1. Federal Ministry of Women Affairs
2. National Commission for Persons with Disabilities
3. National Commission for Colleges of Education, Abuja
4. National Human Rights Commission
5. Federal Ministry of Education
6. Federal Radio Cooperation of Nigeria (FRCN)
7. Nigerian Television Authority (NTA)

Other Stakeholders

8. Hope Alive for Possibilities initiative
9. Quantitative Magazine
10. The International Federation of Women Lawyers (FIDA), Abuja
11. The Nations paper
12. Network of Women with Disabilities
13. Plus TV

14. Abuja Association of the Blind
15. Abuja Association of the Deaf (AAD)
16. MimiJane Foundation
17. Potters Gallery Initiative
18. Inclusive Friends Association
19. Albinism Aid Network
20. Aderonke Rehabilitation Network
21. Cedar Seed Foundation
22. Joint National Association for Persons with Disability (JONAPWD), Lagos
23. Foundation for Persons with Disabilities in Niger Delta
24. News24 International
25. Dargic Communications
26. BLAC
27. Jika Foundation
28. Amputee Coalition of Nigeria
29. Advocacy for Women with Disability Initiative
30. Nigeria Association of the Blind (NAB)

Online Participants

1. Persons with Albinism, Ekiti State
2. Association of Persons with Disabilities, Ado Odo Ota, Ogun State
3. Network of Women with Disability (NWD)
4. Advocacy for Women with Disability Initiative
5. Joint National Association of Persons with Disabilities (JONAPWD) Ekiti
6. Sussan Unique Oasis Foundation (SUOF)
7. National Association of Persons with Physical Disability (NAPWPD)
8. Spinal Cord Injury Association of Nigeria (SCIAN), Bauchi State Chapter
9. Network of Disabled Women (NDW), Plateau State

10. Joint National Association for Persons with Disabilities (JONAPWD),
Osun
11. Albinism Network Association (ANA)
12. Keep Hope Alive Community Development Initiative
13. Advocacy for Women with Disabilities Initiative (Awwdi
Organization)
14. Lifespring Africa Initiative
15. Inclusive Skills Development Initiative (ISDI)
16. Joint National Association of Persons with Disabilities (JONAPWD)
17. Deaf Women Association of Nigeria (DWAN)
18. Foundation for Societal Empowerment and Rejuvenation (FOSER)
19. Fidelity Bank

Background

The Voice Persons With Disabilities (PWD) Community of Practice (CoP) is a community of passionate actors in the disability community who come together to pursue a common goal of mutual learning aimed at advocating and amplifying the cause of the PWD community positively. Though each organisation have their thematic areas of impact as disability has a wide spectrum, there are pertinent common issues that border on awareness, communication, policies and governance which is cross-cutting across all these spectrums and this is where the learning community has come together to address the aforementioned issues and innovate around how best to resolve them. This communal effort not only benefits the wider disability community of which many CoP members are rightsholders, but the intervention also helps the individuals and organisations with learnings which help to expand the positive impact in their various projects while leveraging the network to attend to the peculiarities of their respective projects.

The Community of Practice (CoP) also serves as a learning and resource centre for actors in the disability space, providing a platform for collaboration, learning, and sharing new information.



A cross-section of participants during the event

Overview

The Voice PWDs CoP provides a space for the disability community to connect, share experiences and innovate solutions to the hydra-headed challenges that the community faces doubling as Organizations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs) and rightsholders. Under the linking and learning component of the Voice project in Nigeria, coordinated by Oxfam and facilitated by Cognito and NINE, the community is supported in their quest for a more accessible and inclusive society. The community hold frequent capacity-building meetings co-created by members with a focus on innovatively creating awareness for disability issues, rights and policies as well as ideation around how best PWDs and related issues can be mainstreamed into public and private entities

The 2-day physical activity held between 27th - 28th April, 2023, aimed to educate CoP members and Stakeholders across Nigeria on the rights of people with disabilities, the right terminologies to use and how to engage with PWDs. The theme for this event was "Implementation of the National Disability Act; Breaking Barriers and Creating Opportunities for People with Disabilities"

Objectives

The objectives of this event were;

1. To strengthen the capacity of PWDs CoP members and other stakeholders as this will contribute to the goal of enabling individuals and organizations to have more knowledge about PWD issues and their rights.

2. To Simplify, Produce and Disseminate a simplified version of the National Disability Act as this will help to reach out to a larger population of individuals and stakeholders across Nigeria educating them on the rights of people with disabilities and the provisions of the Disability Act in Nigeria.

3. Educate CoP members and Stakeholders across Nigeria on the right terminologies to use and how to engage with PWDs.

DAY 1



The meeting started at about 10:00 am, moderated by one of the CoP Members, Funso Olajide, who welcomed everyone to the event and facilitated the introduction of participants present. The CoP Chair, Favour Adjara, also welcomed participants to the event. She started by interactively asking the participants, 'Who is a stakeholder and a rightsholder?'. Responses were varied, but the consensus was that Stakeholders are duty-bearers and Rightsholders are the beneficiaries of a particular intervention or program in the community.

The point was also emphasized that a Stakeholder can also be a Rightsholder as the focus of the community is the principle of "Nothing for us without us." Representing Voice in Nigeria, the Linking and Learning Amplifier Officer, Cedric Owuru gave the opening address where he said that Voice is an innovative grant-making facility and the CoP is a component of the linking and learning of voice. In his words, "For us to effect any change that we feel is necessary, we need to learn, and that is the purpose of this program."

Introduction and Opening

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Goodwill messages were then given by various stakeholders present, namely:

- National Commission for Persons with Disabilities
- National Human Rights Commission
- Federal Ministry of Women Affairs
- The International Federation of Women Lawyers (FIDA Abuja)
- National Commission for Colleges of Education
- National Commission for Colleges of Education
- Joint National Association of Persons with Disabilities Abuja Chapter
- Cognito

Session on Understanding the Concept of Disabilities

This session was facilitated by the CoP Chair Favour Adjara; in her session on "Understanding the Concept of Disabilities", she facilitated an interactive session with the participants where she asked them the meaning of disability, and all the responses were geared towards disability as a movement limitation and limitation to participate in physical activity, participation in physical activity for PWD becomes more difficult due to the following factors; discrimination, stigmatisation, lack of information, lack of access to infrastructure and public amenities, isolation, lack of enlightenment as well as negative attitudes towards PWD. These issues call for the need to double, or even triple, advocacy efforts of the CoP to dismantle the biases and barriers that exist in society.

Further expounding on the concept of disabilities, the facilitator went on to explain the different disability models, which she identified as;

- Medical model - where disability is seen as a health problem that needs to be fixed
- Charity model - where PWDs are dismissed as beggars on the street
- Rights-based model - which demands equal opportunity for everyone
- Social model - which sees disability as a social problem and, therefore, society should fix disability before PWDs can be accepted

Highlighting the right terminologies to address PWDs, It was stated that it is important to use the proper terminology when addressing PWDs because you should see the person first before their disability. There are names for every type of disability which are neither derogatory nor discriminatory in their usage. The community should educate as many people as possible on disability rights and the right terminologies to use.

Q&A Session;

1. Should we be sensitising people on equity or equality? Do we advocate for equity or equality? Response: Equity as against equality, while equality provides the same platform for all, equity is inclusive of our diverse individual needs. Recognising we do not all start from the same place, and must acknowledge to make adjustments to imbalances.

2. What is the difference between autism, cerebral palsy, and down syndrome? Response: Cerebral palsy is a neurological condition, meaning it involves the nervous system, and it begins with the brain. It manifests primarily as a disorder of movement and muscle tone symptoms ranging from mild to severe and debilitating. Down syndrome is a congenital chromosomal disability.

It occurs when a child develops in the womb with an extra copy of chromosome 21; the extra chromosome causes developmental delays and all of the characteristics seen in children and adults with down syndrome. There are some distinctive physical features of down syndrome, including flattened facial features, small ears, small hands and feet, a short neck, and short stature. Autism is a complex developmental condition. Individuals with autism face persistent challenges involving social communication, repetitive behaviour, and limited interests. It is a lifelong condition, but the range of signs and symptoms can vary significantly between two individuals. The signs of autism become noticeable when a child is between 2 and 3 years old.

Session on Overview of the Discrimination Against Persons with Disabilities Prohibition Act & Validation of the Simplified Act

Barrister Tracy Onabis facilitated the second session for the day on the National Discrimination against Persons with Disabilities Prohibition Act. The facilitator began with the catchy phrase; “the greatest disability is the inability to see another person as more”. This session aimed to strengthen understanding of the Discrimination against Persons with Disabilities Prohibition Act 2018, also regarded as the National Disability Act or just Disability Act, and to validate the simplified version of the Disability Act put together by the community of practice. She opined that persons with disabilities have had bad experiences while growing up because they lack a legal framework to protect them. The PWDs Act has backing in the constitution under section 15 (2) of the constitution.

- **Prohibition of Discrimination:** Discrimination against PWDs is a criminal offence punishable by law in the Disability Act. According to the Act, within a 5-year window, all public structures should be restructured to cater to PWD accessibility. The Act is for PWDs to engage and be included. Similarly, the Act made provision for equal and equitable access to the recruitment process.

- **Access to Justice:** When PWDs report acts of discrimination against them and similar experiences to the police, sometimes it is trivialised because it comes from a PWD. A PWD can also make a civil case out of the injustice, harm, or discrimination to seek redress.
- **Access to Education:** This calls for inclusive education which allows children regardless of disability status to be integrated into the same class and school to aid their integration into the society later in life. This also provides a platform that educates people and removes the barrier to discrimination. This provision of the Act is to better the welfare of the PWD and improve their access.



What has limited the full implementation of the Act?

After reviewing some of the barriers hindering the full implementation of the Act, Barrister Onabis stated that a lot of work still needs to be done to create awareness of the rights of PWDs in society. The facilitator ended the session with a question to guide focus group discussions aimed at interrogating the factors responsible for the poor implementation of the Act so far while also proffering ideas on how these can be addressed.

Session on Mainstreaming Accessibility & Inclusion in Programs

The session was facilitated by the Chief Responsibility Officer of the Centre for Ability Rehabilitation and Empowerment (CARE), Dr. Chike Okogwu, who called on the National Disability Commission to start 'barking' because this will also prompt the Federal Government (FG) to start acting. He continued by defining the three key terms that formed the basis of discussion for the day:

- Mainstreaming refers to the process of incorporating the needs and voices of people with disabilities (PWDs) into (sharing the ideas, attitudes, or activities that are by most people and regarded as normal or conventional)
- Accessibility is the degree to which a facility or a service is designed to be used by PWDs
- Inclusion refers to the principle and practice of ensuring that individuals with disabilities have equal access to opportunities, services, and resources as those without disabilities. It is about creating an environment where people with disabilities can fully participate, engage, and contribute to society on an equal basis with others.

He went further to say that the signing of the 2018 Disability Act in Nigeria was a significant achievement in the journey towards PWDs inclusion. The community has come a long way from when it was invisible in government policies. The master-servant era, or 1st phase of power as espoused in the book - Power and Powerlessness by John Gaventa, manifested as the exclusion in recognition of PWDs as human beings to the provision of basic amenities to them.

The achievement of the Act and 2nd phase of power is commendable where PWDs are now sitting on the table with the FGN through the National Commission for Persons with Disabilities to address many issues, including education, employment, transportation, housing, and access to public buildings and services will go a long way in protecting the rights of PWDs.

As much as the achievements made are being celebrated, a lot still needs to be done to ensure full inclusion and opportunities for PWDs, as implemented in Nigeria by the Federal and State Disability Commissions. He further stated that he is delighted to speak on the five key strategies that the incoming government of President-elect Bola Tinubu can employ to support mainstreaming, accessibility, and inclusion of PWDs in Nigeria and bring the community to John Gaventa's 3rd face of power or Hegemony stage where resources are allocated to everyone.



First, the government should prioritise disability-inclusive education through inclusive policies by the Ministry of Education, which will help to provide the practical educational infrastructure that promotes accessibility and support the educational needs of PWDs.

Second, there is a need for policymakers to create and enforce disability standards that enhance public building accessibility. The community must ensure that public buildings, transportation systems, and services meet the accessibility requirements of PWDs, just like the NCAA and FAAN are doing a great job in the aviation sector.

Third, affirmative action policies that promote the employment of PWDs in both public and private sectors are needed, as well as incentives to encourage employers to hire PWDs. 5% of incoming president-elect Bola Tinubu's ministers (2 at least) and advisers in the new cabinet must be PWDs in accordance with the 2018 Disability Act. Doing this alone will spread the message to all states and local governments to do the same. The private sector and MDAs will immediately follow suit, and 15% of the hitherto lost GDP will be reclaimed, as former UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon advised.

Fourth, the government should support organisations and other bodies that provide services that promote the social and economic well-being of PWDs.

Finally, the government should prioritise economic empowerment for people with disabilities by providing accessible loan opportunities to scale up their businesses and improve their self-employment abilities.

With CARE's experience working with the aviation industry, there have been achievements within the sector to mainstream accessible and inclusive services, ranging from air travel to airport assistance. A similar approach can be adopted and replicated in other sectors while looking forward to further collaborations to make this achievable.

The facilitator concluded by thanking Voice and Oxfam for providing him with the opportunity to speak on this vital topic and further urged the incoming administration to work towards a more inclusive Nigeria by strengthening the National Disability Commission alongside Organizations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs) to achieve the desired goals of total inclusion of PWDs in Nigeria.

Comments & Experience Sharing

The floor was opened for participants to ask questions or make comments, and the below comments were made.



- Domestication of the Act in rural communities, especially in the north, should be done because this will make advocacy easier.
- Structural access for PWDs in rural areas is crucial to allow better access to their farms.
- Everybody should support the PWDs in the advocacy while all organizations can support in ensuring the implementation of the Act.

The women leader of JONAPWD, Abuja chapter ended the comment session by urging the community to add value to themselves as PWDs, get abreast with the provisions of the Act, use the right terminologies, look good, and boost their self-esteem.

Closing

In closing, the following action steps were decided on;

1. Conduct proactive outreach to private building owners, urging them to take steps towards enhancing accessibility for persons with disabilities. Encourage the establishment of dedicated committees within these establishments to facilitate the process of making their buildings more accessible.
2. Organise a media advocacy session before 29th May 2023, when the new administration will be sworn in, to remind the incoming government of the need for inclusion, especially getting the representation of the PWD in the cabinet.
3. Walk from Eagle Square to Defence House to advocate for the appointment of at least 2 PWDs as Ministers

After the discussions were finalized, the program came to a close at 3:15 pm

DAY 2



National Anthem and Introductions

The Day-2 program started around 9:30 am with the recitation of the National anthem followed by introductions. The CoP Chair, Favour Adjara, facilitated the day's proceedings.

Recap of Day 1

The Day-2 program started around 9:30 am with the recitation of the National anthem followed by introductions. The CoP Chair, Favour Adjara, facilitated the day's proceedings.

Comments on learnings from day one include:

- Learnt about the meaning of disabilities and restrictions and barriers
- Concept of disability and the different models, discrimination against PWDs and implementation of the Act.
- Proper terminologies that should be used for PWDs
- Mainstreaming PWDs will improve inclusion
- PWDs are first human beings before their disability



Session on Strategic Advocacy

This session was anchored by a CoP member, Funso Olajide, he began the session with the concepts around strategic advocacy which he outlined as;

- Public enlightenment
- Community mobilisation
- Sensitization
- Activism
- Mass mobilisation
- Informing and educating
- Awareness

The Facilitator defined advocacy as a set of targeted actions directed at decision-makers on a specific policy or related issues. Advocacy is also speaking up, drawing attention to an important policy issue, and directing decision-makers toward a solution.



Requirements for successful advocacy:

Highlighting the requirements for a successful advocacy, Mr. Olajide listed the below points

1. Internal agreement within the group; agree on issues to be tackled, and stakeholders to be visited.
2. Information management
3. Knowledge of institutional operation; understand the hierarchy of the institution
4. Human, financial, and material resources.
5. Internal educational component; research, press review etc
6. Knowledge of the political reality

Types of Advocacies

1. Policy advocacy
2. Legislative advocacy
3. Budget advocacy

Advocacy Skills required

- Communication/public speaking
- Research
- Interpersonal relationship
- Observation
- Data interpretation
- People
- Analytical
- Planning and organizing
- Alliance/partnership building
- Negotiation
- Dialogue
- Ego management

Common Errors in Advocacy

- Being overly dramatic
- Being unnecessarily offensive
- Exaggerating
- Not being patient or flexible
- Making excessive and unnecessary demands
- Not taking the time to learn the history
- Not acknowledging positives and not following through
- Taking issues personally
- Putting undue pressure to get commitment

Challenges in Advocacy

- Lack of resources
- Poor relationship building strategies
- Inability to be positive, persistent and monitor change
- Poor communication etc

Advocacy Process

- Identify issues
- Analysis
- Set objectives
- Identify targets
- Identify allies
- Define the message
- Select tools
- Plan for monitoring and evaluation

Question & Answer Session

- 1.How does a starter begin considering resources and other factors that need to be put in place? **Answer:** Not every advocacy is resource intensive. You can leverage on allies.
- 2.How do you handle difficult stakeholders? **Answer:** leverage on networks that you can use to access them.
- 3.How do you manage information? **Answer:** respect the dignity of another person.
- 4.Is it necessary to give tokens to stakeholders during advocacy? **Answer:** not necessary for advocacy but may come in handy for the purpose of lobbying



Group Work on Strategic Advocacy – Linking it to why there is a poor Implementation of the Disability Law in Nigeria

Looking at the poor implementation of the National Disability Law, questions asked included – what do we think is the major problem that hinders the full implementation? Is it a lack of Political will and power, or lack of systems and structures, or knowledge about the National Disability Act? The groups were asked to answer the questions using the approach below:

1. What innovative advocacy approaches have we applied that worked? What made it work, and how can we build on it?
2. What advocacy approaches have we applied that didn't work, and why did it not work? Should we continue it or leave it behind?
3. What new innovative advocacy can we apply?

Group work in pictures



Panel Session (Implementation of the Disability Act)

The day concluded with a panel session where stakeholders from FIDA Abuja, the Federal Ministry of Women Affairs, the Federal Ministry of Education, The National Disability Commission, the National Human Right Commission and National Commission for College of Education came together in a panel session to discuss pertinent PwDs issues and how each stakeholder can play a role to ensure inclusivity and accessibility for PwDs in their activities and programs. The panelists brainstormed ways to address barriers, create supportive environments, and implement policies that promote equal participation and opportunities for PwDs. The following were key highlights from the panel discussion:

- Implementation of policies and laws aimed at mainstreaming PwDs in the educational sector.
- Providing comprehensive capacity-building training for stakeholders to ensure awareness of the 5-year timeframe for achieving accessibility in all public facilities.
- Development of policy documents specifically tailored to address the issues of PwDs in all sectors.
- The National Commission for Colleges of Education and the Ministry of Women Affairs are actively incorporating PwDs into their workforce.
- All stakeholders in the panel discussion have committed to ensuring accessibility in their facilities and are actively working towards continuous improvement.
- The Ministry of Education oversees both unity and integrated schools, with scholarships being offered to certain PwDs.



Closing Remarks

The program ended with a closing remark by CoP member Funso Olajide and the CoP leader Favour Adjara who appreciated everyone for their time and patience all through the 2-day event while wishing everyone safety to their destinations.

Thereafter, the program came to a close by 5 pm with the National prayers

