

INCLUSION

**SPECIAL
ANNIVERSARY
EDITION**
Celebrating
Children with
Disabilities

**+
DISABILITY RIGHTS
IN NIGERIA: NEED
TO IMPLEMENT THE
2018 ACT**

**SCHOLARSHIPS,
TEACHERS PROVIDED
FOR PERSONS WITH
DISABILITIES
— ABDULRAZAQ**

**'SOCIETY
DISCRIMINATES'
BRANDS US AS
WASTED
INVESTMENTS"**



**Tanko
Almakura**

**Stereotype Reports About Persons
With Disabilities Must Cease**



**FEDERAL INLAND REVENUE SERVICE
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**PUBLIC NOTICE ON LOCAL FILING PROVISION IN REGULATION 4 OF THE
INCOME TAX (COUNTRY BY COUNTRY REPORTING) REGULATIONS 2018.**

The Income Tax (Country by Country Reporting) Regulations S.I. No.6 of 2018 ("CbC Regulations") was published in 2018 and has thereafter entered into force. The requirement to file CbC Reports forms part of the enhanced transfer pricing documentation set-out in BEPS Action 13 report.

Regulation 4 of the CbC Regulations provides that MNEs, not being the Ultimate Parent Entity, shall comply with local filing obligation i.e. by filing CbC reports to the Federal Inland Revenue Service ("the Service"), under the circumstances stated therein.

The Service hereby notifies branches and subsidiaries of Multinational Enterprises (MNEs) operating in Nigeria that the implementation of local filing requirements is suspended until further notice.

The Service further clarifies that nothing in this notice shall preclude the multinational enterprises whose headquarters are located in Nigeria or surrogate parent entities from filing CbC reports as provided under the CbC Regulations.

Furthermore, all relevant entities are required to continue to comply with all other obligations (e.g. filing of notification) under the CbC Regulations.

All enquiries on any aspect of this circular should be directed to the office of:

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or Director,
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Revenue House,
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Signed
Muhammad Nami
Executive Chairman,
Federal Inland Revenue Service

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Message from Publisher/CEO



**Alhaji Hussaini
Abdulrahman, FCNA**
Wakili Arewa Nupe

As children world over celebrate another children's day, myself and the entire management and staff of A K Global Concepts Limited, publishers of INCLUSION magazine wish to felicitate with all Nigerian children.

We specifically want to use this medium to celebrate children with disabilities in any form, that they are indeed special and unique.

As a parent, I call on all parents with children with disabilities to draw strength from the fact that the world is gradually getting better for their wards especially with the global inclusive policy initiatives.

It is commendable that under this administration, President Muhammadu Buhari GCFR on January 23rd 2019, signed into law, the Discrimination against Persons with Disabilities (Prohibition) Act.

The Act prohibits all forms of discrimination against Persons with Disabilities. It penalises an individual found violating the provisions of the Act, with a fine of N100,000 or a term of six months imprisonment. The law imposes a fine of one million naira on corporate bodies.

The Act also prohibits discrimination against Persons with Disability in the use of public transportation facilities. Under the Act, service providers are to make provisions for the physically, visually and hearing impaired and all persons with any form of disabilities. This also

applies to seaports, railways and airport facilities.

The Act has clearly emphasised the rights and privileges of Persons with Disabilities to include education, health care, priority in accommodation and emergencies. In the area of gainful employment, all public organisations are to reserve at least five per cent job opportunities for these persons.

Let me state here that knowledge is power, seeking assistance for your child is a serious responsibility as a parent or guardian, we as a people must hold those in authority saddled with this duty of implementing the education provision in the Act accountable.

INCLUSION is a voice to speak against injustices and abuses of human rights on Persons with Disabilities.

Together let us fight to make Nigeria an inclusive society, where children who are leaders of tomorrow will not be discriminated or stigmatized for reasons of disability, but rather join hands to build a progressive nation.

Let us change our perceptions and myths on disabilities, let's encourage ability in disabilities of persons.

Finally, INCLUSION covers all facets of life; our doors are open to partner with any organization that is committed to improving the plight of Persons with Disabilities.

God bless Children with Disabilities worldwide.

editor's Comments



Ruby Leo

Children are gifts from God in whatever gender, be it boys or girls, their ability to be productive in society is determined by the kinds of support they receive from their immediate family, the school, their environment and above all the government.

For a child in Nigeria, the possibility of going to school is first and foremost the responsibility of the parents, so in case a parent does not value western education or sees its enormous benefits, the child adds up to the 10 million out of schools presently littering the streets of Nigeria.

As if that is not enough in recent years we have to contend with burning of various schools in northeast by Boko Haram and the abduction of children from several schools in the country.

Most parents who initially sent their wards to schools had to quickly pull them out to avoid the ordeal of child abduction by kidnappers.

UNICEF had come out to lament the eroding of gains achieved in enrolling more children into schools despite various interventions across states.

According to statistics over 3 million persons have disabilities in Nigeria, with the number growing at an alarming rate due to the insecurity presently bedeviling the country.

As the world celebrates children day, a day set aside to draw attention to the rights of children, their plight and encourage government to assent to the Child Rights Act and domesticate same. We at Inclusion can only join our voices to that of various stakeholders to call for a conducive environment that would aid their development.

The document which covers all areas of a child's life advocates for the child to be given protection and care for their well-being.

The act also takes into consideration the

rights and duties of the child's parents, legal guardian, or other individuals, institutions, services, agencies, organizations or bodies legally responsible for the child.

Most importantly is the areas which dwells on the safety of the child, stating, "every person, institution, service, agency, organization and body responsible for the care or protection of children shall conform with the standards established by the appropriate authorities, particularly in the areas of safety, health, welfare, number and suitability of their staff and competent supervision".

We particularly advocate for the rights of children with disabilities, bearing in mind that the Discrimination Against Persons with Disabilities (Prohibition) Act has been signed into law by President Muhammadu Buhari.

Section 16 of the 2018 act stipulates that a person shall not employ, use or involve persons with disabilities in begging.

But unfortunately such laws are not implemented as the streets of most urban cities in Nigeria are festered with child beggars soliciting for assistance to meet their needs.

Children day brings to light these challenges and seek an urgent intervention to ensure that our children irrespective of their abilities or disabilities can flourish and shine.

We must change public perception and myths on children with disabilities, fight for inclusive education that ensures that children get quality education, grow in a conducive environment that does not hinder their growth or capabilities.

Lets us join hands together to make Nigeria great.

God bless the Nigerian Child

DISABILITY RIGHTS IN

NIGERIA: Need To Implement The 2018 Act

Nigeria has made progress towards a disability-inclusive society through the National Disability Act. WINIFRED OGBEBO writes that what remains of the 2018 law is implementation.

The Cyprian Ekwensi Center for Arts and Culture is the destination for many social activities in Abuja. The complex which houses the FCT Social Development Secretariat as well as the FCT Tourism Board serves as a centre where cream of artists, literary and creative minds meet on regular basis to perform, compare notes and share experiences.

A keen look at the facility shows there is no provision for ramps - sloped pathways used both inside and outside buildings to provide access between vertical levels. Ramps provide an alternative to stairs for wheelchair users, people with mobility issues and people with prams, bicycles and other wheeled items. Ironically, the building houses the FCT Gender-based violence response team office and FCT social welfare department.

A 2020 World Health Organisation's (WHO) report shows that over one billion people are estimated to live with some form of disability. This corresponds to about 15 per cent of the world's population, with up to 190 million (3.8%) people aged 15 years and older having significant difficulties in functioning, often requiring healthcare services.

Disability is extremely diverse. While some health conditions associated with disability result in poor health and extensive healthcare needs, others do not. However, all people with disability have the same general healthcare needs as everyone else, and therefore need access to mainstream healthcare services.

Article 25 of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) reinforces the right of persons with disability to attain the highest standard of healthcare, without discrimination. However, the reality is that few

countries provide adequate quality services for people with disability.

According to Nigeria's Health Watch, in January 2019, Blessing Mary Ocheido, Pharmacist and Founder of Ramp Up Nigeria wrote to a bank, sharing her experience while trying to visit one of their branches in Abuja. Below is an excerpt of what she wrote.

"I use a wheelchair and needed to make use of your MoneyGram services sometime last week and upon visiting one of your facilities, the closest to my work place in Kubwa, Abuja, I realised that there were no accessibility ramps to enable me enter the building. Even your doors are too small to fit a wheelchair. I asked your security personnel if there were other entrances into the bank that I could use instead and they replied that there were none. So I was left with the option of waiting under the sun while they went in to make inquiries on my behalf.

Upon his return, the security man said I would have to go into the bank to be attended to. And seeing as there was simply no way for me to do that, except maybe to be lifted up in his arms, I had to leave. There are over 20 million people with disabilities in Nigeria, a good number of whom make use of wheelchairs. So you can imagine the large demographic of people to whom you've shut out of accessing your banking services. You would agree with me that this is not right. I'm speaking out on behalf of people like me and kindly requesting that you build disability ramps in all your facilities and make your mantrap doors wheelchair-friendly."

As it stands now, the plight of persons with disability seems not to be the worry of the Nigerian society. This became very apparent during the COVID-19 pandemic where they failed to include disability consistently in



their response to control the pandemic. This left people with disability exposed to three increased risks with devastating consequences: the risks of contracting COVID-19, developing severe symptoms from COVID-19 or dying from the disease, as well as having poorer health during and after the pandemic, whether or not they are infected with COVID-19.

Many of these persons lack equal access to health care, education, job opportunities and other necessary services.

One of these challenges that prevent their access to possible independence and their use of public spaces is lack of attention to their physical and mobility needs, resulting in their isolation and deprivation of their human rights.

The issue of access to public buildings has received little attention in our country, leading to the deprivation of a large number of people from enjoying their legal rights on an equal footing with other members of the society.

As a result, disability has caused many problems at family and societal levels, because persons with disabilities have been deprived

Disability Rights In Nigeria: Need To Implement The 2018 Act

access to their human rights such as the rights to health and education and other human rights, they have been unable to utilize their talents and their families cannot properly look after them as there are no special rehabilitation and care centers.

Gratefully, on January 23rd 2019, President Muhammadu Buhari signed into law, the Discrimination against Persons with Disabilities (Prohibition) Act.

The Act prohibits all forms of discrimination against persons with disability. If an individual is found violating this law, he/she will pay a fine of N100,000 or a term of six months imprisonment. The law imposes a fine of one million naira on corporate bodies.

The act also prohibits discrimination against persons with disability in public transportation facilities and service providers are to make provision for the physically, visually and hearing impaired and all persons howsoever challenged. This applies to seaports, railways and airport facilities.

The rights and privileges of persons with disability include education, health care, priority in accommodation and emergencies. All public organisations are to reserve at least five per cent of employment opportunities for these persons.

The Act gives citizens with disabilities the right to file a lawsuit for damage against any defaulter.

It provides for a five-year transitional period within which public buildings, structures or automobile are to be modified to be accessible to and usable by persons with disabilities, including those on wheelchairs.

Before a public structure is constructed, its plans shall be inspected by relevant authorities to ensure that the plan conforms with the building code.

A government or government agency, body or individual responsible for the approval of building plans shall not approve the plan of a public building if the plan does not make provision for accessibility facilities in line with the building code.

An officer who approves or directs the approval of a building plan that contravenes the building code, commits an offence and is liable on conviction to a fine of at least N1,000,000 or a term of imprisonment of two years or both.

In Section 31 of the Act, the National Commission for Persons with Disabilities will be established and an Executive Secretary will be appointed as the head of the commission, this thankfully has been done.

Last year, the World Bank in its report on the social inclusion of persons with disabilities in Nigeria said that the absence of distinct data pertaining to disability prevalence and the different forms of disabilities persists in Nigeria, which in turn challenges effective policy responses and data driven programming.



Stereotype Reports About Persons With Disabilities Must Cease

SEN. TANKO ALMAKURA

The law has taken care of the needs of persons with disabilities, for instance free education without discrimination or segregation for children till secondary level, the National Commission for Persons with Disabilities is supposed to provide assistive devices and much more

Al-Makura



BY RUBY LEO AND OLIVER NWEKE

Senator Umaru Tanko Al-Makura has described as unfair the way and manner some media outlets report stories and events of persons with disabilities adding that they stereotype them by focusing on the disability rather than the achievement of the person.

He also called on all persons with disability to have a copy of the Discrimination Against Persons with Disabilities (Prohibition) Act, 2018 just signed by President Muhammadu Buhari and use it as a tool to demand for their rights.

“Knowing your rights empowers you to demand for them as it is backed by law, but if you are ignorant of the law, you will be left hanging and disappointed.

“The law has taken care of the needs of persons with disabilities, for instance free education without discrimination or segregation for children till secondary level, the National Commission for Persons with Disabilities is supposed to provide assistive devices and much more”.

“Brail, sign language and other skills for communication with persons with disabilities must be part of the school curriculum from primary, secondary and tertiary institutions”.

“All these are provided in the law, but most people are ignorant of it”.

The former Governor of Nassarawa State and Senator of the Federal Republic of Nigeria stated this when the Management of A K Global Nigeria Limited paid him a courtesy visit recently.

Speaking on the way and manner the media report stories about persons with disabilities, the Senator had this to say, “Persons with disabilities have contributed immensely to nations building, achieving great stride in education, governance, sports, politics to mention a few.

Yet news and stories about person with disabilities are under reported, and when reported are stereotyped.” he said.

“These stereotypes and perceptions do no good to any one, it encourages families with children with disabilities to hide them from the public eye which often times results in abuse, the media is the medium through which such acts of injustice should be exposed and addressed so if they are biased, and then how do we educate the public”.

“The media has a lot to do in addressing such issues, they are the watch dog of the society, they must expose any wrongdoing of the society and ensure that the relevant authority are

held liable for such offences, be it family, security operatives or the commission”.

Senator Al-Makura called out the exclusion of person with disabilities in Nigeria, especially by the mainstream media.

The Senator expressed appreciation for the signing of the Discrimination Against Persons with Disabilities (Prohibition) Act, 2018 by President Muhammadu Buhari and explained that the Nigerian government is poised to building an inclusive environment for persons with disabilities through deliberate policy formulation and implementation.

He advised all persons with disabilities to familiarize themselves with the Act and demand for their rights.

Meanwhile Al- makura has described the conceptualizing of the Inclusion Magazine as a policy instrument and exclusive voice for interactions, engagements, social, economic and cultural needs for persons living with disabilities in Nigeria.

Al-Makura commended the management of A. K. Global Concepts Limited for the innovative and iconic idea of launching Inclusion Magazine as a policy instrument, a platform and an exclusive voice for interactions, engagements, social, economic and cultural needs of persons living with disabilities in Nigeria.

The Chief Executive Officer of A. K. Global Concepts Limited, publishers of Inclusion Magazine, Alhaji Abdulrahman Hussaini in his response explained that persons with disabilities are under reported in the media and do not have a strong voice in the media.

He stated that persons with disabilities in Nigeria have contributed tremendously to the nation’s political and economic development as well as in the global space of activities including sports.

“Inclusion Magazine is providing this platform to celebrate this section of the population (persons with disabilities) and to serve as policy document to governments and non-governmental organizations” Alhaji Hussaini said.

“The magazine is a people-driven publication that will also feature critical issues of integration for these persons in all facets of the society including matters on policy reforms and social programmes and schemes as obtained in most parts of the world.

Abdulrahman appreciated Senator Umaru Tanko Al-Makura who is also the Chairman, Advisory Board of Inclusion Magazine, for his numerous accomplishments over the years especially in improving the plight of persons with disabilities.

He promised that A K Global Concepts Limited will work closely with the senator and other well meaning Nigerians in achieving the mission and vision of the Magazine.



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Satellite technology viable to tackling insecurity – NASRDA DG

The Newly appointed Director General of the National Space Research and Development Agency (NASRDA), Dr. Halilu Shaba, has noted that deploying satellite technology as a strategic tool would tame insecurity in the country.

Dr Halilu Shaba who made this known during an interactive session while making a special presentation in honor of his formal assumption of office as the substantive Director General of the space agency added that the agency as a strategic partner as it possesses relevant capabilities and specialization in providing support towards combating the insecurity challenges.

According to him, the agency as a stakeholder has a lot to do by ensuring collaborative effort with relevant security organizations to combat the security situation which has portrayed Nigeria in a bad light to the rest of the world.

Dr Shaba reiterated the need for Nigeria through NASRDA to “take our place in space and also take our place on earth” by providing the necessary ingredients for the development of the Nigerian society through the instrumentality of Space Science and technology.

In another development the Geo-information Society of Nigeria (GEOSON) commended President Muhammadu Buhari for the the appointment of Dr. Shaba as the substantive Director General of NASRDA describing it as a round peg in a round hole in the developmental history of space science and technology.

In a goodwill message, the President of GEOSON, Dr Mathew Adepoju at a ceremony on the review of the national security challenges and the need for strategic space applications organized to mark the formal assumption of office of the NASRDA Director-General described Shaba as a distinguished scientist and a man of integrity who believes in equity, justice and fair play.

The NASRDA DG advocated the need for inclusiveness, collectivism and capacity building as an essential tool for policy formulation and implementation of the National Space Programme.

Shaba further said that with the medium and high-resolution satellites used in time past to provide relevant imageries to security agencies, adding that NASRDA is ready to deploy the capabilities of these satellites in providing data of flash point areas which will be highly beneficial in the fight against insecurity.

He then advocated for the creation of the National Reconnaissance Center in collaboration with security agencies under the control of the office of the National Security Adviser (NSA), where relevant security



Dr. Shaba

information will be domiciled.

He expressed commitment towards pursuing the realization of NASRDA’s mandate which among other things include the deployment of space technology in providing solutions to the problem of mankind.

He called for collaboration between stakeholders especially the Defence Space Administration (DSA) who are in the forefront of providing solutions to insecurity in the country using space technology.

Immediate past acting Director General of NASRDA, Dr. Francis Chizea, canvassed for maximum cooperation especially amongst relevant stakeholders with the aim of achieving the objectives of the national space programme of which the space agency plays a leading role.

Dr Chizea stressed the need for management and staff of the agency to be passionate and ensure team work as this will serve as a springboard for taking the agency and Nigeria as a country to higher heights.



“My advice to other disabled people would be, concentrate on things your disability doesn’t prevent you doing well, and don’t regret the things it interferes with. Don’t be disabled in spirit as well as physically.”

-Stephen Hawking

“When you hear the word ‘disabled,’ people immediately think about people who can’t walk or talk or do everything that people take for granted. Now, I take nothing for granted. But I find the real disability is people who can’t find joy in life and are bitter.”

-Teri Garr

“Disability is a matter of perception. If you can do just one thing well, you’re needed by someone.”

-Martina Navratilova





The Universal Basic Education (UBE) in the FCT is quite commendable, going by the records. So, what major landmarks have been achieved compared to past administration?

The Universal Basic Education has a central theme, education for all. When you say education for all, its for all, and no child should be left out. In an attempt to achieve this, access to education is key. I think this is one of the landmark achievements that the FCT has achieved in creating access for every child within the territory. In that line, a number of schools, at the basic education level has been added. These schools are well spread across the territory to ensure that no child travels long distance to get education. Schools have been brought nearer to the students.

To also compliment this, we do attend to children with special needs by creating some special schools in FCT. We started a Model Junior Secondary School, particularly for the girl-child, which is a boarding school. All students in that school live within the school, and it is free and government sponsored. The children in those schools don't pay anything. They are sponsored by the area council where they come from or government. That is why they are called Model schools. The school is at Aco, along the airport road. You are aware that the FCT has also adopted the Inclusion Education Policy. We are also expanding on this by trying to ensure that starting with some model schools, children with disabilities don't even need to go to a special school. They attend same school with normal children, kids without physical disability.

The FCT Universal Basic Education Board (UBEB) has as its mandate, to provide free and compulsory Basic Education through management of Early Child Care Centres, Primary Schools, Nomadic Schools and Junior Secondary Schools. The Universal Basic Education Board (UBEB) manages three quarters of all FCT Public Schools.

They have, presently, 17,000 staff, both non-teaching and teaching staff alike, 629 Primary Schools, 182 Junior Secondary Schools and four Special Needs Education Schools.

Meanwhile to answer your question on

The FCT has set up all-in-one Education Management Platform. Thus, FCT Universal Basic Education Board (UBEB) blazes the trail powered by Stable Shield Solution in Basic Education across Africa with this Next Generation Technology Solution to automate the processes and activities of staff and pupils/students

Abdulrazaq

Scholarships, Teachers Provided For Persons With Disabilities – Abdulrazaq

Mr Lermoh Abdulrazaq is the acting director, Secretary, Education FCT, Administration and Finance in the Federal Capital Development Authority (FCDA). In this interview, he speaks on the various interventions instituted to ensure persons with disabilities get quality education

some of the notable achievements, the FCT Minister of State, Dr. Ramatu Aliyu, under whose purview, the Universal Basic Education Board (UBEB) is, had reaffirmed commitment to re-jig the supervision of schools by the Department of Quality Education Assurance (DQA) through scaling up its monitoring and inspection of schools to ensure standards, and this has been judiciously carried out.

The FCT has set up all-in-one Education Management Platform. Thus, FCT Universal Basic Education Board (UBEB) blazes the trail powered by Stable Shield Solution in Basic Education across Africa with this Next Generation Technology Solution to automate the processes and activities of staff and pupils/students.

In partnership with the United Nations Children Fund (UNICEF) and United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) through capacity building of teachers and development and supplies of relevant school materials, we have enhanced and boosted teaching and learning in UBEB FCT schools.

While the Community Action for Project Participation (CAPP) has also set up infrastructures for Universal Basic Education Board (UBEB) schools, we have added WASH Programme in schools for emergency preparedness and response in schools, which is quite useful for the Covid-19 pandemic and security threat prevalent in the country now,

However, UNICEF on its own has sought to encourage access, retention, and completion achievement for children at the Basic Education level and the UBEB is planning a study tour for selected teachers of three schools in Jos, Plateau State, in preparation for the take-off of Inclusive Education in FCT.

A model all-female school was set up in FCT for the propagation of gender issues which is in the fore burner of global discourse. It was set up in partnership with the Korean Embassy as a Model Junior School called Korea International Co-operation Agency (KOICA) School.

We all know the importance of education, at least in any developing nation. In view of this, what strategies has the secretariat put in place to ensure effective regulations of private schools, especially in the satellites towns in the FCT?

I love that statement that we appreciate the importance of education. Yes, we do. And we know that government is limited by resources. And particularly in the FCT, we have a city where projection, in terms of population, can never be right considering the manner people flop into the FCT on a daily basis. Because of this, private involvement has to be encouraged. Private investors have to be encouraged and guided on what to do so that we don't create mushroom schools.

To ensure this, we have a whole department, which is the quality assurance department that monitors these schools. In the first place, they regulate, register and then licence the school. They also monitor private schools by going round to see what is going on there, whether they conformed with the minimum standards that have been created and where they have not, we ensure that they conform, by giving them all the guidelines. We also have to assist them because if you are punitive, and you just close down schools like that, what happens to children in that environment? So we are conscious of this. We are working with them more like partners to ensure that the right quality is achieved in all the private schools in FCT.

The Department of Quality education Assurance (DQA) also in its mandate to standardize education in the six mandate Area Councils in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) both in public and private schools alike, makes sure that teachers in these schools are regularly trained through capacity building in the world's best global practices as regards to teaching and learning. This is to make sure that the students they produce can fit in globally, academically.

I'm very much encouraged by your words,

that strategies have been put in place to monitor private schools. Have you had cause to close down any school to serve as deterrent to others, because of complaints from parents about how they handle wards in their possession?

We have had cause to do so. But let me say that closing down a school is the very last measure we take. When they visit a school and find issues with the school, we immediately have a meeting with the school, look at what their challenges are and guide them on how to correct such anomaly. We give them time-frame within which such observation should be addressed. In most cases, they conform and address such issue. So, we have very few cases of school closure because we guide them. Just like I told you, we are partners. We don't act as if we must wield the big stick on them. We work with them to achieve the set standard. So where they become difficult or non-compliant, of course, we close down the school. But that is a very last resort.

The school heads, teachers and the school communities are encouraged to always think out of the box in order to keep the school going. We have Parents Teachers Association (PTA), the School Based Management Committee (SBMC) made up of education stakeholders of the schools to think. We find them very useful.

Government cannot do it alone. We therefore invite all relevant partners like Foreign Embassies, National and International Donor Agencies, NGO's, Civil Rights and Civil Society Organisations to join hands with us in actualising this vision for the transformation of the FCT and Nigeria Education sector at large.

How would you ensure



that the programmes of the secretariat reach persons with disabilities across the six area councils in the territory as most of such children are out of schools?

The first approach that was adopted by the FCT was to create some special schools for children with special needs. You know that when you create special school for children with special needs, there are issues you need to also attend to.

That school may not be very close to the students. They may have to travel long distance to get to the school and considering their disability, some might be blind, they would need assistance. They would need a whole lot of support to get to that school. Most of those schools are made boarding schools, but you discover that this provides limited access to children with special needs. This led to the introduction of the Inclusion Policy in Education. It was adopted by the FCT to ensure that children with special needs will not need to travel long distance to get to their schools, by ensuring that in the normal schools, there are provisions for these children to also have access to education. This is what we are doing to ensure that children with disability, wherever they live, have access to education like any other child.. We are working out the modalities for the immediate take-off of Inclusion Education Policy in most of the area councils to ensure that whether you are at Abaji, Kwali, Kuje, Bwari or any part of the FCT, you do not need to travel long distance to get access to quality education.

As a follow up to what you just mentioned, I was in Jabi school of the blind and I talked to some of the students, and noticed that most of the students come from outside the FCT, like Kogi and Benue . So what are you doing to



accommodate those in the FCT, since it's not restricted?

You know FCT is for everybody. Indigenes, settlers and non-residents, FCT welcomes everybody. We are not discriminatory. Wherever you come from does not matter. They are coming from their states to the FCT because they don't have such facilities in their states. So we won't turn them back. What we can do is to expand our facility to accommodate as many as possible. We also believe that with the Inclusion Policy on Education, the pressure on these schools will also reduce because a child that is resident in Bwari would not need to come to Jabi to go to school, if that child has access to such facility in Bwari. Same thing with a child in Abaji. So by the time all these come on board fully, the pressure on the facility in Jabi will reduce and we won't have much problem there.

We know how capital intensive special needs programmes are because of the learning aids involved. What is the secretariat doing to boost support for special schools for persons with disabilities?

We know that the resources available to government are limited, but within this limited resources, we try as much as possible to be prudent in what we do with it. We also ensure that the critical needs of these schools are provided.

We also enjoy the support of donors, public spirited organizations in their community social responsibility service. They do reach out. We have NGOs that also come to our aid to facilitate and ensure that some of these facilities are provided. Within the available resources of the government, we ensure that their basic facilities are provided, particularly their learning facilities and how they also live. For example, most of those schools are free. They don't pay anything there. They are free. But we are managing, we are coping,

With the recent insurgencies, most parents have taken their wards out of schools, and these schools have closed down. Children are being asked to stay

home. But the situation will be much more difficult for a child with special need. Any strategy to mobilize kids to return to schools?

The insecurity in the country is quite a serious concern to us, especially the abduction of kids from states. But we have been fortunate in the sense that we've not had any abduction in our schools. We are so fortunate, probably, because FCT is the seat of government. The special schools we have in FCT, their location, are not situated out of the city. The few ones we have are within the communities that also offer them some kind of security.

However, when the case of attack on schools became rampant, we took some steps to ensure that our schools are safe.

We work with the security personnel, all security formation, the police, the Civil Defence, the military, even the vigilante and the community where the schools are resident. We have worked out a network of security system that ensure that these schools are safe. We are also proceeding to install some security gadgets in some of these schools to ensure that any suspicious movements can be noticed and addressed, without wasting time. So in the FCT so far, generally, our schools are safe. We have made sure that everybody concerned is involved. This include every security personnel. Stakeholders, have been mobilized sufficiently to ensure that the security system is at alert

Inclusive Education Policy has been described as a better option for special needs children as it helps their development. Already, the FCT has a model school for girls operating this policy. So in view of this, are there any plans to absorb these special needs children into the conventional schools?

For us, the Inclusion Education Policy is a win-win situation. For example, for the special needs children, it provides them the opportunity to go to school alongside other children who are able bodied and these able bodied children who are in the school with them, also get to interact with them and accept them.

This is different from when they had different schools. A child that has as his classmate, a visually impaired child, will find it easy to interact with the child. He will find it normal, and natural to relate with such a child and the child that is also visually impaired, will, with time, also get used to interacting with just any other person in society without acknowledging his incapacity or physical disability.

‘Society Discriminates’ Brands Us As Wasted Investments’

BACKGROUND

Ekaete Umoh is generally known as the national president of the Joint National Association of Persons with Disability (JONAPWD). But beyond that, she wears other hats. She is the founder and executive director of FACICP Disability Plus.

JONAPWD is the umbrella body of all organizations of persons with disability in Nigeria, meaning that it has lots of federating units, including the National Association of the Blind, the Deaf, and other clusters.

We represent the interest of over 30 million persons with disability, I'm drawing my statistics from the WHO world reports on disability, which says for any given population, at least 15% of those are persons with disabilities. I'm trying to do my rough maths, looking at our present population of 200 million, which means, 15% of 200 million Nigerians.

It could be much more, in the sense that in developing countries where you still have war, disease, poverty, it's most likely that statistics will go up. So, in Nigeria, we could be more.

FACICP is an NGO that works for the inclusion of women and girls with disability in gender and development programmes. So our business is to advocate to the women's movement and ensure that whatever women's conversation they're having or whatever women development agenda being carried out, it also targets girls and women with disabilities.

So our business is to create visibility for women and girls with disability within women's development programmes and agenda, and also in government and its interventions. We do not have specific programmes for women and girls with disability, but our business is to ensure that women and girls with disabilities are included in whatever intervention that pertains to women and girls in the country.

I'm also the secretary of the African Disability Forum. African Disability Forum is the umbrella body of all disability organisation in African region. So I sit on the board of that organization as the secretary, while I'm also the vice chair of West African Federation of Persons with Disability, the vice-chair in charge of gender and human rights. That's just me.

With all the work you have done in these areas, have you come across any inclusive education policy and programme in Nigeria that you can reckon with?

We have the Inclusive Educational Policy. But how that addresses the issues of children with disability is another conversation. But let's even start to lay the foundation as to why we should be talking about inclusive education that targets children with disabilities.

Statistics has it that children with disabilities, most times, do not have quality and accessible education especially as the system tends to institutionalize education of children with disability. It means that they create separate institutions just to educate children with disabilities.

You have school for the blind, deaf, and the handicap and all those kinds of labeling. And over time, we found out that that these schools are grossly under-funded and they don't even deliver quality education.

Most times, they are even very far away from the city centre, very far from the state itself, maybe located somewhere on the highway in between two states or in-between states.

The curriculum is such that it's just looking at how to fix the child with a disability, not really allowing this child with disability to socialize with his/her peers.

If you look at the statistics of out- of- school children in Nigeria, you will see that we have over 3 million



out- of- school children with disabilities. We have the highest population, if you look at the context of out- of- school children. Why is it that way? Is it because students with disability have refused to go to school or they can't learn? But the answer is that society just wasn't ready for their education because they've institutionalized it.

Now, if you were to bring together all children with disabilities, you will find out that those separate schools or those special schools will still not be

enough to accommodate the number of children with disabilities that we have. So where would the rest go to? Must they go to school for the handicap for whatever? Why can't they go to mainstream schools, where they can learn and play with their peers and develop some kind of social capital?

So that became our question. We have this Universal Basic Education Act which says free and compulsory education. Looking critically at the Act, we saw that the Act is implemented in such a way that it does not cover children with disabilities.

Now, this is not to say that the Act is obviously discriminating against students with disability. But the Act says free and compulsory education. You will agree that it's free and compulsory but not accessible. It is free. It is compulsory, but not accessible and that automatically excludes children with disability from taking advantage of the Universal Basic Education Act. So, if it is free and compulsory and it's not accessible, how will these children learn?

So, what we did was to begin to look at mainstream schools, to see how we can make them very accessible so that children with, or without disabilities can learn and play together. We think this is a very good thing for children with disabilities, because it will help them develop good social capital and help them have some level of self-confidence that will help their learning and socialization in society.

So with the funding from USAID, between 2014 and 2018, JONAPWD, took on a project titled, Inclusive and Accessible Quality Education for children with disabilities.

The aim of the project was just to ensure that we have a policy in place that speaks to the gaps, the current existing gaps that excludes children with disability from actually assessing quality education.

We did this project in three states, FCT, Kwara and Akwa Ibom. It was all about policy advocacy. We really wanted a policy in place that will address the current gap that exists in the UBEC Act. It was about the curriculum to physical space and every other thing, ensuring that the issues of children with disability was taken on board so that schools can be ready to take on children with disabilities, not just going to special schools.

So, if it has to do with physical environment stopping children with physical impairment from going to school, we wanted the school to be accessible to them physically and be ready for children who may have physical impairment to learn and play with those who may not have such impairment. If it has to do with the learning or teaching methods, we are going to ensure the curriculum was ready for children who may have other needs so that the teacher will take into consideration, the fact that these children have their own needs, and design some kind of curriculum that would be all encompassing so that they can learn and play with their colleagues.

And so, it was like, how is it possible that everyone will sit and learn and play in the same place? We said it was very possible. So, we came up with an innovation. We did a design and called it Modeling Assessable and Inclusive School Environment (MAISE). We showed it to the policymakers, how this was very possible and how we were going to approach the issues of inclusive education progressively.

And so we're going to look at progressive realisation. It wasn't just going to happen overnight. So we are also looking at resource centres within the school where children who may be slow learners can also have some time to go to the learning labs to catch up, you know, with their colleagues, with what has happened in the classroom earlier.

But our very concern was an environment where children with or without disabilities can learn and play together. So the policy is ongoing. FCT is almost there, and the policies are in place. It's just waiting for the assent of the



Umoh

FCT Minister.

You said from 2014 to 2018, your team has been tirelessly working to see that this inclusive policy come into place. How would you score the Federal Government on the implementation of the inclusive policy?

Well, implementation has always been a problem. We've succeeded in getting a policy in FCT. Kwara already had a policy, but it was implementation problem. So we pushed for the implementation of some aspect of it. Then Akwa Ibom is still on the policy as it is. So, if we want to look at the implementation of Inclusive Education Policy, we have a National Inclusive Education Policy. Domestication was also the issue. If you have a national policy, it was now left for the states to buy-in into that policy and domesticate. So, the question will be, how many states have actually domesticated the National Inclusive Education Policy? That's one level of advocacy we need to go. But for the one that we did that was supported by USAID, FCT has already started implementation. They mapped up about five schools for which they wanted to model our innovation, which we call MAISE. So they mapped out five schools in the FCT, everything is going gradually.

What are the basic requirements and the things you are advocating for in your policies that you think Nigerians need to know about?

We are advocating for general overhauling of the curriculum, teacher training, teaching methods and looking at the physical environments. We're looking at institutional gaps. I mean, institutional gaps within the education policy, within the school policy. I'm not talking of curriculum now. Curriculum will have to do with teaching and teaching methods and all of that. What kind of classes do they have? We're looking at addressing the attitude of teachers towards children with disabilities. We need physical infrastructure. Those are the basic things that we're looking at. And we're looking at recreation, how adaptive is the recreation facilities to allow for the use of everyone, including children with disabilities. When you go to children playground, you see the facilities. That is part of learning. We want to be sure that those facilities are adapted in a way that children with disabilities can also engage in such recreation. So everything about school is what we are looking at.

Can you throw a little light on the UN convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities?

The UN convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities speaks to so many issues beginning from what it is, defining us, telling us who we are and the issues about rights. So, the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities is just a wonderful set of documents carefully put in place to actually help us enjoy our fundamental human rights across sectors. We are not creating another constitution. What the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities is doing, is that first of all, it did realise that it's going to be extremely difficult for persons with disabilities to enjoy their fundamental human rights on equal basis with others. So the convention is now put in place with different articles, addressing the barriers that might be stopping us from enjoying our fundamental human rights. So, what the UN convention, is doing is just to make sure that they address the barriers that will stop us from enjoying our fundamental human rights.

What is JONAPWD doing to ensure you enroll more persons with disabilities in schools?

I just told you about a project that we ran which is the inclusive education project. Enrolling more persons will start from the primary school. What we are saying is that UBEC Act is beautiful but it's not helping us to gain more education. If you go back to statistics, you look at the UNESCO, and World Bank, it says only 3% of us have been able to gain formal education. This means, we are a bunch of illiterates in the disability community. Not that we are not intelligent enough to learn but I think society believes it's a wasted investment. You see a family where you have like six children and one of them may be a child with disability, the family would rather invest on the one that do not have any form of impairment because they think it would give quick economic results. Because of that, they don't send us to school.

If you're going to be sending 20 students for foreign studies, where is our 15% within that?

‘Society Discriminates’ Brands Us As Wasted Investments”



Those are the arguments. Thank you for the special handicap scholarship which does not go beyond special education. Now, we are saying, I want to be an engineer and you're sending like 20 students abroad to study engineering within a foreign exchange programme. From that 20, how many are persons with disabilities? So those are the kind of conversation we are having and interrogating some interventions, and we'll keep talking. We are not service provider. We engage in advocacy and keep drawing attention to it.

What are some of the partnerships you've had or some NGOs that have helped you in advocating for rights of persons with disabilities?

We are activists and our business is to clamour for change, nose around, see what is happening and ask questions if we are excluded. It depends on the thematic area project we are working on. If we are working on political participation, we also have partners that we work with on political participation. If it has to do with livelihood, we have partners that we work with when it comes to that. So, for every thematic area, we also have partners we work with. So for this inclusive education, it was USAID that gave support. We, ourselves, we mobilize. In this type of partnership, we have on the demand side and the other on the supply side. So on the demand side, we worked with Nigeria Association of the Blind, Nigerian National Association of the Deaf, National Association of Persons With Intellectual Disabilities. Those are our partners because those are the key people that we thought were actually excluded. We saw a few people that may have some kind of physical disabilities but they were still able to go to mainstream schools. But when you're blind or deaf, you automatically need special care and teaching methods. We had Ministry of Education, the FCT Education Secretariat. Then for those states that went to, like Akwa Ibom, Ministry of Education and Ministry of Women Affairs, we say Ministry of Women Affairs because disabilities is under Ministry of Women Affairs. Well, we also have UBEB and SUBEB. So those are kind of multiple partnerships we have. We haven't taken our advocacy yet to UNESCO.

Through your advocacies, have you encountered women being discriminated against?

I'm going to respond now as an activist. When I grant interviews, I take away the human angle and do my advocacy straight and I try as much as possible not to bring my private life into the interview, so it does not have some kind of impact. I would rather respond to questions on how me, being a woman and how that has impacted on my leadership in the organization, or moving around. The gender perspective of leadership and driving a big organization as a leader. Knowing that you are in a patriarchal society, what will be my challenges, what will be my push backs? You have observed very rightly, that I'm sound, but I'm coming from somewhere. So, if there is anything I've done, it is to use myself as a positive role model to advocate for whatever it is. What is the problem, if I have polio as a child, of what difference does it make now? I have never seen someone I wish to be like. In fact, everyone is wishing to be like myself.

You may be hearing this differently because the human angle is that for every person with disability,

their stories are like, they beat me, they did not give me food. That was not my story. And I cannot start forging stories that is not true because that wasn't my story.

That is why I'm so strong talking to you this way, and I'm using it to challenge parents who think they can push their children to develop poor self-esteem and make them to be less productive when they grow up. I'm a polio survivor, that's all. Everybody needs support, including you talking to me.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, I saw people queuing for palliatives; they were not people with disabilities. You see that everybody needs support. Even people with disabilities could not get the palliatives, but those without disabilities went to collect the palliatives. Yet, before COVID-19, charity was seen to be going to less privileged people. But the bags of rice went to people who were not seen as less privileged.

We are changing the narratives. We are reconstructing it and making it the way it ought to be. I'm a polio survivor, and after polio, I had good family support. I did not go to any special school. I went to school that my peers went to. How did that happen? Because I had a family who are better enlightened and knew that if you had polio, that was just a tiny aspect of it.

They gave me the education that was given to every other child. I had family who socialized me, to the point that I have very good self-confidence, and confidence will only come with knowledge and capacity. You'll draw confidence from something. So if I had that education, I had all the facilities at my disposal. I had quality life.

Why will I not have self-esteem? I am not a typical example; I am one of those stories as a scattered dots in a straight line graph. Such scattered dot will help challenge families to know how to help the child. Self confidence begins from the family. You have a child who had polio, you feel you have lost confidence in the child and that he is wasted, that is your business. And somebody else has a child who had polio and says, I'm going to give this my child, the best of life, and the child come up so positively, that is their gain. And the one that thought the child will be wasted investment, that is their loss. So, everything begins from the family.

It is true people with disabilities go to hospital and they get discriminated against. That's true. Maybe they are women and they're pregnant and they're expecting babies for goodness sake. Don't they have family life? Don't they have rights to form families? You see what I was talking about society not being ready for persons with disability? Why they do have such attitude is because the facility in the hospital is not equipped to handle them.

They don't have accessible facilities for these women to use. Instead of them to admit their shame, they now turn and put pressure on the person with disability. A woman with physical disability has come, she is heavily pregnant, she's a wheelchair rider, she needs to go on the examination table that is four feet high and the wheel chair is not more than one foot. She refused to be carried because that is not dignifying. The hospital doesn't have accessible examination table. Instead of them to bury their head in shame knowing fully well that they didn't prepare for everybody, you say instead, why did you come here? Why did you get pregnant?

That is abuse which we are challenging, which we are no longer accepting. When we learn of such kind of abuse, we take it up with the authority. The health care system is not accessible, just as the educational system and the economic system. All these inequalities are showing up in all these places because programmes and projects are not designed in an inclusive manner, in such a way that people with disability can assess those facilities on equal basis with others.

Can you speak on sexual harassment on the girl-child especially those with special needs?

Its obvious, people take advantage of girls with disabilities. They think that is where they can go and do their cheap stuff. If women and girls experience gender and sexual-based violence, you can imagine what women and girls with disability will experience. They will experience triple of the abuse that other women do face.

What pains me most is the justice system. That is where I have a problem. There was a story from the South East, whether Enugu or somewhere, of a girl with a disability that was sexually harassed and abused. And the matter went to the police and the way the police treated the matter as a none-issue, like, you should be grateful that somebody even slept with you. That was the attitude and we are not resting on that case. I told them not to drop it, we will pursue it to a logical conclusion. It's just like a woman who experienced domestic violence and she goes to the police station and they say, please go and settle your family matter. You see that kind of attitude, it's the same attitude that is displaying itself now. Is it not your husband that beat you? Who will beat you if not your husband or partner? I want us to be drawing this inference from existing situation so that we can have that kind of comparative analysis and be able to affect it in our write-ups. It's true they take advantage of them. It's easier to rape a blind woman than a sighted woman. It is easier to rape a woman who is a wheelchair rider than a woman who can race by foot. It's really easier to sexually molest a deaf woman than the one who hears. I want you to conceptualize all that and then draw your inference from there.

Albino Foundation ensuring inclusive policies for persons with disabilities during elections

The Albino Foundation works to create awareness about social challenges that Persons with albinism and other disabilities face in Nigeria and the world by advocating for the recognition, and respect for the rights and socio-economic inclusion of persons with albinism and other disabilities.

The Foundation also works with governments and development institutions in programme areas that protect, promote, and improve their rights, health, education, and social wellbeing in Nigeria as well as assist and empower them to find their rightful place inclusion in the society

In order to promote the inclusion and enhance the civic and political participation of Persons with disabilities in the electoral process in Nigeria, the Foundation carried out a good number of activities through the European Union Support to Democratic Governance in Nigeria (EU-SDGN) project titled “Enhancing the Civic and Political Participation of Persons with Disabilities in the Electoral Process in Ekiti and Osun states and FCT-Abuja being implemented by The Albino Foundation.

The activities carried out through the project include the following among others:

- Advocacy for the inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in the political and electoral process as well as other areas of public life.
- Town hall meetings of Persons with disabilities with relevant stakeholders in order to increase awareness of relevant stakeholders to improve participation of Persons with disabilities in the electoral processes in Nigeria
- Capacity training workshops for various relevant stakeholders such as Persons with disabilities, key officers of judiciary and law enforcement agencies, INEC, SIEC, leadership of political parties e.t.c in order to promote and enhance the inclusion of persons with disabilities in the political and electoral processes as well as access to justice system in the political and electoral processes.
- Media sensitization program titled “Disability Inclusion” which is focused on the inclusion and

mainstreaming of Persons with Disabilities in all spheres of human endeavours. The programme airs weekly on Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday on Radio Nigeria, Ayoba 95.1FM (Ekiti state), OSBC 104.5 FM (Osun state) and live on all FRCN radio stations nationwide in the FCT. The program aims to build the capacity of relevant stakeholders such as INEC, SIEC, Political parties, Media, Religious leaders and members of the public etc. on the understanding of disability issues and inclusive society for all. It is also targeted at ensuring that Persons with Disabilities know their rights and demand for it. The programme has the overriding goal of creating more awareness on disability inclusion in Nigeria.

- The Foundation facilitated the process of amendment of the relevant clauses that promotes the inclusion of persons with disabilities and other vulnerable groups in the ongoing Electoral Amendment Bill which is one of the Foundation’s relentless efforts in pursuit for an Electoral Act that engenders participation, inclusiveness, transparency and credibility of the electoral process while the Foundation led the delegation of other Organizations of Person with disabilities and Civil Society Organizations during the presentation of the proposed amended clauses to the Senate and House of Representatives’ Joint-Committee on INEC and Electoral Matters.

- The Foundation in partnership with other Civil Society Organizations, development partners and INEC developed, updated, and validated a Disability Inclusion Guide which aimed to increase awareness of relevant stakeholders to improve participation of Persons with disabilities in the electoral and political processes in Nigeria.

– *Complied by the Albino Foundation.*



8 Habits that hurt your heart

1 You Bank on Your Workout

Do you exercise? That's great. But if you sit down for most of the rest of your day, that's a problem. You need to be active all day long. Little bursts count. If you have a desk job, take a short walk every hour to boost your circulation, even if it's just to your break room and back. Binge-watching your favorite show? Get up and dance, or do push-ups during the commercials.

2 You Say 'I'm Too Young'

Don't wait to work on keeping your heart healthy. Exercise, eat a healthy diet, and know your numbers -- blood pressure, cholesterol, and blood sugar. The ideal time to do your heart a favor is now.

3 One Drink Too Many

For most people, moderate drinking (one a day for women, up to two daily for men) is OK. A daily drink may even have some benefits for the heart. But more than that can raise levels of certain fats in the blood, and raise blood pressure, too. That's especially true if you have several drinks at a time. So stick to your daily limit.

4 You need a good Diet

You may think it's going to be all oat bran, all the time. Surprise! There's no reason for your food to be bland and boring. A Mediterranean-style diet has delicious foods like olive oil, nuts, fruit, whole grains, fish, lean protein, and red wine. It helps keep your heart healthy, thanks to the "good" fats, fiber, and nutrients. Plus, you'll actually want to stick to this diet because it tastes so good!

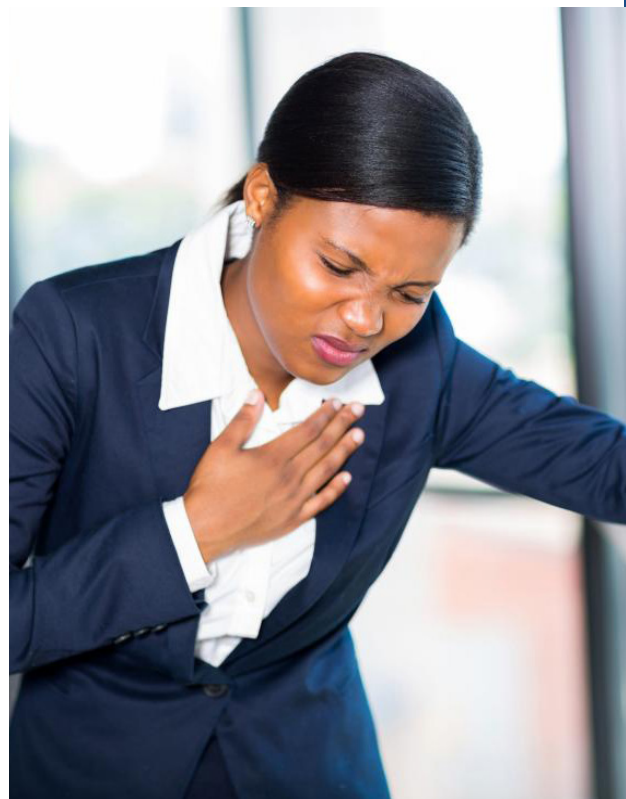
5 You Don't Know Your Numbers

Pop quiz: What's your cholesterol level? How about your blood pressure? No clue? That's risky. They could be too high without you knowing. (You could feel just fine and have

high cholesterol or high blood pressure.) So protect yourself. Starting at age 20, make sure you see your doctor regularly and create a plan to check and track your numbers.

6 Having Bucky Waist

Belly fat is particularly bad for your heart. So get your tape measure and size up the inches around your waist. It's a red flag if it's more than 35 inches around for women or 40 inches for men. Need to slim down? Take it step by step. Even losing a small amount of weight is good for your heart.





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Sadiya attends the first shift class at the Bakassi IDP Camp

Displaced and living with physical disability, a little girl takes her first steps into the future, with support from UNICEF and Education Cannot Wait.

FOLASHADE ADEBAYO,
Communication Officer,
UNICEF Nigeria

CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES: Sadiya goes to school

In the eastern wing of Bakassi IDP camp, Maiduguri, north-east Nigeria, the soft sound of Sadiya Ali's crutches is a familiar rhythm.

Two months earlier, the six-year-old girl had no crutches and had to crawl on the floor to reach her destination, including a community classroom for out-of-school children established by UNICEF in the camp.

Sadiya's family had fled conflict in Gwoza, soon settling into a new routine at the Mairi Kuwait community in Maiduguri, where Sadiya was born in 2014. But a near-fatal road accident involving a sand truck in 2016 shattered Sadiya's left leg, which had to be amputated. Sadiya was only two years old at the time.

"She has remained quiet since then. She chooses her friends carefully and does not talk much. She has come to rely only on Adamu, her stepbrother, who is now her best friend," said Mariam Ali, Sadiya's stepmother. Sadiya's mother is separated from her father.

When UNICEF and the Restoration of Hope Initiative established 14 community classrooms at the camp in July 2020, Sadiya and Ali were among the first to enroll. The intervention, funded by the Education Cannot Wait (ECW), ensures children can continue to learn despite school closings due to COVID-19, and provides education supplies and school bags for the children. Ali Mohammad, a volunteer

teacher paid by ECW, teaches Sadiya and 199 other children in four shifts.

Sadiya, who had never been enrolled in any formal learning before, attended either limping or riding on Adamu's back. Sadiya attends the first shift class at the Bakassi IDP Camp. But the little girl maintained her quiet disposition, talking only when spoken to.

"I discovered Sadiya when I went to monitor how the project was going," said Phillip Gana Malgwi, a community mobiliser. "One day, I saw her limping to class. When she got tired, she sat on the bare road to rest before proceeding. I decided to get her a set of crutches, to encourage her. Schools in Borno will reopen next week, and I know that without help, Sadiya might not attend because it is a little further than the community classroom near her house," said Malgwi.

Malgwi helped Sadiya get crutches so that she could move around on her own

Malgwi approached Benjamin John, programme manager at Restoration of Hope Initiative, who contacted a carpenter to design simple wooden crutches for Sadiya.

"Sadiya has improved. She is willing to learn. Now she is talking to other children in the class and responds to questions," said teacher Ali Mohammad.

Since July 2020, UNICEF and the Restoration of Hope

Initiative have established 97 temporary classrooms across 10 IDP camps in Maiduguri. All the learning points across the city operate in four shifts to mitigate the risk of COVID-19 infection and accommodate more children. A total of 16,224 children (9,254 of them girls), including Sadiya, access education in these learning points, facilitated by 150 volunteer teachers. Before the programme began, UNICEF organized intensive capacity building for the teachers on lesson delivery, COVID-19 mitigation, prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse and where to refer children experiencing challenges. The teachers receive a small monthly stipend, thanks to ECW.

Sadiya's stepmother Mariam said that when schools reopen in Borno, her daughter will be enrolled formally. "Sadiya is like my child because she lives with me. Her mother does not live with us. She would like to be a medical doctor and I pray that it happens so that she can help others."

Promoting inclusion and empowering young people living with disabilities in Nigeria

A virtual event hosted by UNICEF and other UN agencies in Nigeria provided a platform for young people living with disabilities to feel included and empowered as they joined hundreds of other young people to learn about advocacy

For a community of young people living with disabilities in Nigeria, engaging with other young

included and empowered as they joined hundreds of other young people to learn about advocacy.

Themed 'Youth engagement for global action', the virtual event brought together speakers such as Patoranking, singer and youth advocate; Beverly Naya, actress and filmmaker; Mohammed Keana, team lead, Almajiri Child Rights Initiative; Musa Musa, advocate for people living with disabilities; and young influencers. They provided practical examples of how they have executed successful advocacy initiatives and encouraged young peoples' meaningful engagement in global issues – especially in making the SDGs a reality.

To ensure that the virtual event, held on Zoom, was more accessible to young people with hearing disabilities, videos used were captioned and a youth advocate and sign language interpreter was present to ensure easier communication.

"It was an honour to be a part of the discussions on youth advocacy and use my skills as a sign language interpreter to help empower young people living with disabilities," said Joseph Collins, a professional sign language interpreter working to help the deaf community in Nigeria bridge the communication gap.

Young people living with disabilities regularly experience barriers to their inclusion in Nigerian society. Their abilities are often overlooked and underestimated, and many times, their needs are given low priority. It therefore encourages them to participate more actively in their communities when their needs are given priority in a supportive environment.

"I appreciate the inclusive nature of this webinar," commented Ohakwe

Onyediziri, an event participant, in the chat box. "The sign language interpreter is doing a great job. I can identify with him."

"Building the capacity of young people living with disabilities to advocate more effectively helps them find a seat at the table, articulate their opinions and contribute to decisions being made about their world," said Oluwatosin Akingbulu, UNICEF Nigeria Communications Officer and coordinator of the event.

"Participation of young people is a right, just as inclusion is a right, and for inclusion to be significant, it is necessary to provide platforms that engage young people living with disabilities."

During the interactive session, the experiences shared by key speakers in response to questions from the participants helped the young listeners understand how to meaningfully advocate for causes they are passionate about. It also helped them gain a deeper understanding of issues on inclusion.

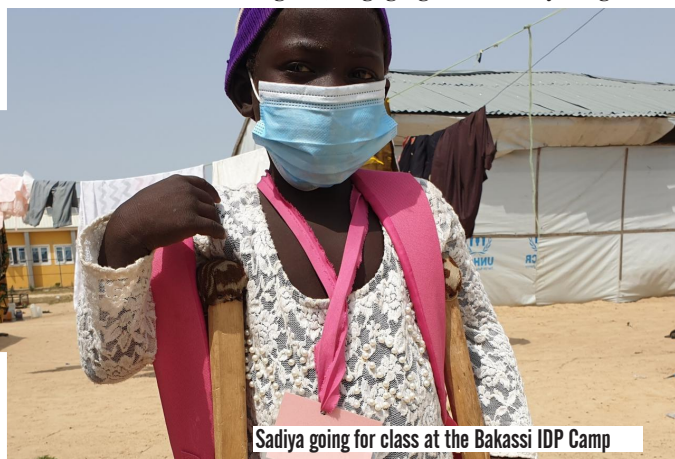
"We want you to see young people living with disabilities as partners who are ever ready to contribute to the country," said Musa Musa, one of the key speakers and an advocate for young people living with disabilities. "Let's have an inclusive approach where every category of youth in Nigeria is a stakeholder."

The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, building upon the existing provisions of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, promotes and protects the rights of young people living with disabilities. Their full inclusion in society is possible – with a recognition that young people living with disabilities have the same rights as others; that they can be changemakers; and that their voices must be heard in policymaking and programmes.

Every young person has hopes and aspirations – including those living with disabilities. And all of them deserve a fair chance to be empowered and achieve their full potential.



Oluwatosin Akingbulu,
Communications Officer,
UNICEF Nigeria



Sadiya going for class at the Bakassi IDP Camp

people usually means the ability to access a supportive environment where they can express themselves.

A virtual event hosted by UNICEF and other UN agencies in Nigeria on International Youth Day 2020 provided a platform for them to feel

Participants during one of the training sections on inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in the electoral process



Director General of the National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) Dr Chikwe Ihekweazu exchanging pleasantries with (NCPWD) staff members.



Executive secretary of the National Commission for Persons with Disabilities (NCPWD) Mr James Lulu

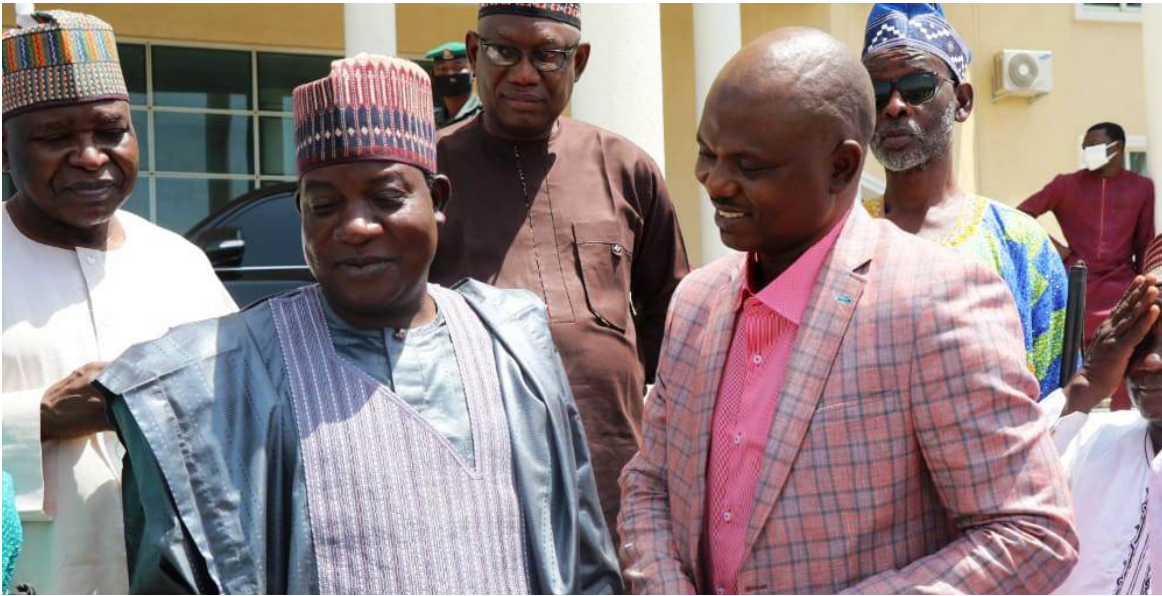


Guests during media sensitization program "Disability Inclusion" on Ayoba 95.1fm, Ado-Ekiti, Ekiti state

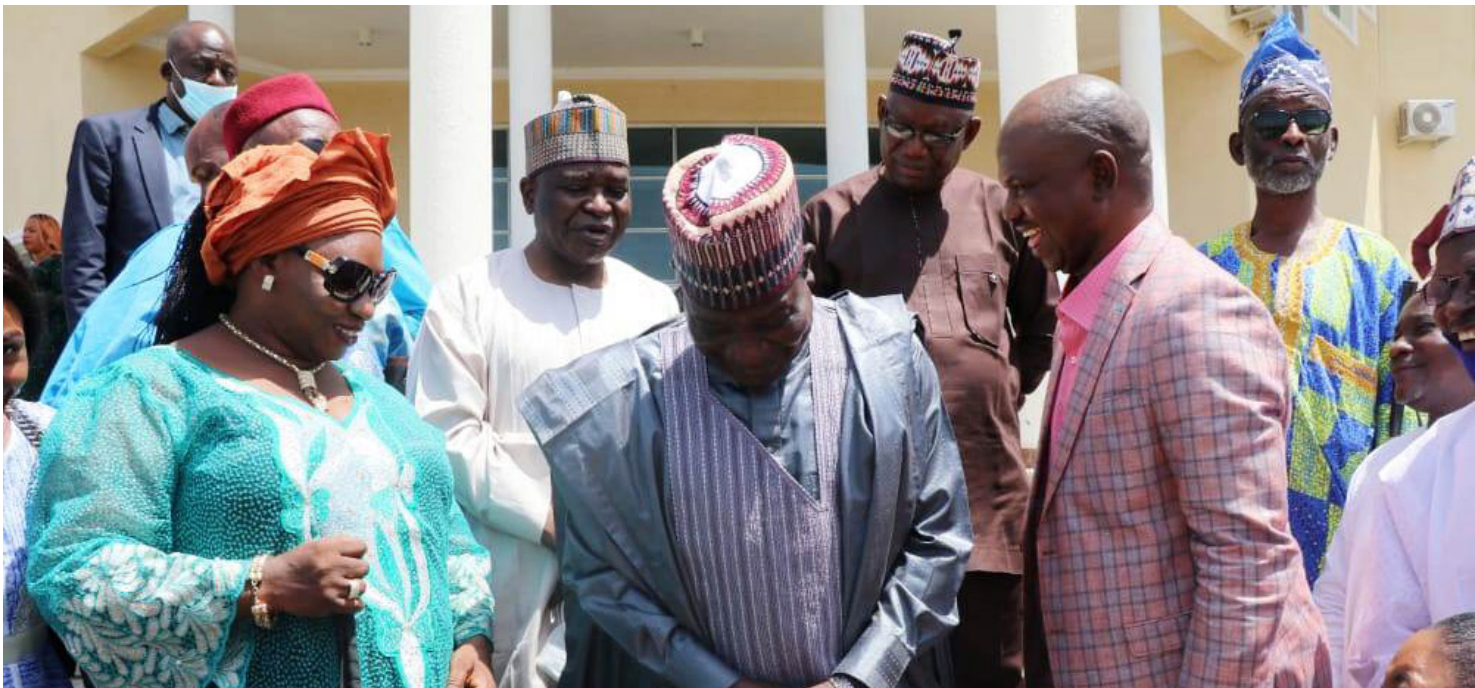


Executive secretary of the National Commission for Persons with disabilities (NCPWD) Mr James Lulu during a courtesy visit to the Executive Secretary of the Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC), Dr Hamid Bobboy

PICTORIALS



Cross section of the management and staff of NCPWD and UBEC at a group photograph



The governor of Plateau State Rt Hon Simon Lalong sharing a joke with the Executive Secretary of NCPWD, Mr James Lalu



cross sections of dignitaries at the event



A group photograph during an advocacy visit to the Chairman, Osun State Independent Electoral Commission

DR ANNE ENYI: Blazing The Trail Against All Odds

Perhaps, living in the aphorism that it's not our disabilities, it's our abilities that count by Chris Burke, Dr Anne Enyi did not allow her hearing impairment to deter her. WINIFRED OGBEBO writes on how she walked on uncharted waters to carve a niche for herself in the medical field.

Helen Keller said, "Although the world is full of suffering, it is full also of the overcoming of it.

This saying succinctly captures the life of Dr Anne Enyi, who, despite the challenge she faced at a tender age, pushed herself against all the odds to stand apart in society today.

The second of four children of late Arc. Dr. Wilson Enyi and Mrs Victoria Enyi, she became profoundly deaf at the age of three following complications arising from measles.

But if life or providence had dealt her an unkind upper cut, it also offered her a beacon of hope with the incredibly massive support and encouragement from her father and other family members.

Enyi had her nursery and primary education at Sir Winston Churchill School for the Deaf, South Woodford in London, United Kingdom, thereafter, attended Kent Academy, Miango and graduated from Federal Government Girls' College, Gboko, with six distinctions.

She earned a MBBS degree from the University of Jos and a public health postgraduate degree in education at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine and University College, London.

She trained and worked in the NHS and worked in the UK's private healthcare sector.

As a lifestyle medicine practitioner, she's a member of the British Society of Lifestyle Medicine and a co-founder of Feel Better Live More.

However, her life's journey was not without some difficulties along the way.

Her words, "I had several ear surgeries done at Charing Cross Hospital, London and after the first one, my pediatric audio logical physician got me to

wear body aids which were huge hearing-aids, almost the size of my little palm then and worn on my chest. I later 'graduated' to BTE (behind-the-ear) hearing-aids when I was six years old and over the years since then, I have been using various types of BTEs.

"Even though, oral curriculum was used in my primary school, I preferred to sign with the others at school."

According to her, learning how to speak English legibly would probably be the hardest thing she ever did in her entire life.

"I had extensive speech therapy throughout my time in primary school and my profound gratitude goes to Lucy Pearson who was a really dedicated speech therapist.

"I am also grateful for Pat Hurst, a conscientious audiologist who regularly came round to provide services in the school.

But there's ability in disability. The trained doctor turned this challenge around to becoming a great listener with a huge confidence boost in communicating with people from different backgrounds which later helped her get a distinction in French in her secondary school final exams.

She says, "Because of my low frequency hearing loss type, I was also able to learn to speak Spanish and Mandarin as they are high tonal and high pitch accented language, respectively. I had to sit in front of the class and copy notes from my bench mates.

"However I still don't listen to the radio and I don't watch TV unless there are subtitles or captions. I have had to learn to use the telephone over the years since I first started wearing hearing-aids which means that I have few strategies to enhance the ease of telephone conversations like employing active



Enyi

listening techniques and utilising the NATO phonetic alphabet when spelling out unfamiliar words.

She has also had to contend with challenges from people who are not deaf-aware in the sense that they don't know how to communicate effectively with people who have hearing impairments.

Experts proffer some extremely helpful things to do like facing the person directly, ensuring that the person faces you without any sunlight glaring on the eyes which reduces the ability to lip-read, not covering their mouth to ease lip-reading, enunciate words properly and projecting the voice clearly instead of mumbling, being in a place with less interfering background noise. Facial expressions are key in communication.

Many people do not even realize that maintaining eye contact with a hearing-impaired person is vital while communicating.

Additionally, most conversations with people should be contextual to reduce misunderstandings so people should learn to give leads on the topic being discussed and know how to paraphrase.

For Anne, "about 98 per cent of my own communication with people in general is via speech

reading which means I get information on what is being said by watching the speaker's lips, facial expressions, gestures, body language, etc. It can be exhausting to pay attention to all these cues for certain periods of time."

She said meetings with a mixed group of people especially in large numbers can also be energy draining and she does not hesitate to ask for clarification.

"Wearing my glasses help tremendously in speech reading and I actually have a better ear which I use while communicating. At this point, I would probably say that my sense of humor has served me really well over the years in tackling communication situations."

Speaking on the challenges and stereotypes in the medical profession, she narrates how she struggled during her undergraduate medical school days, mainly because there was a lack of deaf awareness.

"Sitting in front of the class did not help much because there was generally poor acoustics in lecture halls and I had no assistive listening devices then.

"Since my hearing loss is of the low frequency type, it was really difficult to hear and understand the males (lecturers and students alike) and body sounds like heart sounds were hard to pick up even with the electronic stethoscope I had then.

After graduation, she went back to the UK for her house man ship and subsequent, medical training. In the UK, she was fortunate to work with accommodating but brilliant consultants who viewed her as an asset to the team and who allowed her strengths to shine.

Although she reveals she didn't have a mentor right at the beginning, but she received good advice from Anne Tynan who was then the Director of the DIVERSE project at the Royal Veterinary College in London and she was the first DIVERSE doctor as there were veterinarians

with disabilities.

"She later put me through to the British Medical Association as there was a BMJ Careers Discrimination Matching Scheme then.

"There were also other doctors with various chronic illnesses on the scheme.

"When I first joined, a number of secondary school students in the UK were matched to me for mentoring and I am proud to say that they have successfully gained admission and later graduated as medical doctors in the UK.

"I had the opportunity to share mutual experiences with other doctors with varying degrees and types of hearing impairments.

"I was a member of AMPHL (Association of Medical Professionals with Hearing Loss) which has a vast majority of members based in North America.

"Soon afterwards, a similar association called the UKPHL in the UK was formed with most of the members who were deafened in the later years of their lives or following certain illnesses."

Another recent additional accessibility challenge, the hearing impaired doctor had to face is the current COVID-19 situation, which has necessitated the mandatory use of face masks.

She says, “Transparent face masks of medical grade are not widely manufactured and the use of PAPR respirators which have clear shields are costly and not widely used.

“The above-mentioned support and network is obviously not available in Nigeria.

Currently running a STEM mentoring programme to encourage deaf young adults (particularly females) in Nigeria to take up STEM careers, she observed that there are still peculiar challenges with universities in the country which have archaic views on what people with disabilities should or should not do.

“For instance, in my STEM mentoring programme, there is a young lady in Kano who was refused admission to study medicine at Bayero University in Kano on account of her hearing disability despite the fact that she had very good grades in her school leaving certificate.

“She, however, ended up studying medical laboratory sciences elsewhere and has just recently graduated with a diploma with an intention to further her education.”

Speaking on her expectations for the recently established National Commission for Persons With Disabilities, she wished for increased mass awareness in the society on disabilities in general and hoped that discrimination declines significantly.

“It is quite astonishing that the gaps I experienced in the UK during my childhood is still what is obtainable on in Nigeria. Media definitely has an important role to play in educating the public and a huge amount of work needs to be done to bridge the gap.”

According to her, political will can only go far if the rest of the society is willing to work together to ensure that resources are made available and adaptations be made to provide platforms for people with disabilities to contribute their quota on society.

“With this, it is expected that more PWDs are given unlimited opportunities to shine and show their strengths. I would also expect that people with disabilities should know their rights and be willing to stand up for them and also that the society should accept that without question without making PWDs ‘charity cases’.

“In this vein, each state in Nigeria should establish its own Disability Commission with PWDs making up the entire board and ensure that firm justice is swiftly executed for any slight and mis-justice against PWDs to boost the morale of PWDs and also send a strong message against discrimination.”

Also, experts opine that education is extremely beneficial in building up individual’s personal

development and this fact should also apply to PWDs as well as making resources available to improve access to education.

There are also expectations that women with disabilities who occupy the most vulnerable part of the society will be further empowered through the National Disability Bill.

Dr Enyi said to drive the point home on inclusivity, Sign Language must be recognized as an official language in Nigeria as she said it’s a means of communication that deaf and hearing-impaired



people use to take part in society.

“In Nigeria, the American Sign Language is used in teaching in deaf schools. It is hoped that in the near future, Nigeria will have its own unified Sign Language which can be used by any deaf to communicate with another deaf in any part of the country.

“Take United Kingdom for example, BSL (British Sign Language) is recognised as an official language.

Be that as it may, many well-meaning Nigerians especially those with disabilities want the federal government to address the challenges being faced by persons with disabilities.

Said Enyi, “One of the main areas that need to be tackled is education and empowerment with the view of giving opportunities for people with disabilities to use their strengths for self-development and thus

contribute to their respective communities.”

She said the government should fully engage with civil service organizations involved with PWDs on every level while efforts should also be made to ensure that diverse technologies be made available in Nigeria.

“For example, the current president of Nigerian National Association of the Deaf introduced VRS (Video Relay Services) which would mitigate communication barriers. Assistive aids for the visually-impaired should be more widely available. If people with disabilities can live independent lives



in the West, the Nigerian society should actively encourage the same thing.

“Most children particularly those with hearing disabilities are often left behind in education for several reasons. In many cases, parents don’t have access to information which can help them in making informed decisions ranging from medical treatment, available social services and education.

“Priority should be placed to ensure that people with appropriate qualifications and relevant experience in special education can run schools and provide the essential services.

“Unfortunately, there are quacks running Special Education schools with impunity in Nigeria. Efforts should be made to increase awareness about people with neuro-divergent disabilities in Nigeria.

As compared to the Western world, Enyi rates

public perception to persons with disabilities as extremely poor.

“Take for example, back in the 1970’s, I visited a family who had three deaf children all in my primary school then. The parents were deaf; in fact, the mother came from a famous family with several deaf siblings.

“The entire house was adapted with different flashing lights for the doorbell, telephone (then it was text phone), child monitor, etc. This showed that an entire deaf family could be independent. In Nigeria, such a family would be discouraged from living independently; never mind the fact that most of the assistive aids are not even available.”

She said laws governing disability rights have significantly improved public perception in the West like the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990.

ADA is a civil rights law that prohibits discrimination based on disability. In 1995, the UK Government passed the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) with the main intention to end discrimination against disabled people and the law was replaced by the Equality Act in 2010.

These have so many positive ramifications and make it easier for PWDs to fully participate as much as possible in the society.

But the Nigerian media has a role to play in eroding the stigma attached to people with disabilities.

According to the UK trained medical doctor, if there was increased awareness and visibility of achievements made by people living with disabilities, it is hoped that stigmatisation would decline.

“I recently saw a certain press release message which went viral.

“In that press release, appointments were made for councilors and one of such appointments was for a Councilor in charge of ‘Graveyards and disabled and physically challenged persons affairs’.

“I find that incredulous.

“Diverse cultural beliefs are still strongly held in different parts of Nigeria and account for a large portion of ignorance and negative beliefs in the society. Again, it is hoped that media will play a strong pivotal role in promoting positive perception about disability in general.

“Just like there are cultures in communities around the globe, people should be respectfully aware of the fact that Deaf Culture exists which is a topic for another day.”

Howbeit, Dr Anne Enyi has surmounted the hurdles to stand out in a world of uncertainties and struggles.

She certainly has made lemonade out of the lemons life threw at her.



Songhai Farm In Minna: The Template For Robust Food Production In Nigeria

BY MOHAMMED KANDI

Successive governments in Nigeria have come up with a number of strategies and approaches to address food scarcity that could lead to full blown food insecurity in the country. As ambitious as those approaches were, they failed to achieve much, owing to policy inconsistency and complete neglect by succeeding governments. The President Muhammadu Buhari-led government has indeed shown some flashes of seriousness and determination in its resolve to make Nigeria a major food hub in the continent and globally.

To achieve this very important feat, the President Buhari administration is reforming and repositioning the agricultural sector to meet the food needs of Nigeria and serve as net exporter of agricultural commodities. The Nigerian government is anchoring its food security drive and initiative which is aimed at tackling food insecurity, hunger and acute poverty on existing and reliable bodies like the River Basin Development Authorities (RBDAs).

In a concerted effort made by the federal government to enhance the operations of all the River Basin Development Authorities through its supervisory agency, thus, Federal Ministry of Water Resources, a recent pronouncement by the Minister of Water Resource, Suleiman Adamu indicated that a lot was being done through the RBDA's to address issues of food security in Nigeria. The Minister was particularly assertive on the volume of work currently being carried out at various RBDAs, sighting possible commercialisation of their activities for increased revenue generation.

There are several initiatives aimed at seamless implementation of RBDA's mandates, one of which is the domestication of Songhai Farm, as a model that would facilitate Nigeria's expedition to self-sufficiency in food production.

The Upper Niger River Basin Development Authority (UNRBDA) under the leadership of Prof. Mohammed Abdulkarim Ali, was rated the best amongst others for its commitment to the implementation of the Songhai farm

prototype. As the Managing Director, Prof. Ali's tenacious drive to proactively change public perception about the Authority, especially from his provision of firm leadership to timely execution of multi-billion naira projects within the franchise of the UNRBDA including Niger, Kaduna and the FCT cannot be contested. He has shown leadership, competence and capacity in the discharge of his responsibilities as well as other adhoc assignments given to him.

Already, Nigerians are beginning to reap from the Songhai farm in Minna, the Niger state capital. Whilst the Ouando Centre, the main experimental site of the Songhai Farm in Porto-Novo in Benin Republic currently sits on over 22 hectares of land, the Model Farm Minna, which is one of its prototypes resides on approximately 7.51 hectares (75068 m²) and lies at an altitude of 310 m above the mean sea level, with a cultivated area of about 3 hectares within the premises of the UNRBDA headquarters.

An integrated system of farming that combines different agricultural activities to increase food production and maximize returns per hectare was enabled in the Minna Farm Model, with the support of some expatriates from Songhai Farm in Benin Republic. Residents from communities around the Model Farm in Minna have continued to throng the Sales Unit to procure various products of their choice, ever since commercial activities commenced in the farm. They've developed an affinity for the Model Farm for a single reason- all products from farm are organically produced.

As products disappeared from the shelves, sooner were products replaced in their troops to meet the daily needs of customers. The constant demand for smoked fish, eggs and processed Gari- mixed with coconut or with pineapple have kept staff at sales point busy all day. Already, the farm management is planning to deploy some state-of-the-art storage facilities for preservation of other perishable crops like pawpaw, cucumber and okro that are often scarce, no thanks to their shorter life span.

The MD has repositioned the farm as a Model to draw huge revenue from training, entrepreneurship and agricultural needs of Nigerians. Also, there are eight sections in which

various agricultural activities are organized into a functional unit to profitably harness resources. These are: Agroforestry (Orchard), Poultry, Fishery, Market Garden (arable farm), Ruminant Section (livestock), Processing, Bio-gas production plant and sale point. Various groups mostly women have received trainings in poultry, fish and agroforestry farming.

Agroforestry (Orchard) section

The agro-forestry section consisting of pawpaw, orange, banana, plantain and moringa plantations has a potential of creating for the Authority, millions in revenue. For instance, information obtained from interaction with staff and survey at sales point has shown that an average pawpaw (Vega) pod costs N50, and each stand is capable of producing 80-100 fruits per season. With a population of 1, 110 stand/ha and assuming a harvest of 80 pod/ stand, a revenue of four million four hundred and forty thousand Naira (N 4, 440, 000) is assured per season from a single hectare of pawpaw.

Poultry section

Poultry section was planned for the production of both layers and broilers. The layers section was designed to accommodate three thousand five hundred and sixty (3, 560) birds in two pens (housing units). The first pen has been completed and production has commenced with 880 birds that are now laying a minimum of 24 and maximum of 26 crates per day, while the second



pen is under construction. The two pens of layers when fully utilized will produce 100 crates of eggs per day or more (assuming 85%-90% of their maximum production potential which will generate a revenue of one hundred thousand (N100, 000) naira only/day at a cost of N 1000

per crate. Production in the broilers section would commence as soon.

Fishery section

The fishery section has 12 production ponds, one hatchery containing 16 small ponds, 6 nursery ponds and 2 parent stock ponds and a reservoir for collection of waste water. Each production pond has a capacity to accommodate 1, 000 fish. The fish are sorted as they grow in size in a way that only 500 can be accommodated in one pond before harvesting. The fish takes 8 months from hatching to harvesting in production ponds. A peer of three or four fully grown smoked fish costs N1, 000. There is always smoked fish in abundance at the farm.



Market Garden section

In the Market Garden, arable crops such as okra, cassava, cucumber, sweet corn and sweet potato are planted. These crops are sometimes inter-planted and covers approximately 18% of the total area (14306 m2).

Livestock section

The livestock section is the source of manure for both agroforestry and market garden. The animals are confined within a pen. There are 51 cattle and 95 sheep in the animal pen.

Processing section

The processing section has an abattoir for processing and packaging meat to the sale point. There are also cassava processing units where cassava is turned into granules (Garri) of various types to meet its increasing demand.

Bio-gas production section

Waste material produced in other sections are utilized in Bio-gas production plant section. The section has digesters, inlets and waste reservoirs for collection of sludge from the digester. Plant residue, animal excreta and water hyacinth from the pond are introduced through the inlet. These are decomposed anaerobically in a digester to produce gas and sludge.

Training centre

Tremendous success has been recorded in the area of training. The youth and women groups residing within the catchment areas of the UNRBDA have been trained to acquire skills in their various fields of interest. This is in line with President Buhari-led government's transformation agenda on agriculture, food security and poverty alleviation. Mohammed Kandi, is the Special Assistant (Media & Publicity) the MD, Upper Niger River Basin Development Authority.

Mohammed Kandi, is the Special Assistant (Media & Publicity) the MD, Upper Niger River Basin Development Authority.

Okro plan

Paw paw plantation under trial at the Songhai Farm in Minna, Niger State.

Covid 19 vaccines are safe, get your shot, ES NCPWD tells constituency

BY RUBY LEO

The Executive secretary of the National Commission of Persons With Disabilities (NCPWD) Mr James Lalu has called on all persons with disabilities to get vaccinated against Covid-19 describing it as safe with no side effects.

Speaking during an awareness campaign by the National Primary Health Care Development Agency as well as Nigeria Centre for Disease Control for persons with disabilities Lalu said any misconceptions about the vaccines have been laid to rest.

“All fears we had, we have dropped them today, prior to now, I had such fears, but today thank God, the National Primary Health Care Development Agency created the necessary awareness about the vaccines today, I have received mine today, am calling on all our leaders, Persons with Disabilities across the country to go and get vaccinated”.

He added that contrary to some reports that there were

some side effects after one gets vaccinated, Lalu noted that he is fine and is yet to see any side effects.

He called on the National Primary Health Care Development Agency to ensure that they make the vaccine available to the disability communities, saying, “because lack of the vaccine to the disability communities in itself is discriminatory.

“This is what we are trying to manage today. We are telling our people, there is nothing wrong about the vaccine, it is safe. There is nothing to fear, there is no need to fear the vaccine. I call on all and I will call on the disability communities as we have started today, we are going to each state of the geo-political zones very soon, so we can create more awareness”.

He commended the National Primary Health Care Development Agency for a proper awareness campaign and urged them to make available the vaccine for the disability communities.

The Executive secretary of the National Commission of Persons With Disabilities (NCPWD) Mr James Lalu has called for the implementation of an inclusive education policy which will pave way for economic growth and development of the nation.

The NCPWD boss Mr James Lalu made this known during a courtesy visit to the Executive Secretary, Universal Basic Education Commission, Dr Hamid Bobboyi.

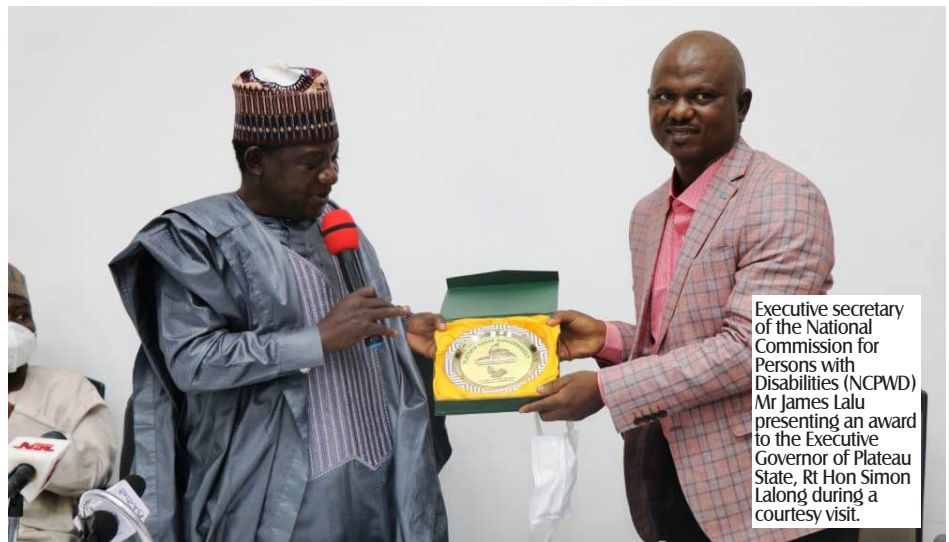
In a statement signed by Dooshima Pius-Ikerave, the Chief press secretary of

NCPWD, Lalu commended the UBEC boss on his giants strides and urged him to ensure the realization of an inclusive education.

Lalu who spoke on the challenges encounter by persons with disabilities stressed on the importance of education adding that being one himself, he understands perfectly how it feels and so such matters should be addressed with deep concern.

He further emphasized on the importance of education for persons with disabilities and placed emphasis on accessibility, qualitative and Inclusive education.

He drew the attention of the ES UBEC Dr Hamid



Executive secretary of the National Commission for Persons with Disabilities (NCPWD) Mr James Lalu presenting an award to the Executive Governor of Plateau State, Rt Hon Simon Lalong during a courtesy visit.

Education fundamental to development, growth of any nation – ES NCPWD

Bobboyi on the need for recruitment of special education teachers as well as constant training and re-training of this teachers to accommodate the needs of Persons with Disabilities (PWDs).

The ES also stressed that the needs of PWDs are enormous and requires professional and well skilled special education teachers to handle and identify their peculiarities, with emphasis on PWDs with extreme cases and those with Intellectual Disabilities.

He pleaded with the UBEC boss for partnership between NCPWD and UBEC on the grounds of accessible, qualitative, Inclusive and timely education .

Responding Dr Hamid Bobboyi

expressed his delight over the Commission’s visit and welcomed the team, he apologized for the in-accessibility of UBEC office complex for PWDs and affirmed his deep concern.

The ES UBEC also assured the team that they are not insensitive to the needs of Persons with disabilities and promised to put all modalities in place to ensure that the commission provides a conducive, accessible and inclusive environment for all.

Dr Bobboyi went further to recall a personal experience he had with a PWD, and said the child’s education was delayed because no one could decipher the child’s problem.

Denying vaccines to PWDs is discriminatory – Lalu

The Executive Secretary NCPWD, Mr James Lalu has described as discriminatory plans to deny persons with disabilities access to the covid 19 vaccines presently being distributed across the country.

In a statement signed by Dooshima Pius-Ikerave, the Chief press secretary of the NCPWD, James Lalu noted that PWDs have been segregated for too long due to ignorance.

The statement added that the ES NCPWD paid a courtesy visit to the Director General of the National Centre for Diseases Control (NCDC), Dr Chikwe Ihekweazu at their office in Utako with some of his Management staff.

The Executive Secretary NCPWD, Mr James Lalu commended Dr Chikwe Ihekweazu for the warm welcome and stated that the reason for the visit was



Executive secretary of the National Commission for Persons with disabilities (NCPWD) Mr James Lalu in a meeting with the Director General of the National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) Dr Chikwe Ihekweazu with some of their management staff

the long negligence of PWDs in the area of Covid-19 interventions and sensitization.

Mr Lalu opined that the PWDs have different challenges and so difficult to relate an information to them via the same channel of communication and expect them to follow and understand. He also mentioned that there were lots of myths and negative speculations associated with covid-19 and it's vaccine which has made it practically impossible for PWDs to believe in it,

therefore causing them to shrink and shy away from the vaccine.

The ES called the attention of the DG to the vulnerable state of PWDs and pleaded for an early intervention to help curtail the spread and also include PWDs in all their policy plan and projects moving forward. Responding the DG NCPD, Dr Chikwe Ihekweazu commended the management of the NCPWD for revealing to them some areas they had not touched or rather considered.



Lalong pledges to speak to governors to assent to persons with disability bill

The executive governor of Plateau State, Barr Simon Lalong yesterday promised to speak to other state governors to assent to the recently signed Persons with Disabilities Bill and have them domesticate same in their states.

The Governor gave the assurances when the executive secretary of the National Commission for

Persons with Disabilities, Mr. James Lalu and some of the management staff of the Commission and the Members of the Plateau State Disability Rights Commission paid him a courtesy visit.

Barr. Simon Lalong, who was speaking at the Press Hall of the Governor's Office, Jos Plateau State added that he would not

be limit his plea to only the Northern Governor's Forum, but also to the Nigerian Governor's Forum and would send a copy to Mr. President stressing the need for the Governor's to domesticate the Disability Rights Act 2018 in their various States.

The Governor opined that Lalu is like a son to him, and lauded him for not disappointing the people of Plateau State who bestowed their trust and blessings on him.

He commended Mr. Lalu for his passion, commitment, high level of responsibility and dedication in the management of the affairs of Persons with Disabilities in Plateau State and now the National Commission for Persons with Disabilities.

He posited that Lalu has the capacity to deliver on the mandate of the Commission to over 28 million Persons with Disabilities.

He shared his experiences and how he developed passion for Persons with Disabilities and how that has been complemented by the Honourable Minister of Humanitarian Affairs, Hajiya Sadiya Umar Farouq who is equally a passionate person that has paid a motherly role in the affairs of Persons with Disabilities in the country.

He said, "she honored me to let Mr. James Lalu pioneer the management of Commission, because he has a dream for the Disability Community and only a passionate person can drive the dream to its peak.



How Nigerians with Intellectual Disabilities are Shining through Sports

A person with an intellectual disability, according to the World Health Organisation, has a significantly reduced ability to understand new or complex information and to learn and apply new skills.

This results in a reduced ability to live independently. Intellectual disability begins before adulthood and has a lasting effect on development. Research by Special Olympics states that 16 in 1000 people in developing countries have an intellectual disability. Hence, it is estimated that there are 3.2 million people living with intellectual disabilities in Nigeria.

Despite the odds

The National Director, Naomi Ejobe said despite the odds and challenging terrain, the organisation is impacting thousands of lives and increasing its reach across the country.

“We are spread across 28 states in five out of the six geopolitical zones of the country – South-West, South-East, South-South, North-Central and North-West providing year-round local training and competition in 10 Olympic-type Sports; Aquatics (Swimming), Athletics, Badminton, Basketball, Cycling, Floor Ball, Floor Hockey, Football, Table-tennis, and Volleyball.”

She explained that for the past 17 years, they have been committed to real, transformative, and sustainable change for PWID across Nigeria. Taking into consideration the current state of the economy and life after sports for Special Olympics athletes,

the organisation aims to empower people with ID by providing opportunities to acquire vocational and life skills that would improve their standard of living.

She noted that while the ground-breaking achievements of the athletes with intellectual disabilities have not received considerable media coverage nor nationwide celebration, their achievements are recognised and respected in sports circles across Africa and the world, and would hopefully soon gain a similar attitude in Nigeria. The athletes consistently perform great during regional, national, and international competitions, winning several medals and titles that make us proud.

Laudable achievements

Naomi shared recent achievements, saying “Our Unified football team was awarded the Best Team of the 2018 Unified Cup Tournament in celebration of the 50th Anniversary of the Special Olympics in Chicago. Also, at the 2019 Special Olympics World Summer Games in Abu Dhabi, SO Nigeria athletes participated in 7-Olympic type sports and returned home with 63 medals including gold medals in Football and Volleyball”

She also added: “With our achievements, Nigerians are gradually learning more and are growing in acceptance of the Special Olympics movement. There has been some show of support by a number of corporations and individuals towards people with intellectual disabilities through the provision of resources to support our sports, health, and capacity building programming. Still, we keep working hard to raise awareness of the Special Olympics brand, to garner more support so we can reach the estimated 3.2 million people living with intellectual disabilities in Nigeria. We have over 26,000 athletes whose lives have improved after participating in our initiatives. Our athletes are healthier, more confident, have grown in self-esteem, and have become leaders among themselves (athlete leaders), youth leaders, and coaches.

Challenges

Like many other noble projects, limited resources remain one of the biggest challenges Special Olympics Nigeria faces. Naomi said: “Our challenge stems from obtaining the resources needed to organise programs that positively impact their lives and their community. Currently, Special Olympics Nigeria does not own any sports facilities, and thus, has to pay to utilise sporting venues for training and competition. This affects our ability to provide consistent training to our athletes. Therefore, there is a need for more support from the government and other sports agencies to increase access to consistent training for people with intellectual disabilities by providing free access to sports facilities.

As more Nigerians support and advocate for us, the message of inclusion is spread, and more support is generated for the people with intellectual disabilities we serve.” Naomi concluded.

Credit: www.thisdaylive.com

Nigeria's blind athletes are carving a niche for themselves through sports



EBENEZER BAJELA

Muyiwa Fatogun sighed, cleared his throat, and began sharing his life story. It's the story of how he lost his sight and how sheer determination and the willpower to succeed as a sportsman saw him break new grounds.

"I started having problems with my eyes immediately after I finished secondary school in 1995," Fatogun, founder of the Nigeria Blind Sports Association, said. "There was no actual cause; it just started with the left eye. We started treating it but it later moved to the right eye in 1998. My mother detected it and we tried treating it at the University College Hospital, Ibadan. I also came to Obalende, Lagos for treatment but to no avail. Then both eyes went off finally November 15, 1998, the same year I watched the France '98 World Cup."

For many, the thought of losing their sight is a horrifying and unimaginable experience.

However, some have overcome blindness to become global icons amid difficulties as a result of loss of vision.

Visually-impaired people like Marla Runyan, the first blind athlete at the Olympics, who competed in able-body sports and won gold in 1500m at the 1999 Pan-American Games; Steven Wonder (musician), Derek Rabelo (surfer), John Bramblitt (painter), Christine Hà (chef), Pete Eckert (photographer), Christopher Downey (architect) and most recently in Nigeria, Cobhams (musician, producer and songwriter), amongst others, have proven their ability to compete in a variety of fields.

Credit: www.premiumtimesng.com



NIGERIA'S DISABLED ATHLETES FACE SURPRISING CHALLENGES

ABUJA - Nigeria's paralympic athletes have outshined their able-bodied counterparts in world competitions year after year. Yet, these athletes face such challenges as lack of proper training facilities and inadequate funding.

Abdulazeez Ibrahim, who's known as Nigeria's para powerlifting champion, is training hard for the powerlifting competition at the Paralympic Games next year in Japan.

In 2016, he was part of the disabled team who won medals for Nigeria at the Rio Paralympic Games.



ROLAND EZURIKE of Nigeria kisses his gold medal following the men's Paralympic Powerlifting competition, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, Sept. 9, 2016.

Despite dominating world championships, Abdulazeez says the performances of Nigeria's paralympic athletes are a result of their personal sacrifices and fighting spirits.

"I'm a champion, but when you see me along the road, I'm not looking like a champion," he said. "But go abroad, you see their champions. They're disabled, see their lives, see their cars. It's different. Every day, we always make Nigeria proud, and they don't make us proud. Why?"

Nigerian paralympians say they are treated like second-class athletes and get less funding than their able-bodied counterparts, who win fewer medals. Queen Uboh, president of Nigeria's para powerlifting federation, agrees. "If they can give 10% of the attention they give to soccer or football to para powerlifting or para sports, I think that's a good start," Uboh said.

U.S. Sports Envoys Promote Paralympic Sports In Nigeria

The U.S. Embassy Abuja played host to two American athletes and a coach under the U.S. Department of State's Sports Envoy program. The envoys included Catherine Sellers, a Former High-Performance Director for the U.S. Paralympics Track and Field Program; Deja Young, a double goal medalist in sprints; and Dennis Ogbe, a star shot-putter. Their visit was coordinated in partnership with the Federal Ministry of Youth and Sports and the Nigerian Paralympic Committee.

The envoys launched sports clubs in special schools in Abuja and Lagos, conducted coaching clinics for Paralympians and their coaches, and visited the Sports Minister to advocate for increased participation of persons with disability in sports.

While donating shot-puts to the Nigerian Paralympic Committee, Cultural Affairs Officer of the U.S. Embassy, Sterling Tilley, said the U.S. is committed to partnerships with sports bodies to explore opportunities and increased participation of persons with disability in sports, as well as to promoting peaceful co-existence among youths through sport.

In his remarks at the concluding program, U.S. Embassy Counselor for Public Affairs Aruna

Amirthanayagam stated that "The program is designed to support sports – particularly to support the inclusion and rights of people living with disabilities. This is very important in the United States and I'm proud to say we are one of the countries that's at the forefront of promoting sports worldwide for people with disabilities."

He added that visits by American athletes and coaches involved in traditional and alternative sports is another way in which the embassy promotes engagement between Americans and Nigerians, and he advocated for the continued support of such programs.



Government 'Must Stop Excluding' Disabled People From Covid Messaging, Says UK MP

A Conservative MP has stated that the Government is still "excluding people from the communications that are going out" due to lack of Sign Language interpretations.

In October, after deaf campaigners fought since March for signing at the televised Covid-19 briefings, the Government stated that one was not available due to the size constraints of Number 10. Caroline Nokes, MP spoke to *The Independent* and asked "How long does it take to find a bigger room? How many more campaigners are going to have to walk to Downing Street to get their message across? How long will it take before the message about clear face masks sinks in and they become commonplace in our schools?"

"I think we have seen a real tick-box attitude to equality impact assessments and the public sector equality duty, which gives an impression of a Government not interested in equality.

Speaking about her participation in the Disability Rights Advice webinar on 21 January, Ms Nokes said "doing the webinar last night really rammed it home to me that disabled people are still being excluded from the communications that are going out, that Government has to stop excluding and start including, right at the top."

The Government is currently facing legal battles for their lack of BSL interpretations.

The Women and Equality Committee, of which MP for Romsey and Southampton North, Ms Nokes, is chair, published a report in December 2020 on the unequal impact of covid-19 on the disabled community, and on access to services.

It calls for a full inquiry into the treatment of disabled people during the pandemic.

Three-Quarters Of Disabled Students Say Wellbeing Has Worsened Since Covid

Three in four disabled students say that their mental wellbeing has worsened during the coronavirus pandemic, a new survey has found, highlighting a need for more support through counselling and specialist services.

The report, which polled 1,314 disabled students, also found that 81 per cent of students feel more isolated as a result of Covid-19.

The survey was conducted by Randstad Student Support, a provider of support workers to students with disabilities, health conditions or additional learning needs.

The research follows a poll by the National Union of Students (NUS) in December which found that one in two (52 per cent) of students said their mental health had deteriorated or been affected negatively by Covid-19.

Commenting on the findings at the time, Larissa Kennedy, NUS national president, highlighted that Covid-19 "has further entrenched the disadvantage that marginalised groups feel", calling for targeted support for "students of colour, disabled students, student parents and LGBT+ students".

The report found that almost half (48 per cent) of disabled students have considered dropping out of their course due to their deteriorating mental health. Seven in 10 students are either experiencing a short-term mental health condition, have been diagnosed with a long-term mental health condition, or believe they may have a condition which has not been diagnosed. While last year has impacted disabled students across the board, the pandemic appears to have hit some groups particularly hard, with a total of 84 per cent of non-binary students telling researchers that the pandemic has had a negative effect on their mental wellbeing.



Across US, Most Counties Have No Behavior Therapists



Access to behavior therapists is woefully lacking in many places, with a new study finding that more than half of the nation's counties don't have a single one.

Even in communities with board-certified behavior analysts, or BCBAs, the number of providers available to serve each child with autism varies greatly, researchers found.

The findings come from a study published recently in the journal *Autism* that looked at all 3,108 counties in the 48 contiguous states and Washington, D.C.

Researchers cross-referenced information from the Behavior Analyst Certification Board's registry of providers with data from the U.S. Census and the Department of Education's Civil Rights Data Collection in an effort to estimate both the number of BCBAs and the prevalence of children with autism in each county.

They found that 1,667 counties had no BCBAs. Of those, 325 neighbored counties that also had none of the providers.

There were 784 counties considered to have the highest access to BCBAs, up to 17 children with autism per therapist. On the flip side, the 129 counties with the lowest access had more than 137 kids with the developmental disability per BCBA. The study notes that the professional organization for BCBAs recommends that each therapist manage six to 12 clients at a time or 12 to 16 if they are supported by an assistant.

The locations with the greatest access to BCBAs tended to be wealthier and had fewer uninsured residents, the study found.

When the researchers examined the 129 counties with the highest prevalence of autism, they found that 55 of them had zero BCBAs. Nine of these counties also had no therapist in any neighboring counties.

- Credit: disabilityscoop.com

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