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Global Disability Fund

Situational Analysis on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in Nigeria

Country Brief

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Disclaimer:

This brief was prepared by the GDF Secretariat. It summarizes the key findings from the full Situational Analysis report and does not necessarily reflect the position of the GDF.

Acronyms and Abbreviations

CSO	Civil Society Organization
CRPD	Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
DWG	Disability Working Group
FCDO	Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
GDF	Global Disability Fund
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organization
JONAPWD	Joint National Association of Persons with Disabilities
LASODA	Lagos State Office for Disability Affairs
LGA	Local Government Area
MDA	Ministries, Departments, and Agencies
NCPWD	National Commission for Persons with Disabilities
NHRC	National Human Rights Commission
NIMC	National Identity Management Commission
NNAD	Nigerian National Association of the Deaf
NBS	National Bureau of Statistics
NIPDID	Nigeria Partnership for Disability-Inclusive Development
NIMC	National Identity Management Commission
OCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
OPD	Organizations of Persons with Disabilities
OSSAP-SNEO	Office of the Senior Special Assistant to the President on Special Needs and Equal Opportunities
OSIWA	Open Society Initiative for West Africa
PWD	Persons with Disabilities
SRH	Sexual and Reproductive Health
TAF	The Albino Foundation
UNCT	United Nations Country Team
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNOCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WGQ	Washington Group Questions

1.0 Background

The United Nations Global Disability Fund (GDF) (formerly UNPRPD MPTF) is a global initiative supporting countries to implement their commitments as outlined in the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Under its Strategic and Operational Framework 2020-2025, around 50 countries have been supported to carry out Situational Analyses of the rights of persons with disabilities.

The analysis aims to:

- Inform UN programming and serve as a baseline for interventions.
- Identify gaps in disability inclusion across national policies and programmes.
- Strengthen collaboration between the UNCT, government, OPDs and civil society.
- Provide a tool for advocacy and capacity building for OPDs and development actors.

In Nigeria, the Situational Analysis was carried out between August and December 2024. It provides a comprehensive assessment of the country's disability landscape, identifying progress and key challenges in CRPD implementation. The study used a mixed-method approach, including:

- Desk reviews of policies, laws, and reports.
- Stakeholder interviews and focussed group discussions with government officials, OPDs, CSO service providers and development partners.
- Survey and data analysis, reviewing statistics and administrative data on disability.
- Validation meetings to ensure the accuracy of findings.

2.0 Introduction to Disability Context in Nigeria

The 2018 Demographic and Health Survey indicate an 11.4% national prevalence of any functional difficulty among individuals aged 15 and above using the Washington Group Short Set questions. Due to challenges in data collection methods and underreporting, these figures may not capture the full extent of disability in Nigeria, highlighting the need for more robust and standardized data systems.

Nigeria has progressively built a legal framework to protect the rights of persons with disabilities. Early efforts include the Nigerians with Disability Decree of 1993, which, despite its intent, was never fully implemented. The country ratified the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) in 2007 and its Optional Protocol in 2010, committing Nigeria to uphold international disability rights standards. In January 2019, the Discrimination Against Persons with Disabilities (Prohibition) Act was passed, setting out legal standards for equality, non-discrimination, accessibility, and inclusion in public services.

Several states have taken independent steps by enacting their own disability laws. To date, 23 out of the 36 states have passed such legislation, reflecting a growing regional commitment to disability rights.

Disability inclusion is increasingly recognized in national development plans and strategies. Recent frameworks and UN-supported programmes include specific chapters and indicators aimed at mainstreaming disability issues, signalling progress at the policy level.

Despite these achievements, significant challenges remain, such as:

- Weak enforcement and low public awareness of legal rights.
- Poor coordination among government agencies, OPDs (Organizations of Persons with Disabilities), CSOs and international partners.
- Inadequate physical, digital, and service accessibility across public infrastructure, education, health and employment.
- Inadequate budgeting and governance systems.
- Limited meaningful participation of persons with disabilities (especially women and marginalized groups) in decision-making.
- Deep-rooted stigma, discrimination and cultural misconceptions

3.0 Findings

3.1 Stakeholder Coordination Mechanisms

Government and its Coordination Mechanisms

At the national level, government MDAs (Ministries, Departments, and Agencies) are responsible for developing and implementing legislation, policies and programmes—including guidelines and standard operating procedures—that strengthen the national service delivery system. These initiatives are then adopted or adapted by state and local government bodies. Recent efforts to implement the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) have led many MDAs to designate Disability Desk Officers and, in the case of the Federal Ministry of Health and Social Welfare, to establish a Steering Committee for disability inclusion.

A complex structure of key agencies is responsible for coordinating and overseeing disability inclusion at the federal level. The Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs and Poverty Alleviation, supervises implementation of disability-related initiatives. It oversees the National Commission for Persons with Disabilities (NCPWD) but also has its own Special Needs Department. In addition, there is an Office of the Senior Special Assistant to the President on Special Needs and Equal Opportunities (OSSAP-SNEO). It focuses on creating an inclusive society by promoting accessible education, healthcare, job creation and financial support for essential services.

NCPWD was established in 2020 to coordinate and monitor the implementation of the Discrimination Against Persons with Disabilities (Prohibition) Act, 2018. It is responsible for developing and promoting disability-related regulations, standards, and policies in collaboration with other MDAs. However, stakeholders report several issues:

- The NCPWD is perceived as confused, often competing with disability-focused CSOs for implementation roles. Its engagement with OPDs is weak, limited mostly to occasional event invitations without substantial involvement in programme design or evaluation.
- Although the NCPWD initiated an OPD Support Grant of NGN 20 million in 2023 (expected to increase to NGN 50 million in 2024), the 2024 funds have yet to be disbursed.
- There is duplication of responsibilities with the OSSAP-SNEO and the Special Needs Department of the Federal Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs and Poverty Alleviation, which complicates national disability response efforts.

- Despite holding the power for interministerial budgeting and monitoring, this function has not yet been effectively implemented.

At the State and Local levels, the complex federal level structure is replicated. For example, in Lagos there is a Lagos State Office for Disability Affairs (LASODA). It implements and monitors disability policies such as the Lagos State Special People's Law 2010, although it operates under the supervision of the Lagos State Ministry of Youth and Social Development.

Additional structures have been developed such as the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) for inclusive electoral processes and by the Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board (JAMB) for inclusive higher education. Yet, overall, disability issues are still largely treated as charity or medical concerns rather than as integral elements of public policy, with limited budget allocations and fragmented coordination undermining effective implementation. Participation by OPDs is often tokenistic.

Organizations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs)

JONAPWD serves as the national umbrella OPD body which works to protect the well-being, interest and rights of persons with disabilities in Nigeria. It has branches, Women Wings and Youth Wings across the 36 States and in and the Federal Capital Territory. It has seven specialized cluster associations:

- Nigeria Association of the Blind (NAB), which has nationwide presence and a dedicated Women Wing.
- Nigerian National Association of the Deaf (NNAD) which has nationwide presence and two national umbrella clusters – Nigerian Deaf Women (NNAD Women Section) and Youth Section.
- Association for Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities in Nigeria (AIDDN). It comprises persons with intellectual and developmental disabilities, parents, professionals, caregivers and service providing CSOs. It currently lacks national reach.
- Albinism Association of Nigeria (AAN), which is a newer group dedicated to raising awareness and promoting the rights of persons with albinism.
- National Association of Persons with Physical Disabilities, which empowers individuals with physical disabilities to secure socioeconomic and political rights.
- Spinal Cord Injuries Association of Nigeria which concentrates on rehabilitation and self-development for persons with spinal cord injuries.
- International Association for Integration, Dignity and Economic Advancement (IDEA)-Nigeria: Advocates for persons affected by Hansen's disease (leprosy) and their families.

Key challenges of the disability movement include underrepresentation of women, youth, and other marginalized groups (e.g., children, persons with small stature, psychosocial/mental health conditions and deafblind). The low representation of females in the leadership is attributed to intense politics/abuse of power, weak networking by women, lack of financial power and gender discrimination.

OPDs operate in silos with limited coordination, hindering effective joint advocacy, except during critical campaigns like the push for the Discrimination Against Persons with Disabilities (Prohibition) Act. Many OPDs lack the technical skills for policy dialogue, advocacy, and specialized programming. Challenges in governance, financial management and accountability contribute to their overall inability to secure sustainable resources.

Civil Society Organizations (CSOs)

A diverse group of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) actively contributes to disability inclusion in Nigeria, spanning cross-disability advocacy, specialized services and support for assistive technology. These organizations engage in humanitarian interventions, policy advocacy and capacity-building initiatives, though their collaboration with Organizations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs) is often limited and competitive.

Cross-Disability CSOs include groups like the Inclusive Friends Association, Disability Not a Barrier Initiative, TAF Africa and the Disability Rights Advocacy Centre. These organizations focus on areas such as inclusive education, economic empowerment, access to justice and gender-based violence, and typically receive institutional funding. They operate mainly from Abuja and other key regions, providing technical expertise in areas like policy engagement, digital accessibility and inclusive governance.

Disability-Specific CSOs such as She Writes Woman, Deaf Women Aloud Initiative, The Asido Foundation and Let Cerebral Palsy Kids Learn concentrate on the unique needs of specific disability groups. They address challenges in mental health, communication and specialized education, though some still face funding constraints.

Disability Support Service Providers like the C.A.D.E.T. Academy and its non-profit arm, Dewdrops Community Centre for Special Needs, Super Parents Foundation, Accesstech Innovation and Research Center and The Irede Foundation focus on direct service delivery. Their work ranges from early intervention and inclusive education to the provision of assistive technology and prosthetics, helping to bridge critical service gaps. Despite their achievements, challenges such as inconsistent accountability and limited technical capacity persist across many CSOs in the sector.

UN Agencies and International Organizations

Multilateral and bilateral donors are viewed as the largest contributors, focusing on areas such as inclusive education, social protection, economic growth and digital accessibility. However, stringent funding conditions often exceed the capacity of local Organizations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs), limiting their active role in project design and implementation. Major donors include the World Bank Group, FCDO, Disability Rights Fund, Mastercard Foundation, Ford Foundation, MacArthur Foundation, USAID, Australian Aid, European Union, OSIWA, UNDP, UNICEF, UNESCO and UNOCHA.

Disability-focused INGOs and disability-inclusive INGOs further complement donor efforts. Disability-focused INGOs—such as SightSavers, CBM Global Disability Inclusion, CBM International, Light for the World and The Leprosy Mission Nigeria—emphasize community-based inclusive development, humanitarian action and health-related interventions. In contrast, disability-inclusive INGOs like RoLAC (British Council), ActionAid Nigeria, PERL, Save the Children International and Plan International Nigeria focus on ensuring inclusive governance, education and social protection. These organizations are generally seen as more technically competent in managing disability-specific initiatives, although coordination with OPDs remains limited.

Within the UN system, agencies implement the UN Disability Inclusion Strategy 2019 across Nigeria's programmes. The UN Disability Inclusion Technical Working Group was established in 2021 under the leadership of UNESCO to coordinate disability inclusion efforts. While the UN agencies provide essential

support in areas like inclusive employment, education and climate change, findings indicate that further efforts are needed to strengthen the meaningful participation of OPDs in their activities.

The Nigeria Partnership for Disability-Inclusive Development (NIPDID) was formed in 2022, with the support of the World Bank. It is led by the NCPWD to strengthen coordination among development partners and key stakeholders, and for the purpose of bolstering investments in disability inclusion efforts in Nigeria. However, it has not made any significant progress since inception.

Other Stakeholders

In 2020, the private sector established the Nigeria Business and Disability Network (NBDN)—an employer-led platform created in collaboration with SightSavers and the Chartered Institute of Personnel Management—to promote inclusive workplace practices and enhance job readiness for persons with disabilities. However, engagement with OPDs remains largely tokenistic. Meanwhile, academia has increased its efforts in disability-related research, though the prevailing charity model continues to limit active involvement of persons with disabilities and OPDs beyond being mere research subjects.

Summary of Stakeholder Coordination Analysis

- Government MDAs are increasingly incorporating disability into policies and services through designated disability desks, but they often lack rights-based expertise and sufficient budget, treating disability mainly as a charity rather than a development issue. Existing coordination mechanisms are weak, with overlapping roles among key government agencies and limited, often superficial, OPD engagement in decision-making and accountability.
- OPDs have become better organized and decentralized yet face challenges with gender and broader representation—as well as capacity gaps in leadership, governance and fundraising. In contrast, CSOs are technically stronger and better funded, though they often operate as competitors to OPDs and struggle with accountability.
- International cooperation, including donors, INGOs and UN agencies, plays a crucial role in funding and technical assistance but imposes strict conditions that limit OPD participation and sometimes rely on less-skilled external experts.
- Academia and the private sector are increasingly involved, but their charity-focused approaches are seen as tokenistic.

3.2 Preconditions for Disability Inclusion

A critical element of the GDF strategy is its focus on the essential preconditions for disability inclusion to advance the CRPD. The following findings focus on the five preconditions.

Equality and Non-Discrimination

Nigeria's Constitution guarantees equality and non-discrimination in principle. However, it does not specifically mention disability rights. The Discrimination Against Persons with Disabilities (Prohibition) Act, 2018 was a major positive milestone but is enforcement is weak due to low awareness and insufficient funding. Disability is often treated as a charity issue rather than a fundamental human rights matter. OPDs are frequently involved in a superficial manner, with minimal influence on policy design and implementation. Deep-seated stigma, cultural misconceptions, and intersecting disadvantages (e.g., for women and rural

residents) further undermine true equality. OPDs capacity to engage in policy dialogue or awareness raising is weak.

KEY FINDINGS

While Nigeria has made important strides by establishing legal frameworks to protect the rights of persons with disabilities, the effectiveness of these measures is undermined by gaps in implementation, low awareness, insufficient funding and pervasive social stigma. There is a need to revise and update existing legislation so that it fully aligns with the CRPD. Government officials and service providers need clear guidelines and training on a rights-based approach to disability inclusion. OPDs role must be strengthened.

Inclusive Service Delivery

DISABILITY ASSESSMENT AND REFERRAL SERVICES

Nigeria lacks a standardized disability assessment and referral system at all government levels. The national registration system, managed through JONAPWD, has no validation process, allowing unverified registrations and primarily serving OPD-affiliated individuals. State-level systems are not aligned, creating inconsistencies. In Lagos State, the Lagos State Office for Disability Affairs (LASODA) requires medical certification, but this only serves as identification rather than providing access to structured benefits.

In 2024, efforts to address these challenges were initiated through the 'Nigeria Digital Identification for Development (DID4D)' project, supported by the World Bank, the European Investment Bank, and the French Agency for International Development. This project led to the development of the Disability Inclusion Policy for the National Identity Management Commission (NIMC). Despite these policy commitments, the NIMC system currently does not capture disability status, preventing persons with disabilities from accessing government and private services.

Remaining key challenges include:

- Lack of a National Disability Assessment and Referral System with standardized criteria and validation mechanisms.
- Non-inclusion of disability status in the NIMC system, despite policies in place.
- Fragmented data collection and storage methods (not yet digitalised), limiting effective planning.
- Registration does not guarantee structured benefits or services.

DISABILITY SUPPORT SERVICES

The *Discrimination Against Persons with Disabilities (Prohibition) Act, 2018* does not mandate disability-specific support services, including assistive technology, leaving PWDs without structured state aid. Regulation is fragmented across multiple agencies like National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC) and the Standards Organization of Nigeria (SON), with no national list of approved assistive devices. This leads to inconsistent quality and high costs due to reliance on imports and minimal local production. Government funding is limited, and health insurance barely covers assistive devices. Procurement lacks coordination, further restricting access.

Rehabilitation services, including physical, occupational and speech therapy, are scarce due to shortages of trained professionals and urban concentration of facilities, making access difficult for rural PWDs. Community-Based Rehabilitation (CBR), initially part of the National Policy on Disability, has become obsolete due to poor funding and government neglect, shifting to facility-based models run by faith-based organizations.

Social protection remains weak, with no national disability grants except in Jigawa State, which provides free education and modest cash benefits (NGN7,000/month for 150 PWDs per LGA, set to rise to NGN10,000 for 200 PWDs in 2025).

Nigeria still relies heavily on special schools, which are poorly resourced, have inadequate learning materials and assistive technology and suffer from poor infrastructure and untrained teachers. Learners with intellectual and developmental disabilities are most marginalized due to a lack of skilled teachers and appropriate learning resources.

Residential institutions for persons with disabilities are still common. They are poorly regulated and mostly private. In Oyo State, 32% of children with disabilities in such homes wanted to leave due to inadequate support. There are no formal abuse reporting mechanisms.

Sign language services are scarce and unregulated, with few interpreters available in schools, hospitals, and public events. Even when interpreters are present, media coverage often fails to display them properly. A pending bill (HB. 210) seeks to formalize sign language as an official language but has yet to be passed.

MAINSTREAM SERVICES

Persons with disabilities in Nigeria face significant barriers to equitable access to essential services such as education, healthcare, employment and social protection. Despite some existing policies and legal frameworks, implementation gaps, inadequate resources and systemic barriers persist.

SOCIAL PROTECTION

The Revised Draft National Social Protection Policy (2021) includes provisions for disability-inclusive social assistance and social insurance. However, only 4.8% of persons in the National Social Register are PWDs, indicating poor integration in social welfare programmes. There is also limited coverage of assistive devices in health insurance plans and low inclusion in financial aid programmes such as Zakat (Islamic welfare system). There are no provisions for reasonable accommodations in student loan schemes. Weak regulation and enforcement of social protection measures contributes to these gaps.

HEALTH

The National Health Policy (2016) includes disability-related interventions, and the 2018 Disability Act guarantees access to healthcare for persons with disabilities. The Mental Health Act (2023) repealed the outdated Lunacy Act (1958) and introduced protections for persons with mental health disabilities, including safeguards against forced treatments and restraints.

However, most health programmes are run by development partners/CSOs, with limited government involvement. Health infrastructure is inaccessible, and health communication is not provided in accessible formats (e.g., Braille, sign language). While women with disabilities face higher risks of sexual exploitation, their access to SRH education and services is extremely limited. They also face problems in accessing justice.

There is limited availability of disability-specific health services outside the bigger cities. A study in Kogi and Niger States found that 71% of PWDs could not access needed medical care.

EDUCATION

The National Policy on Education (2013) and the Compulsory, Free Universal Basic Education Act (2004) guarantee education for all children, including children with disabilities. The Discrimination Against Persons

with Disabilities (Prohibition) Act (2018) mandates free education for children with disabilities up to the secondary level and ensures the provision of assistive devices. The National Policy on Inclusive Education (2023) seeks to transform at least one special school per state into a resource centre for inclusive education.

However, the transitioning to inclusive education has been difficult due to lack of trained teachers in inclusive practices. Also, the 2023 Policy does not allow separate deaf education, sparking debates about inadequate accommodations in inclusive schools. There is no reliable data on the prevalence of children with disabilities in schools, which affects planning and intervention. Most efforts focus on primary education, with little support for secondary-to-tertiary transition. There is inaccessible school infrastructure and learning materials, especially for students with visual and intellectual disabilities.

EMPLOYMENT AND LIVELIHOOD

The National Employment Policy supports disability-inclusive employment. The 2018 Disability Act guarantees equal employment rights and mandates a 5% employment quota for PWDs in public organizations. The Nigeria Business Disability Network, in collaboration with private companies like MTN, Access Bank and Guinness Nigeria, promotes workplace inclusion.

Despite this, there are very high unemployment rates among persons with disabilities. Mostly persons with disabilities find their livelihood in the informal sector. The government is the largest employer of persons with disabilities, but to not manage to fulfil the required quota. Discriminatory workplace policies and culture, including lack of reasonable accommodations continue to create barriers. There are limited career progression opportunities for employed persons with disabilities.

KEY FINDINGS

- Nigeria lacks a unified assessment system for disability assessment and registration, making access to social services unreliable.
- Inclusive education efforts primarily focus on primary schools, while secondary and tertiary education transitions remain weak.
- Persons with disabilities struggle to access healthcare, SRH services, and assistive technology due to high costs and inadequate insurance coverage.
- High unemployment, workplace discrimination and limited career growth restrict employment opportunities for PWDs.
- Disability-inclusive social protection exists on paper but is poorly implemented, leaving PWDs with limited financial support.

Accessibility

Despite the provisions in the Discrimination Against Persons with Disabilities (Prohibition) Act, 2018 and the standards set in the Persons with Disabilities (Accessibility) Regulations, 2023, limited enforcement and inadequate awareness among planners and builders result in widespread non-compliance, especially in rural and resource-constrained areas.

Many public infrastructures such as schools, health facilities, courts, etc. still lack essential features such as ramps, tactile paving, and accessible toilets. Public transport, including buses, trains and airports, lack accessibility features such as ramps, priority seating and visual/audio information. This means that persons with disabilities are largely excluded from accessing many public services. Government websites and online services do not incorporate features like text-to-speech, easy-to-read formats or sign language

interpretation. This digital gap prevents persons with disabilities from accessing essential services and information, reinforcing their exclusion from the digital economy and everyday civic life.

A major barrier to effective accessibility is the insufficient technical capacity and expertise among those responsible for implementing the regulations. Budgetary constraints further hinder the retrofitting of existing infrastructure, and the integration of accessibility features into new projects. The absence of a centralized monitoring system leads to inconsistencies in enforcement, with some urban centres performing better than rural areas.

KEY FINDINGS

Enforcement of accessibility laws is needed through mandatory compliance audits for public and private institutions and fines for non-compliance. There is a need for:

- Including accessibility standards in urban planning and public infrastructure projects.
- Mandating digital accessibility in government websites, online services and public media.
- Investments in accessible transportation policies and incentives for private transport operators to improve accessibility.
- Funding for assistive technology and ensure affordability through government procurement and local production.

CRPD-Compliant Budgeting and Financial Management

There is no official tracking of how much of Nigeria's national and state budgets are allocated for disability-inclusive programmes. Most MDAs do not have dedicated budget lines for disability inclusion, and funding is often embedded within general social programmes, making it hard to measure the actual financial commitment to disability-related policies. Inter-ministerial coordination on budgeting is weak, leading to duplication of efforts and inefficient spending. The Nigeria Inclusive Data Charter Action Plan (2024-2028) was developed to improve disability-disaggregated data collection, but it lacks an implementation budget.

Policies such as the Discrimination Against Persons with Disabilities (Prohibition) Act, 2018 and the National Policy on Disability, 2017 exist but lack detailed costed implementation plans. The National Commission for Persons with Disabilities (NCPWD), which is responsible for coordinating disability inclusion, has a strategic plan, but no dedicated budget to implement it effectively. The Federal Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs and Poverty Alleviation supervises the NCPWD, but this bureaucratic structure has restricted the financial autonomy of NCPWD. Disability budgeting is not a priority, and disability-related expenditures are often the first to be cut during budget reviews.

Disability rights initiatives rely heavily on donor funding, rather than sustainable national investment. However, International development funding for disability programmes is declining, further straining financial resources.

KEY FINDINGS

Nigeria's disability-inclusive budgeting is currently inadequate, with poor transparency, weak coordination and insufficient funding across key sectors. Areas of improvement include:

- Mandating government entities to publicly disclose disability-related budget allocations.
- Establish a Disability Expenditure Dashboard to track spending.
- Strengthen parliamentary oversight through regular budget hearings to ensure proper allocation and use of funds.

- Developing a costed implementation plan for disability policies, establish disability budget tracking, and conduct financial audits.
- Creating a multi-sectoral disability budgeting committee, enforce mandatory disability budget reporting, and align budgets across health, education, and social services.
- Aligning donor funding with national disability priorities and advocate for increased disability inclusion in UN/World Bank projects.

Accountability and Governance

INCLUSIVE EVIDENCE AND DATA GATHERING SYSTEMS

The National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) conducted a Demographic and Health Survey in 2018, using the Washington Group Short Set questions. Despite its shortcomings, this is still the best effort to generate data on prevalence of disability in Nigeria. NBS still does not mandate disability disaggregation in national surveys, leading to inconsistent and unreliable data collected by public, private and CSO stakeholders in need of information. Various stakeholders use different definitions of disability and different tools for collection and storage of data (often not digital). This means that Nigeria lacks a centralized disability data system, making it difficult to track the number of persons with disabilities, their needs of services and protection, their present access to public services and benefits etc.

The Nigeria Inclusive Data Charter Action Plan (2024-2028) was developed to improve disability-disaggregated data collection, but it lacks an implementation budget.

NATIONAL ACCOUNTABILITY MECHANISMS

While disability laws exist on paper, there is limited political commitment to implementation and enforcement. Low awareness and prioritization of disability rights by government agencies results in inadequate funding and weak institutional capacity. Multiple government entities are involved in monitoring implementation of CRPD and national legislation commitments, but poor coordination leads to inefficiency and duplication of efforts between the following entities:

- National Commission for Persons with Disabilities (NCPWD) – Responsible for overseeing disability inclusion but lacks full financial autonomy and enforcement power.
- Federal Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs and Poverty Alleviation – Supervises the NCPWD, limiting its independence.
- Office of the Senior Special Assistant to the President on Special Needs and Equal Opportunities (OSSAP-SNEO) – Engages in disability-related initiatives, often overlapping with NCPWD functions.
- Coordination between national and state governments is weak, leading to fragmented disability policies. State-level disability offices (e.g., Lagos State Office for Disability Affairs - LASODA) operate independently, leading to inconsistencies across states.

The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) is responsible for monitoring human rights violations, including disability rights, but it lacks a dedicated disability rights division and there is no dedicated budget line for addressing disability-related complaints. Disability discrimination cases are rarely prosecuted, as law enforcement agencies lack training on disability rights.

Nigeria delayed its first report to the CRPD Committee (due in 2012, submitted in 2021). No alternative or shadow reports from civil society were submitted, limiting external scrutiny.

KEY FINDINGS

Despite the existing challenges in governance and accountability for disability inclusion in Nigeria, several opportunities exist to enhance policy enforcement, institutional coordination and transparency.

- There is a need to address overlapping mandates. Nigeria should harmonize the roles of NCPWD, OSSAP-SNEO, and the Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs and establish a National Disability Coordination Task Force to align policies and budgets.
- A National Framework for State-Level Disability Commissions should ensure uniform implementation across states. Regular consultations with OPDs should be institutionalized.
- The NHRC should be empowered as an independent monitoring body, with the authority to track compliance, investigate complaints and impose sanctions for non-compliance with disability laws. The NHRC should establish a dedicated Disability Rights Division with state-level offices to handle disability-related complaints. Toll-free hotlines, digital complaint platforms and accessible legal aid services should be introduced, and law enforcement and judiciary personnel must be trained in disability rights.
- The Nigeria Inclusive Data Charter Action Plan (2024-2028) must be fully funded to enhance disability data collection. Mandatory use of Washington Group Questions (WGQs) in national surveys and the creation of a National Disability Database will enable data-driven decision-making.

3.3 Cross-Cutting Approaches: Gender, Participation, Inequalities

GDF has adopted three cross-cutting approaches to be intrinsically applied across all its work, including its structures, programmes and processes to ensure full and meaningful participation of all persons with disabilities.

Participation

There are no established mechanisms to ensure meaningful participation of the diversity of OPDs in legal and policy reforms, development programmes, humanitarian response or sustainable development planning. The Disability Act, 2018 provides for only one person with a disability from each geopolitical zone (six in total) to be represented on the NCPWD Governing Council. This excludes many disability clusters, such as deaf-blind persons, persons with psychosocial disabilities and those with intellectual disabilities.

There is no clear framework ensuring equal representation of different disability groups. There are also no disability-specific representatives in the House of Representatives or major policy-making bodies.

OPDs are often invited to attend events or consultation meetings but do not play a major role in decision-making (tokenism) and reasonable accommodation for their meaningful engagement is not provided. At the same time, OPDs often lack the technical skills and knowledge required for effective policy dialogue, monitoring and advocacy. Many OPDs also lack awareness of available engagement platforms.

Gender

Women with disabilities in Nigeria face multiple layers of discrimination due to gender and disability stereotypes. Many are denied education and jobs as they are seen as unfit for marriage or independence. Social isolation and exclusion from women's rights advocacy further deepen their marginalization.

Key barriers include:

- Underrepresentation in Leadership: Only one of 36 JONAPWD State chapters is led by a woman, and women with disabilities are largely absent from policymaking.
- Higher Risk of Gender-Based Violence (GBV): They face increased rates of rape, domestic violence, forced marriage and human trafficking. Many do not report abuse due to stigma, inaccessible services and untrained law enforcement.
- Limited Access to Education & Employment: Financial barriers, stigma and inaccessible environments reduce school completion rates and job opportunities. Employers often favour men with disabilities.
- Economic Dependence: Low employment rates and lack of financial empowerment programmes leave many reliant on family support.
- Restricted Sexual & Reproductive Health (SRH) Services: Healthcare providers lack training, and SRH facilities are mostly inaccessible. Women with disabilities face forced sterilization, contraception, and denial of maternal care.

Inequalities

Certain disability groups are significantly underrepresented or excluded from national disability platforms such as JONAPWD. These include:

- Persons with deaf-blindness and persons with intellectual disabilities
- Persons with psychosocial disabilities/mental health conditions
- Persons with small stature (dwarfism)
- Persons with leprosy
- Persons with disabilities in rural and conflict-affected areas
- Children and youth with disabilities

National surveys do not adequately capture data on these groups, making them invisible in policy planning. They therefore lack access to essential services. Many experience high levels of stigma, social exclusion and forced institutionalization. There is a need to ensure explicit measures to include these groups in OPD networks, in national surveys/data, in policy making and in design of programmes. Disability assessments should include psychosocial disabilities and invisible disabilities.

3.4 Disability Inclusion in Broader Development, Humanitarian and Emergency Contexts

National Development Plans

The National Development Plan (NDP) 2021-2025 includes a dedicated chapter on persons with disabilities, with defined indicators and targets. Despite these commitments, the plan lacks a detailed monitoring framework and dedicated budgets for implementation. Disability inclusion activities under the NDP are expected to be funded through MDA budgets, but no clear allocations were reported. The plan does not ensure disability disaggregation in indicators from other sectors, making it difficult to track progress on inclusion.

OPDs expressed dissatisfaction with limited participation in the NDP development process.

Disaster Risk Reduction and Humanitarian Action

The Discrimination Against Persons with Disabilities (Prohibition) Act, 2018 provides some protection in humanitarian contexts but does not address Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR). Major national frameworks,

including the National Disaster Risk Management Policy and National Disaster Response Plan, fail to integrate disability inclusion. Humanitarian coordination platforms (e.g., the Humanitarian Country Team) do not prioritize disability inclusion, limiting the protection and accessibility of aid for persons with disabilities.

The Disability Working Group (DWG) in the North-East (Adamawa, Borno and Yobe (BAY) States), however, is a notable initiative to respond to increasing accessibility and protection challenges. It brings together OPDs, humanitarian organizations, government agencies and international development partners to conduct multisectoral situation analysis and needs assessments for disability-inclusive humanitarian action. Apart from DWG, humanitarian actors rarely consult OPDs in planning and programming, leading to accessibility gaps and OPDs lack technical capacity in humanitarian response, further limiting their engagement.

Budget allocations for disability inclusion in humanitarian aid are insufficient, leading to inadequate reasonable accommodations and specialized support.

Climate Change

Climate change has disproportionate impacts on persons with disabilities, including increased vulnerability to extreme weather events, health deterioration and economic hardship.

The Climate Change Act, 2021 established the National Council on Climate Change, which includes OPD representation—a step towards ensuring consultation and participation of persons with disabilities in climate action. However, major climate policies and plans still lack disability-specific provisions:

- The National Climate Change Policy for Nigeria (2021-2030) refers to “vulnerable groups” but does not explicitly include persons with disabilities.
- The Nigeria National Adaptation Plan Framework does not incorporate disability-sensitive strategies.

Barriers in climate governance include lack of disability-disaggregated data for climate resilience planning, absence of disability-inclusive early warning systems and emergency responses as well as inaccessibility of climate change information and education. There is limited OPD involvement in climate policy discussions and governance.

4.0 Conclusions

While Nigeria has taken initial steps toward disability inclusion through legislative and policy initiatives, significant challenges remain in their implementation. Strengthening coordination, improving enforcement and funding, and ensuring the meaningful participation of persons with disabilities are essential to creating lasting change. The list of recommendations outlined below provide a roadmap to move forward and transform the lives of millions of Nigerians with disabilities.

Strengthen Governance and Coordination

- Clarify NCPWD’s role vis-à-vis other entities with direct reporting to the Presidency and ensure that the implementation of disability legislation and policy commitments are budgeted for.
- Strengthen OPD representation in policy formulation, budgeting and monitoring, and provide technical and financial support to OPDs to improve advocacy and governance.

- Develop a National Disability Coordination Framework across ministries at federal, state and LGA levels.
- Strengthen the independent monitoring role of the NHRC.

Improve Legal and Policy Frameworks

- Revise the Disability Act (2018) to align with CRPD and include stronger enforcement mechanisms.
- Mandate disability inclusion across education, health, employment and social protection policies.
- Expand public awareness campaigns to address disability stigma.

Enhance Accessibility and Inclusive Services

- Enforce the *Persons with Disabilities (Accessibility) Regulations, 2023*.
- Develop a national disability assessment and registration system for better service access.
- Expand funding for assistive technology, rehabilitation and health coverage for persons with disabilities.
- Expand employment quotas to include private sector organizations and ensure provisions for reasonable accommodations.

Ensure Disability-Inclusive Budgeting and Data Collection

- Mandate disability-responsive budgeting in all MDAs and track allocations.
- Develop a unified national disability data system to ensure accurate, timely and comprehensive data for policy decisions.
- Align donor-funded programmes with disability inclusion targets.

Promote Gender Equality and Inclusion of Marginalized Groups

- Increase representation of women with disabilities in leadership.
- Improve access to GBV response services and legal aid.
- Ensure all disability groups are represented in OPD structures.

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