

# **"They Called Us Senseless Beggars"**

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**Challenges of Persons with Disabilities  
in North-Eastern Nigeria**

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Page | 4 This report was written by Timothy Ali Yohanna and reviewed by Holly Cartner (Consultant to GCPEA and former director of the Europe and Central Asia division of Human Right Watch (HRW), Prof. Anna Mohammed Malgwi (Professor of Agricultural Entomology), Prof. Duru Emmanuel Chukwuma (Professor of Political Science), Dr. James Friday Ogbe (Research and Development Analyst at Novum Agric Industries), Antonia Juelich (Ph.D. Candidate at the University of Edinburgh), Musa Shallangwa (Ph.D. Candidate at the University of Jos) and David Hyelni Seth (Ph.D candidate Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria).

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## **1:1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Page | 5 Northern Nigeria has been plagued by persistent conflicts in recent years, which have claimed over 20,000 lives. Apart from the general impact of the conflict, it has also contributed to an alarming increase in the number of Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) and made all PWDs more vulnerable. Disability resulting from conflict-related injuries is becoming more prevalent than those due to other causes, such as diseases, accidents etc. The conflict has had a negative impact on PWDs' living conditions, has compromised their ability to pursue economic activities and earn a livelihood, as well as to enjoy a social and cultural life. This negative impact has been especially felt by children and women, who are more prone to all kinds of vulnerabilities.

World Disability Report of 2011 stated that, about 25 Million Nigerians have at least one disability, while 3.6 million of that figure have very significant difficulties in going about their business. Of the 84 million estimated PWDs in Africa, 29% are located in Nigeria. More than 50% of the 25 million disabled Nigerians are females. Women and girls with disabilities are at 3 times greater risk of suffering physical, sexual and economic abuse than women without disabilities. Due to the Boko Haram insurgency, the North-East hosts the highest number of persons with disabilities. Only 5% of the Nigerian adults with disability are literate, while more than 90% of children with disabilities have no access to elementary education.

This report, produced by the Grassroots Researchers Associations (GRA), examined the conditions, vulnerabilities and rights of PWDs in Nigeria, including in particular in the crisis-prone North-Eastern States of Borno, Yobe and Adamawa. GRA interviewed 70 PWDs in the North-East region about the impact of the conflicts on their lives and the challenges they face generally. Most of those interviewed reported stigmatization, discrimination, exclusion and neglect of their special needs as major concerns.

According to our findings physically-challenged people in North-Eastern Nigeria face discrimination in housing, education, employment, and in access to public transportation. Their needs and concerns are rarely taken into consideration by the state, and they often have no options, choices or control over their lives. Their rights are not systematically upheld. The government does not uphold the rights of PWDs within state institutions, and does not guarantee that these rights are respected throughout Nigerian society. Harsh economic realities prevail, and there is little support outside of benevolent family caregivers for many forms of disabilities. As a result, PWDs are often predisposed to dependence on street begging, which further endangers their lives.

PWDs routinely face social exclusion within their communities in the whole of the study area. Public attitudes and perceptions toward the group are disheartening with strong underlining superstitious/cultural beliefs that result in discrimination against PWDs. Despite advocacy by

civil society groups, religious institutions and international communities on the need to support PWDs, the majority of Nigerians still assume that persons with disabilities are incapable beggars who depend on others to provide for them. In nearly half of the interviews we conducted, PWDs repeatedly stated that most people assumed they are lesser humans because of their disabilities. Those interviewed reported that their rights are violated in many different ways, including opposition by communities against a disabled person to marry a person without a physical disabilities, medical services due to inability to pay bills, participation in pilgrimage trips to holy lands, access to participation in school competitions, the right to rent apartments for housing and commercial purposes, the right to political representation, the right to equal education and their right to life as human beings.

Our findings indicated that the support PWDs need from government agencies and development partners is either significantly lacking or grossly insufficient. Despite the presence of several non-governmental organizations intervening in North- Eastern Nigeria, They have not made the plight of PWDs a priority of their work. There has been little effort by disability-rights NGOs and other institutions to work with PWDs to develop programs that effectively respond to their needs and concerns. The Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development, which is responsible for special education, social welfare and health services, has failed to develop appropriate programs for the protection of PWDs' rights. Instead, the Ministry has taken a charity/welfare approach to persons with disabilities.

Although Nigeria has signed the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, among other relevant global and regional efforts relating to PWDs, to date it has failed to implement these commitments. Until it does so, the fate and condition of PWDs in Northern Nigeria and the country as a whole will remain a sorry tale to tell in the face of extreme rise in poverty levels.

To address the challenges of the PWDs, a plethora of strategies have to be adopted by all stakeholders at all levels to create a synergy of efforts. Central to any sustainable intervention is presidential assent to the Disability Bill and its passage into law to facilitate a national legal and social framework upon which other efforts hinge.

The government, civil society groups and donors should design their interventions plans and strategies by engaging PWDs and their associations through law makers, relevant local agencies, researchers and other partners in advocacy, policy formulation, decision-making, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. This would provide information for policy-makers, decision-makers and planners to contribute in promoting the rights of PWDs within the contemporary Nigerian society, and therefore facilitate their effective social inclusion within the communities in which they live.

## **1:2 METHODOLOGY:**

The report is a qualitative research based on interviews (one-on-one, focus groups), desk research and observation methods. It was carried out in Adamawa, Borno and Yobe States between January to June 2018. Seventy (70) interviewees were identified with the help of GRA-grassroots researchers through the associations of disabled persons in the respective localities and regions. GRA's representation cuts across cultures, religions, professions. Each respondent's eligibility to participate in the studies was verified based on the nature of their disability, medical records, years of disability and family background. The eligibility process was conducted in consultation with the disabled person, his/her family, caregivers, as well as community and religious leaders.

After obtaining verbal/written consent for interviews from the PWDs themselves, we worked directly with PWDs, their associations and their care-givers to conduct purposeful interviews in their homes, offices, clubs, IDP camps, host communities, business settings, schools, hospitals and communities. We interviewed a total of 13 females with different forms of physical disabilities from Maiduguri, Damaturu, Geidam, Jimeta and Yola. In addition, we interviewed a total of 57 men between the ages 18 - 65 with deformities on both legs, blindness, deafness, and/or leprosy.

All interviews were conducted in compliance with ethical research standards. Researchers explained the purpose of the interviews, gave assurance of anonymity, and considered interviewee opinions strongly during the course of the interviews. The participation of the interviewees was voluntary, and participants were specifically asked whether they consented to the interview. The interviewees were not paid for their interview. However, GRA covered all the direct logistical expenses of feedings, accommodations and travel, using the local vendors in each community of consideration. Three languages—Hausa, Kanuri and English—were used for the interviews, and sign interpreters were used where necessary. Psychosocial support was provided for those suffering from trauma.

In the first phase, all interviews were conducted in private so that respondents had an opportunity to describe their personal experiences individually. These individual interviews were complemented by 6 different focus groups, in order to discuss as a group, the specific challenges and needs of those who are physically disabled, blind, deaf, or suffering from leprosy. Research for this report also drew on court documents, medical records, and letters that interviewees had submitted to authorities.

We also consulted archival documents and undertook desktop research, relying mainly on secondary sources such as newspaper articles, media coverage, government publications, academic journals, charity publications and community bulletins on the activities of PWDs. We also used those sources to verify some of the primary data and statements made by the interviewees.

### 1:3: BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY:

According to the World Bank, 15% of the world's population (over 1 billion people) has some form of disability<sup>1</sup> and is more likely to experience adverse socioeconomic outcomes than persons without disabilities<sup>2</sup>. Over 25% of the large number of disabled persons globally is in Nigeria; 25 million disabled persons in Nigeria suffer from some form of physical deformity, with over 3.6 million having serious challenges with mobility<sup>3</sup>. Unfortunately, those most seriously disabled are found predominantly in Northern Nigeria because of many factors such as poverty and armed conflict that have contributed to a significant increase in the size of the disabled population. Many of these PWDs are also less educated and have limited access to both employment and public spaces<sup>4</sup>. Due to the Boko Haram insurgency, the North-East hosts the highest number of person with disability, while the south-west has the lowest number as reported in World Disability Report of 2011.

Globally, Nigeria ratified the United Nations Convention on the Right of PWDs (CRPD) on 30th March 2007 and its Optional Protocol on 24th September 2010.<sup>5</sup>

At continental level, the Africa Charter, the flagship human rights instrument, had no specific provisions for persons with disability until 30<sup>th</sup> January 2018. At that time, the protocol to the African charter on human and people's rights was adopted, emphasizing the importance of the rights of people with disability, including equality before the law and a range of rights (education, social welfare etc.).<sup>6</sup>

At both global and continental levels, Nigeria has failed to report any significant progress in the implementation of the mandates of the treaties respectively. The Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development is the government department responsible for promoting and protecting the rights and welfare of PWDs in Nigeria, but it has not clearly address the issue of

<sup>1</sup> WHO " Disability and Health" January 6, 2018: <http://www.who.int/en/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/disability-and-health> (Accessed on February 30, 2018)

<sup>2</sup> The World Bank, " Disability Inclusion" September 26, 2018: <http://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/disability> [ Retrieved July 7, 2018]

<sup>3</sup> Segun James; "Over 25 Million Nigerians Disable" April 22, 2017 <https://www.thisdaylive.com/index.php/2017/04/22/over-25m-nigerians-are-disabled> (Retrieved July 7, 2018)

<sup>4</sup> Shayera Dark, "Nigerians with Disabilities Are tired of waiting for an Apathetic Government", February 8, 2017: <https://brightthemag.com/health-nigeria-disability-rights-activism-96aa2cfef5f2> (Accessed April 22, 2018)

<sup>5</sup> US-Country Report, "Consolidated disability findings from the 2010 US State Department Country Reports on Human Rights practices" January 2010. [http://www.usicd.org/doc/africa\\_disability\\_references1.pdf](http://www.usicd.org/doc/africa_disability_references1.pdf) (Accessed, May 7, 2018)

<sup>6</sup> AU- Assembly, "The 30th Ordinary Session of the African Union Assembly concludes with remarkable decisions on (3) flagship projects of Agenda 2063" January 30, 2018, <https://au.int/en/pressreleases/20180130/30th-ordinary-session-african-union-assembly-concludes-remarkable-decisions-3> (Retrieved January 30th, 2018)

discriminations and inclusiveness approach to develop programs and policies necessary to fulfill its mandate.

At national level, the Nigerian Constitution, other than the indirect general prohibition of discrimination based on birth and guarantee of the right to equality and fundamental rights for all, does not contain any provision that directly addresses disability.<sup>7</sup>

A 1993 Nigerians with Disability Decree, which existed under the military government, directly addressed disability by providing for the rights and social welfare of persons with disability but unfortunately, this decree is no longer applicable.

Under the current democratic dispensation however, Nigeria is yet to comply with the provision of section 12 of the Nigerian constitution which stipulates that a treaty cannot come into full force until passed by the national assembly and assented by the president. Although the Nigerian National Assembly has repeatedly adopted legislation addressing the plight of PWDs, the presidency in each of the past three successive governments has failed to assent to such bills. It is unclear why the presidency has failed to assent to such legislation, but the absence of such a legal framework is a significant obstacle to addressing the concerns of persons with disabilities that are documented in this report.<sup>8</sup> Without any form of supportive legal or legislative framework, Nigerian PWDs are systematically left at the mercy of various shades of societal, organizational and personal stigmatization, discrimination and exclusion etc.

Around the world, persons with disabilities have been shown to be particularly vulnerable to abuse and violence. For example, both public and private act of violence against children with disabilities is at least 1.7 times greater than for children without disabilities<sup>9</sup>. PWDs are also less likely to obtain police intervention to prevent violence and abuse, legal protection or preventive care.<sup>10</sup> Armed conflict typically contributes to a significant increase in the number of disabled persons and further exacerbates their vulnerability. For every child killed in warfare, three are injured and rendered permanently disabled.<sup>11</sup>

The rise of Jama'atul Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awatiwal-Jihad, known as Boko Haram, has contributed to the unfortunate situation of the PWDs in North-Eastern Nigeria. The Boko Haram conflict claimed over 20,000 lives and rendered thousands of people disabled; Boko Haram has

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<sup>7</sup> Ngozi CU and Ramola A. (2013) " NIGERIA: Population Indicators" January 2013  
<http://www.saflii.org/za/journals/ADRY/2013/17.pdf> (Accessed February 24, 2018)

<sup>8</sup> The Nigerian Constitution 1999 (As amended) ; Section 12

<sup>9</sup> Global Campaign for Education, " Fund the future Education Right Now: A ten point plan for transforming aid to education" January, 2011:  
[http://www.campaignforeducation.org/docs/reports/ftf/Fund%20the%20future\\_education%20rights%20now.pdf](http://www.campaignforeducation.org/docs/reports/ftf/Fund%20the%20future_education%20rights%20now.pdf)  
(Accessed February 18, 2018)

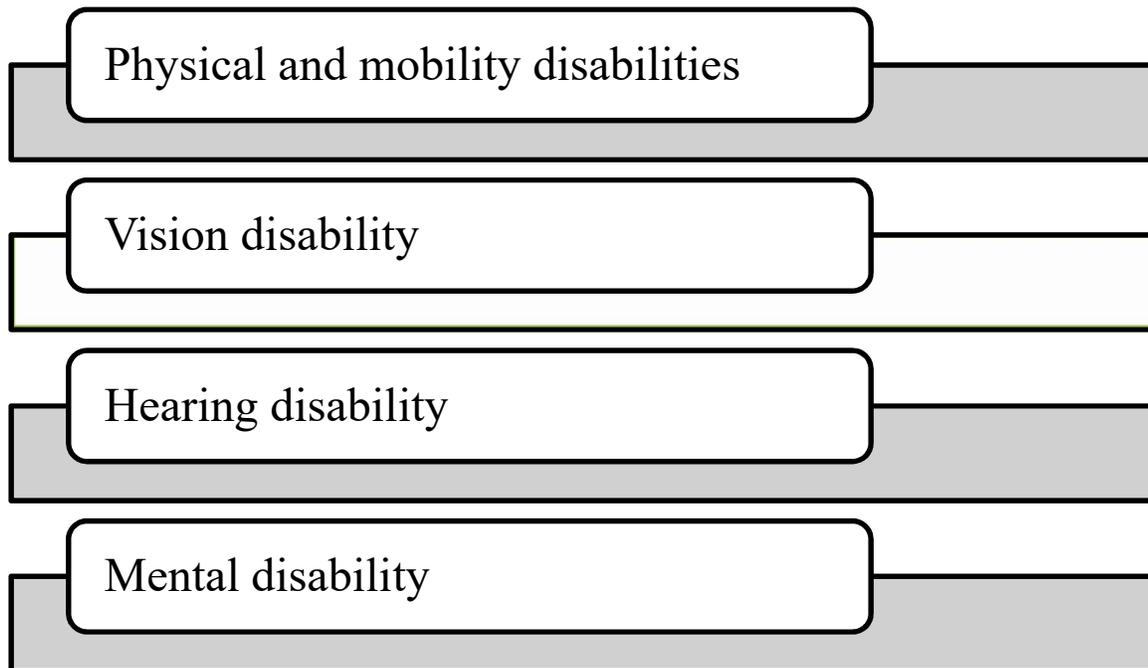
<sup>10</sup>Jon Simmons and Tricia Dodd, " Crimes in England and Wales 2012/2013". Home Office Statistical Bulletin:  
<http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20110218141841/http://rds.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs2/hosb703.pdf>:  
(Accessed March 2018)

<sup>11</sup> Disabled World Toward Tomorrow "Disability Statistics: Information, Charts, Graphs and Tables" February 10th 2018: <https://www.disabled-world.com/disability/statistics/> (Retrieved March 15, 2018)

committed numerous atrocities in regions under their control, including the amputation of arms or hands and stoning of civilian as capital punishment. The impact of the armed conflict has been particularly severe for women and children, increasing the number of women and children with disabilities. This so because women are specifically targeted by the armed group to be abducted and forcefully married off.

# Types of Disabilities

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*1:1: Diagram showing Types of Person with Disabilities*

## **1:4: TYPES OF DISABILITIES**

Disability knows no race, age, gender or status and may be hereditary or congenital. It is defined as any restriction or lack of ability to perform an activity in the manner or within the range considered normal for a human being due to impairment. In an overview on disability by the Center for Disease Control, disability is any condition of the body or mind that makes it more difficult for an individual to carry out certain activities and interact with the world around him/her.<sup>12</sup> As a result of these impairments, PWDs become vulnerable and often considered dependent individuals who require a level of special protection and support. These disabilities vary and take different forms. Hence, disability can be regarded as an umbrella term for impairments, activity limitations and participation restrictions. Impairments are problems in body

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<sup>12</sup> Centers for Disease Control (CDC) "Disability overview/disability and health". August 1, 2017: <https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/disabilityandhealth/disability.html> Retrieved (accessed August 23, 2018)

function or alterations in body structure.<sup>13</sup> Activity limitations are difficulties encountered by an individual in executing activities while participation restrictions are problems with involvement in any area of life.<sup>14</sup>

There are wide variations in the classification and types of disabilities. The World Health Organization provided an international classification of disabilities as it relates to the consequence of diseases. These include: behavioral disabilities, communication disabilities, personal care disabilities, dexterity disabilities, situational disabilities, particular skill disabilities, body disposition disabilities and loco motor disabilities.<sup>15</sup> Others classified disabilities into physical, sensory and mental disabilities. This is due to the fact that there is no universally accepted standard definition or conceptualization as it is influenced by factors including but not limited to causes, cultures, ideologies, beliefs, societies and history.

However, disabilities can generally be considered as falling into three dimensions.<sup>16</sup> The first is impairment to a person's body structure or function. Examples of impairments include loss of a limb, loss of vision or memory loss. Activity limitation, such as difficulty seeing, walking, hearing or problem solving, and, thirdly, participation restrictions in normal daily activities, such as working, engaging in social and recreational activities. In view of this, the following sub-categories of disability can be adopted for ease of understanding:

- Physical and mobility disabilities
- Vision disability
- Hearing disability
- Mental disability

### **Physical and Mobility Disabilities**

Physical and mobility disabilities affect a person's mobility, stamina or dexterity<sup>17</sup>. Such a person is constrained from carrying out physical activities independently. Persons with physical disabilities often use mobility devices such as crutches, canes, wheel chair and artificial limbs to aid mobility.<sup>18,19</sup> Focus group discussions conducted by GRA staff in the three North-Eastern

<sup>13</sup> US Department of Health and Human Services (2005). "The Surgeon General's call to Action to improve the Health and wellness of Persons with Disabilities". Washington, DC Department of Health and Human Services, Office of the Surgeon General. Retrieved from "Defining disability" page. (accessed August 23,2018)

<sup>14</sup> World Health Organization. Health topics-disabilities. Retrieved from, <https://www.who.int/topics/disabilities/en/> (accessed August 24,2018)

<sup>15</sup> International classification of impairments, disabilities and handicaps (1980): A manual of classification relating to the consequences of disease published in accordance with resolution WHA29.35 of the 29<sup>th</sup> World Health Assembly, May 1976. Section 3, page 142- 172 (accessed August 24,2018)

<sup>16</sup> World Health Organization (2001). International classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF). WHO, Geneva. (accessed August 24,2018)

<sup>17</sup> Achieve Australia. "Physical disability" <https://achieveaustralia.org.au/disability-services/physical-disability/> (accessed August 27,2018)

<sup>18</sup> Disabled world, "Physical and Mobility Impairments: Information and News" (revised/updated: 2015-03-03). <https://www.disabled-world.com/disability/types/mobility/> (accessed August 27,2018)

states included 38 persons with mobility challenges who were using wheel chairs and five persons using canes/sticks for mobility (see methodology for details). Physical disabilities can be congenital, hereditary or acquired. Congenital and hereditary include those conditions developed from birth or at a later stage due to genetic problems or injury during birth.<sup>20</sup> Acquired disabilities are acquired or developed after birth through road or industrial accidents, infections such as polio, or diseases as stroke or cancer.<sup>21</sup>

### Types of physical and mobility disabilities.

- **Musculoskeletal disability:** Inability to carry out distinctive activities associated with movements of the body parts due to muscle or bone deformities, diseases or degeneration. Examples include amputations, arthritis, fractures, spine and joint disorders.<sup>22,23</sup>
- **Neuromuscular Disability:** It is defined as the inability to carry out controlled movements of affected body parts due to diseases, degeneration or disorders of the nervous system. Examples are Cerebral Palsy, stroke, head injury etc.<sup>10</sup>
- **Spinal cord Disability:** An injury or damage to the spinal cord often result in a permanent disability leading to loss of function (mobility) and feeling. This kind of injury mostly occurs due to severe accidents.<sup>24</sup>

### Vision Disability

Vision disability or impairment is defined as a reduced ability of an individual to see to a degree that causes problems not fixable by usual means, such as glasses and medication.<sup>25,26</sup> Visual impairment can be caused by, but not limited to, un-operated cataract, uncorrected refractive

<sup>19</sup> Colorado State University, "Mobility Modules- Mobility Impairments"

[http://accessproject.colostate.edu/disability/modules/MI/tut\\_MI.php?display=single\\_pg](http://accessproject.colostate.edu/disability/modules/MI/tut_MI.php?display=single_pg) (accessed August 27, 2018)

<sup>20</sup> Handicaps Welfare Association. "General information on physical disabilities" Retrieved on 27<sup>th</sup> August, 2018 from <https://hwa.org.sg/general-information-on-disabilities/>

<sup>21</sup> Mark F. O'Reilly, Nicolette Sammarco, Michelle Kuhn, Cindy Gevarter, Lci Watkins, Heather K. Gonzales, Laura Rojas, Jeff Sigafoos, Guilio E. Lancioni Russell Lang (2015). From the book; Clinical and Organizational applications of Behaviour Analysis. Chapter 8- Inborn an Acquired Brain and Physical Disabilities. Retrieved from <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/B9780124204298000083>

<sup>22</sup> Disability Benefits help." Musculoskeletal disorders and Social Security Disability". Retrieved from: <https://www.disability-benefits-help.org/disabling-conditions/musculoskeletal-system> (Accessed June 24 2018)

<sup>23</sup> Scott Flexa, "Disabilities Experts of Florida: Musculoskeletal Impairment Disability Claims" December 21, 2015 <https://www.disabilityexpertsfl.com/blog/bid/155473/Musculoskeletal-Impairment-Disability-Claims> (accessed August 27, 2018)

<sup>24</sup> Disabled World: "Disabilities Definition, Types and Model" September 28th, 2018. <https://www.disabled-world.com/disability/types/> retrieved on September 24, 2018:

<sup>25</sup> Disabled world "Vision disability: types, news and information", October 2nd, 2018 <https://www.disabled-world.com/disability/types/vision/> (accessed August 28, 2018)

<sup>26</sup> World Health Organization "Change the definition of Blindness". Archived from the original on July 14, 2015. Accessed August 28, 2018.

errors, age-related macular degeneration, trauma, Glaucoma, diabetic retinopathy.<sup>27,28</sup> The term blindness is used for complete or near total vision loss.<sup>29</sup> Visual impairment or blindness interferes with a person's ability to perform everyday activities as, walking, reading, socializing and driving. The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that more than 80% of all vision impairment can be prevented or cured.<sup>30</sup>

### **Hearing Disability**

Hearing impairment is a full or partial decrease in the ability to detect or understand sound.<sup>31</sup> It occurs when there is a problem with or damage to one or more parts of the ear.<sup>32</sup> The inability to hear is called deafness. Hearing impairment in children can affect their ability to learn spoken language and can cause work-related difficulties in adults.<sup>33</sup> People who have severe hearing impairment often use sign language for communication. The cause of hearing loss or deafness can be congenital or acquired. Congenital causes may be hereditary, non-hereditary or a result of complications during pregnancy and childbirth, such as low birth weight, infections during pregnancy, inappropriate use of particular drugs during pregnancy etc. Acquired causes can manifest at any age, such as chronic ear infections, excessive noise, and aging.<sup>23</sup>

### **Mental Disability**

This occurs due to mental impairment which affects a person's thinking, emotional state, interaction and behaviours.<sup>34</sup> Examples include anxiety disorders, bipolar disorder, depression, anorexia nervosa, post-traumatic stress disorder(PTSD), body dysmorphic disorder, depression, schizophrenia etc.<sup>35</sup>

<sup>27</sup> Bourne RRR, Flaxman SR, Braithwaite T, Cicinelli MV, Das A, Jonas JB et al, (2017). Vision Loss experts, "Magnitude, temporal trends and projections of the global prevalence of blindness and distance and near vision impairment". A systematic review and meta-analysis. *Lancet global Health*, 2017, September;5(9): e888-97.

<sup>28</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "Blindness and Vision Impairment" <https://www.cdc.gov/healthcommunication/ToolsTemplates/EntertainmentEd/Tips/Blindness.html> (accessed August 28,2018)

<sup>29</sup>Maberly D.A., Hollands H., Chuo J., Tam G., Konkal J., Roesch M., Veselinovic A., Witzigmann M., Bassett K., (March 2006). "The prevalence of Low vision and blindness in Canada", *Eye (London, England)*. 20(3): 341-346, doi:10.1038/sj.eye6701879PMID15905873

<sup>30</sup> World Health Organization, "Blindness and visual impairment". October 11, 2017: <http://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/blindness-and-visual-impairment>(accessed August 28, 2018)

<sup>31</sup>Disabled world "Hearing impairment: Deaf and Hearing Loss Information" <https://www.disabled-world.com/disability/types/hearing/>

<sup>32</sup>Teens Health, "Hearing impairment". March 6,2016: <https://kidshealth.org/en/teens/hearing-impairment.html> (accessed August 28, 2018)

<sup>33</sup> World Health Organization, "Deafness and Hearing loss". March 15, 2018 <http://www.who.int/en/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/deafness-and-hearing-loss> (Accessed 22nd June 2018)

<sup>34</sup> National Alliance on Mental Illness, "Mental Health Conditions".<https://www.nami.org/Learn-More/Mental-Health-Conditions> (accessed August 28, 2018)

<sup>35</sup> Mayo Clinic, "Mental illness: symptoms and causes". <https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/mental-illness/symptoms-causes/syc-20374968> (accessed August 28,2018)

- **Anxiety disorders:** People with anxiety disorders frequently have intense, excessive, and persistent worry and fear about everyday situations. These feelings interfere with daily activities, are difficult to control, are out of proportion to the actual danger, and can last a long time.<sup>24</sup>
- **Post-traumatic stress disorder:** Post-traumatic stress disorder can develop after someone experiences or witnesses a traumatic event which threatened their life or safety, or that of others around them.<sup>36</sup> For example, events which can trigger PTSD include a physical or sexual assault, an accident, natural disasters, or war. Symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder include, flash backs, night mares and severe anxiety.<sup>37</sup>
- **Depression:** This is characterized by sadness, loss of interest or pleasure, feeling of guilt or low self-worth, tiredness, poor concentration and disturbed sleep or appetite.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> National Institute of mental Health, “An overview of Post- traumatic stress disorder”.

<https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/post-traumatic-stress-disorder-ptsd/index.shtml>accessed August 28, 2018)

<sup>37</sup> Mayo clinic, “An overview of Post traumatic stress disorder, PTSD”. <https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/post-traumatic-stress-disorder/symptoms-causes/syc-20355967> (Accessed June,14,2018)

<sup>38</sup>World Health Organization, October 2014 “Fact sheets- Mental disorders”. <http://www.who.int/en/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/mental-disorders>

# Challenges of People with Disabilities

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*1:2: Diagram showing Challenges of Person with Disabilities*

## **1:5: CHALLENGES OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES**

Persons living with disabilities in Nigeria face several challenges which include difficulty in accessing public buildings, high unemployment, negative treatments and attitudes especially from their able-bodied counterparts, poor provisions of education and health services, among others, which often lead to their exclusion from community life and decision making. During our interview with 70 PWDs in Adamawa, Borno and Yobe States between January and June 2018 to find out the various challenges they experience, most of them shared personal experiences pointing to marginalization, victimization, exclusion, stigmatization, discrimination and neglect of their special needs as major concerns.

*Challenges being encountered by our respondents include:*

### **Healthcare Services**

Disabled people in Africa, including Nigeria, are usually extremely poor, often living in rural and other areas where medical and other services are scarce, or even totally absent, and where

disabilities are not detected in time. When disabled people receive medical attention, if at all, the impairment may have become irreversible.<sup>39</sup>

People with disabilities have largely been unrecognized as a population for public health attention, but recent efforts have made the poor health of this population visible.<sup>40</sup> In their report on disability and health in the US, Altman and Bernstein (2006) stated that adults with disabilities are four times more likely to report their health to be fair or poor than people with no disabilities (40.3% vs 9.9%).<sup>41</sup> The foregoing is indicative of the likely poor health conditions of persons with disabilities and also the need for their special healthcare provision, which unfortunately, PWDs in Nigeria say is lacking. Persons with disabilities reported that they often do not receive the needed healthcare due to exorbitant cost of health services. Others say they are treated badly by health care workers and/or denied access to public health infrastructure. For example, mammography screening equipment requires a woman to stand, absence of weight scale that accommodates people on wheel chairs or others who have difficulty standing are hardly provided by hospitals in Nigeria.

Our findings reveal that the major challenges PWDs in North-Eastern Nigeria face in the Health sector include affordability, accessibility, mobility, availability and stigmatization.

- **Affordability and availability**

A 58-year-old blind man from Damaturu, Yobe State, narrated that getting access to medical care back then was difficult but even with the modern health facilities now, PWDs still face the same situation:

“I became blind as a result of measles. I was 17 years old then and I could remember there was no medical centre or facility in my village then. My blindness was as a result of in-efficiency of our government to do the needful in the local communities. Though there is a Primary Health Centre now, medication for the illness is not free and medicine is not available. There was no time that I was given free medical care because of my disability. I have to buy medicine whenever I or any of my family member takes ill”.<sup>42</sup>

Another 35-year-old female respondent from Yobe State told GRA that although she has difficulty walking and no sources of income, she still has to pay medical bills without any subsidy. Her caregiver lamented that accessing healthcare services is hard and costly as well.

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<sup>39</sup>World Health Organization WHO, (2012). “Disabilities” <http://www.who.int/topics/disabilities/en/> (Accessed November 25, 2012)

<sup>40</sup>Trevathan E. Foreword. In: Drum CE, Krahn GL, Bersani H Jr, editors. "Disability and Public Health. American Public Health Association and American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities". Washington, DC: American Public Health Association; 2009. pp. vii–viii. (Accessed, February 6, 2018)

<sup>41</sup>Altman BM, Bernstein A. "Disability and Health in the United States," 2001-2005. Hyattsville, MD: National Center for Health Statistics; 2008. (Accessed March, 30, 2018)

<sup>42</sup> Grassroots Researchers Association interview with PWDs in Damaturu, Yobe State, February 11, 2018.

“I don’t find it easy getting treatment when I fall sick or any of my children does. This is because sometimes I don’t have money to buy hospital card to see a doctor or buy medicine. Government claim medicines are free in its hospitals, however, when you go you have to buy and mostly you don’t find medicine prescribed by doctors in the hospital”.<sup>43</sup>

A 65-year-old leprosy man interviewed in Borno state shared his experience about the Leprosy Hospital located in the Molai community in Maiduguri. He narrated that there are no drugs in the hospital. Previously, services offered by the hospital included general medical treatment, general surgeries, laboratory, eye care and physiotherapy.<sup>44</sup> It was considered one of the best hospitals, but the situation dramatically changed after Netherlands Leprosy Relief (NLR) stopped providing financial, material and technical support some years ago. Another factor that contributed to the failure of the medical center was conflict: The General Hospital was rocked by a bomb-blast last year.<sup>45</sup>

“When we go to the hospital, we buy drugs ourselves; no assistance from the government. Molai hospital which was meant for the leprosy has nothing working in it; no drugs, less staffs with old equipment”.<sup>46</sup>

### • **Mobility, Accessibility and Stigmatization**

Accounts from interviewees and medical experts working in North-Eastern Nigeria suggest that PWDs have serious challenges with mobility and accessibility. Even when they get stranded at stair cases, medical workers do not promptly assist. They often face stigmatization and their disabilities are often superstitiously associated with curses. Recounting her experiences, a 33-year-old lady from Adamawa State who has difficulty walking lamented her ordeals during visits to hospitals whenever she takes ill:

“Any time I visit hospitals for medical care, I have to come along with a relative to assist me wheel up because the hospital workers would rarely take it upon themselves to assist me where there are staircases or give consideration even on queues”.<sup>47</sup>

No matter how small the hospital bill is, PWDs find it difficult to raise money to pay for hospital bills. A 35-year-old visually-impaired man in Borno states that medical bills are not affordable:

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<sup>43</sup> Grassroots Researchers Association interview with PWDs in Damaturu, Yobe State, February 11, 2018.

<sup>44</sup> International Leprosy Associations: "COCIN Hospital and Rehabilitation Centre" retrieved on 24, September 2018: <https://leprosyhistory.org/database/archive302> (Accessed June 10, 2018)

<sup>45</sup> Channels Newspapers "Suicide Bombers Attack Borno Hospital" August 4, 2017: Retrieved from: <https://www.channelstv.com/2017/08/04/breaking-two-suicide-bombers-attack-borno-community/>: (Accessed July 7, 2018)

<sup>46</sup> Grassroots Researchers Association interview with PWDs in Maiduguri, Borno State, February 11, 2018.

<sup>47</sup> Grassroots Researchers Association interview with PWDs in Yola, Adamawa State, February 11, 2018.

“Getting access to health facilities for disabled persons in the state is pathetic. My wife had terrible abdominal pains and I took her to the hospital for treatment. As a blind man, I expected that special considerations would be given to my wife as a person with disability but, unfortunately, we were rejected at General Hospital Maiduguri when we told them we cannot afford N6,800 medical Bill”.

To him, medical bills are expensive and unaffordable. He noted that even when he continued to plead with the hospital, they would not listen to their pleas. "The way they treat us in the hospital is terrible. There are other cases where they refused to attend to us for even N200 medical bills charges”, he added. All the respondents interviewed in the three states are experiencing various forms of challenges with healthcare services.

### **Education Sector:**

UNESCO reported that 90 per cent of children with disabilities in developing countries do not attend school<sup>48</sup> and in 1998 UNDP study reveals that the global literacy rate for adults with disabilities was as low as 3 per cent, and 1 per cent for women with disabilities.<sup>49</sup> In the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries, students with disabilities in higher education remain under-represented, although their numbers are on the increase.<sup>50</sup>

These findings are not any different from those in this study which details contextual factors and instances in North-Eastern Nigeria that predispose or confirm these outcomes. PWDs lack equal opportunities for education, as their able-bodied counterparts are considered first during admission screenings. Even when they gain admission it may not be affordable to them to cope with the speed of learning with non-disabled students and might cause emotional distress due to segregation. For those able to afford the cost of education, limitations and constraints of mobility and accessibility are insurmountable daily hurdles as most school buildings or service points have no disability provisions. Coupled with untoward disposition from individuals in the academic environment, they are constantly disposed to physical, psychological trauma resulting in various degrees of self-limiting withdrawal reactions. The shortage of special education teachers (physical therapist, speech and language teachers) in addition to often being taught by teachers without special education certification slows down the progress of the students. Some of the interviewed PWDs narrated their personal experiences regarding education as follows:

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<sup>48</sup> UNESCO " Education for All" report on Children of Person with Disabilities: November 4,2015::<http://www.unesco.org/new/en/education/themes/leading-the-international-agenda/education-for-all> (Accessed on July 4,2018)

<sup>49</sup> See UNDP report: Retrieved on September 24, 2018

<sup>50</sup> OECD "Students with Disabilities, Learning Difficulties and Disadvantages: Statistics and Indicators " <http://www.oecd.org/education/school/studentswithdisabilitieslearningdifficultiesanddisadvantagesstatisticsandindicators.htm> (Accessed June 20,2018)

- **Discrimination**

Although inclusiveness is practiced at primary, secondary and tertiary institutions, there are a lot of challenges, as reported by most of the respondents. The findings reveal that negative attitudes towards the PWDs is paramount in schools. These attitudes are displayed by teachers and non-teachers as well. Cultural beliefs play a significant role in worsening the situation.

- **Mobility and Accessibility**

There are no services available to PWDs in both private and public schools. Our findings reveal that there are no structural considerations to ease the mobility of PWDs in public schools as such building were not built with them in mind. Adapting to such environments is a huge challenge to students with disabilities, as recounted by 27-year-old physically challenged student of Modibbo Adama University of Technology Yola of Adamawa state:

"As a student, arriving at lectures on time is always difficult for me due to the discriminating way most buildings were constructed with no considerations for students with disability. Sometimes I make it to exam halls late."<sup>51</sup>

One of the prominent issues that was noted regarding mobility and accessibility is the lack of coordination between the school administration and the families of PWDs. In many of the instances, the schools were constructed without considerations for the groups. Over 11 million children are out of school due to armed conflict with Boko Haram<sup>52</sup>, and a considerable number of these children have disabilities with special needs of education. Even when they get into public schools, they face a lot of mobility challenges. Narrating her challenges while at the University of Jos doing a National Diploma in Special Education HH, a lady from Adamawa State explained that:

"Ever since I gained admission, considering the rocky undulating Jos terrain, I find it so difficult moving around with a wheelchair that sometimes I had to forfeit lectures. Hostel accommodation are built without support paths for PWDs. Some students see us as third-class citizens and some see it as a taboo making friends or dating a disabled lady."<sup>53</sup>

- **High Cost of Education and Educational materials**

Another challenge is the cost of education for the PWDs, especially the blind, as stated by a blind teacher in Borno state. Probably the biggest issue for the students/school is the inability to

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<sup>51</sup> Grassroots Researchers Association interview with PWDs in Yola, Adamawa State, February 11,2018.

<sup>52</sup> PM news " 11m children out of school in North - East Nigeria " September 25, 2018 retrieved from: <https://www.pmnewsnigeria.com/2017/06/14/11m-children-school-north-east-nigeria/> (Accessed June 15,2018)

<sup>53</sup> Grassroots Researchers Association interview with PWDs in Yola, Adamawa State, February 11,2018.

afford the learning materials. There are almost never waivers or subsidies from the government to cushion the burden for disabled students and make the materials available:

“Our study materials are very expensive. Just our pencil is ₦5,000 and yet the government isn’t doing anything to offer us scholarships. Government has forgotten the disabled in rural communities. We are left alone with the education of our children. Any education is money and there is no special treatment or waiver for us persons with disability. We have to beg before we eat, not to talk of schooling for our children”.<sup>54</sup>

An estimated 80 per cent of all people with disabilities in the world live in rural areas of developing countries and have limited or no access to the services they need. Thus, providing decent work for people with disabilities makes social as well as economic sense.<sup>55</sup>

- **Insufficiency of special schools**

Nigeria continues to fail the daunting task of educating people with disabilities as a result of insufficiency of special schools. In theory, present and future plans for such schools look outstanding, but in reality, it was one step forward and two steps backward in establishing special schools for the most vulnerable group. Some of the findings revealed that special schools in North-Eastern states are completely dilapidated: A 35-year-old man who has difficulty walking lamented over the sorry state of their school:

“There is only one school for PWDs in Adamawa State, which is in a bad condition without maintenance and adequate state government funding. We therefore call on the government to allocate funding for refurbishing and improving the standard of the school.”<sup>56</sup>

## **Banking Industries**

The Nigerian banking industry is growing on a large scale with a rapid increase in the number of customers. There are currently over 22 commercial banks that are operating in Nigeria. These commercial banks complied with the directives of the Central Bank of Nigeria in 2016 to either merge with other banks or to shut down.<sup>57</sup> Although the Central Bank has emphasized the

<sup>54</sup> Grassroots Researchers Association Interviews with PWDs in Borno State, February, 12,2018

<sup>55</sup> International Labour Organization (ILO) "Facts on Disability in the World of Work" November 2017: [https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/documents/publication/wcms\\_087707.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/documents/publication/wcms_087707.pdf) (Accessed June 4,2018)

<sup>56</sup> Grassroots Researchers Association Interviews with PWDs in Yola Adamawa State, February, 26,2018

<sup>57</sup> Editorial Staff " Commercial Banks in Nigeria/List of Commercial Banks in Nigeria with Head Office Address & websites" April 23, 2018, <https://www.currentschoolnews.com/articles/commercial-banks-nigeria/> (Accessed July,10, 2018)

importance of complaint management and created a customer protection guide with information on where and how to lodge complaints against Financial institutions and Commercial Banks<sup>58</sup> PWDs still face problems of accessibility and inclusion with banking industries in Nigeria.

People with disabilities experience a range of access issues when attempting to use bank facilities and services. Some lament that there are hardly provisions for them in buildings and/or technological accessibility at most banks. These may vary depending upon the nature of the disability, but the overall outcome is discomfort and ineffective use of bank facilities by persons in wheelchair and on crutches, as well as by persons who are visually and/or hearing-impaired . Accessibility and usage of the automated teller machines (ATMs), utilization of security doors and protocols, and insensitive and unsupportive bank cashiers are among the many challenges PWDs face at the banks.

- **Accessibility, Privacy and Security**

Some PWDs mentioned being robbed of their money and other valuables at ATM stands because they had asked other users to assist them in making withdrawals: A 34-year-old student of Adamawa State Polytechnic who has difficulty walking recounted his ordeal at an ATM:

“Fraudsters on several occasions have taken advantage of me at ATMs and withdrew the little money I was able to labor for. I went to withdraw from a nearby ATM but since I cannot climb the stairs, I beckoned on a young man to assist me. After I had given him my pin and card, he almost emptied my account, dropped my card on my lap and disappeared into thin air. I screamed and wailed but no one was there to help me out.”<sup>59</sup>

Despite the emphases by the World Health Organization (WHO) and World Bank on the needs and vulnerability of disabled persons, lack of accessibility to public buildings and all aspects of modern development is still alarming in North-Eastern Nigeria. Considerations for infrastructural programmes and policies do not accurately capture the needs of PWDs. In some instances, even their right to privacy is at stake. A 56-year-old blind man interviewed in Yobe State narrated his experience at the bank as frustrating:

“In 1997, I went to the Bank (name of bank withheld) in Damaturu to open an account with my money and they refused. Because of my blindness, they said I have to come with somebody that is not blind before I would be allowed to open an account and make

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<sup>58</sup> Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN), " Consumer Protection: Complaints Management": <https://www.cbn.gov.ng/Supervision/cpdcomgt.asp> (Accessed on June 24,2018)

<sup>59</sup>Grassroots Researchers Association interview with disabled persons in Yola North, Adamawa State on January 28, 2018

deposit. I tried to explain that this is my privacy, but they refused to listen, so I had to leave with my money because of my seeing disability.”<sup>60</sup>

- **Banking Protocols and Procedures**

A large number of the respondents we interviewed talked about the strict protocols and procedures of the banking industry. PWDs, along with their family members, are not treated with respect and courtesy in the bank environment. According to 19-year-old lady from Adamawa State who has difficulty walking:

"Out of the numerous banks we have in Yola, not even one has provisions to fit my wheelchair into the banking hall for transactions, so I have to crawl my way in hoping to find a Good Samaritan that can help place my teller on the counter or at the customer care section likewise at ATM outlets".<sup>61</sup>

Most of the commercial banks do not show efforts to make banking easy and convenient for PWDs despite their policies that encourage inclusiveness in products and services. There is no provision for physical access, friendly interacting or special doorsteps.

" The major challenge in banking industries is the entrance as the gimmick does not recognize cripples due to the height and the position of the ATM machine", 46-year-old told GRA in Borno State. Another recounted that, "The main challenges for us in the field of banking is the entrance and the nature of the ATM which is meant for the able bodies".<sup>62</sup>

A purposeful visit to some of the commercial banks to verify the claims of the PWDs revealed that<sup>63</sup> single door mechanisms is the common door system in all the banks without special support for PWDs. There is also discrimination in the set-up of some facilities to accommodate PWDs, including especially in locker areas, stair cases, customer services, and banking halls.

### **Political and Electoral Participation**

PWDs face diverse attitudinal, physical and institutional barriers which stifle or quell their dream for political participation or representation in Nigeria. They are noticeably absent in politics and political offices, are largely neglected in governance and democratization, and have limited

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<sup>60</sup> Grassroots Researchers Association interview with disabled persons in Damaturu, Yobe State, January 28, 2018

<sup>61</sup> Grassroots Researchers Association interview with disabled persons in Yola North, Adamawa State, January 28, 2018

<sup>62</sup> Grassroots Researchers Association Interviews with PWDs in Borno State, February, 30,2018

<sup>63</sup> Grassroots Researchers Association's Field Visit to Commercial Motor Park in Maiduguri, Borno State on February 24, 2018 to observed the challenges faced by PWDs.

access to electoral process participation. There are no affirmative measures by political parties and the electoral body to reserve certain political positions for people with disabilities. Although PWDs are a large minority, they are particularly affected by bad governance and during political violence. More specifically, the financial cost of political participation is often too high for a typical PWD. In times of electoral violence, PWDs can also be particularly vulnerable, making it risky for them to attempt to participate in political protests or marches. Should violence occur, PWDs may be unable to run or defend themselves. At the same time, however, the failure to engage in political participation or obtain political representation over the years by PWDs in Nigeria has contributed in reducing them in the eyes of many to low-lives and second-class citizens in their own fatherland.

- **Non-fulfillment of Political Promises**

During the assessment that GRA conducted, some of the interviewed PWDs spoke of perceived marginalization in governance and the democratic processes, including non-involvement in the political processes, non-representation in the decision-making machinery, and commensurate levelled-ground electoral processes to fairly compete with their able-bodied counterparts. The lack of protection and victimization before, during and after elections, among several others were also mentioned challenges.

A 55-year-old blind man from Damaturu Local Government Area (LGA), Yobe State, stated during a focus group discussion how politicians approached them during electoral campaigns with sugar-coated promises but forgot about them after they got into power. Reiterating the act by politicians in making unfulfilled political promises to them, a 19-year-old crippled female in Adamawa State lamented about the fake promises by the politicians:

“In 2015, some political aspirants came to our state office prior to the elections, making false promises and urging us to register to get our voter card and vote for them. Sadly, when in office, not even one came back to fulfil any of the promises they made to us.”<sup>64</sup>

- **Political Marginalization and Inclusiveness**

Since the inception of democracy in Nigeria, PWDs have never been considered for elective or appointive position in the North-East, particularly in states like Adamawa and Borno State. Out of 3 Governors, 9 Senators, 30 House of Representatives and 65 State house of Assembly members in all the three states, none of the positions is occupied by a person with disability. With all the outcry, strategies and initiatives by political parties, government institutions, civil society groups and development partners, the involvement of PWDs is still a mirage. Even at the local government level, PWDs have not been given opportunities to contest for Councillor and

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<sup>64</sup> Grassroots Researchers Associations Interviews with PWD in Yola , Adamawa State on June 26, 2018.

Chairman positions. Very few have had the chance to be nominated as Advisors in government cabinet.

Lamenting the political marginalisation against PWDs in Borno State, a 45-year-old crippled respondent from Maiduguri regretted that, unlike other states that make special provisions for PWDs, they are not considered for any government appointments in his state. He noted that:

"Politically we are marginalized in the state. In Yobe state, for instance, the handicaps are appointed as advisors, they are also included to the party executives which is contrary to Borno State politics. In terms of sharing the rewards and benefits of democracy,, they are not benefitting as their Yobe state counterpart".<sup>65</sup>

He stated that even the workshop provided for the disabled by a former Borno State Governor is no longer functional. According to him, the skills acquisition centres have only 16 to 18 staff across the LGA, out of which many have died and some retired, yet, the government has failed to make replacement or appoint disabled people to the vacant positions. Most of the buildings in the centre have become dilapidated while some have been destroyed by insurgents.

### **Employment Opportunities**

The International Labour Organization (ILO) reports that unemployment among PWDs in some countries is as high as 80% and employers often assume that PWDs are incapable of working. The analysis conducted by the *World Health Survey*, based on the involvement of 51 countries, showed that the rate of disabled workers stands at 52.8% of men and 19.6% for female compared with normal male workers with 64.9% of men and 29.9% of female. At an average, Disabled Person had 72.4% against 94.8% , by implications, the average rate of employment among persons with disabilities is less compare to that of persons without disability. Another study conducted by the OECD found that the average rate of workers with disabilities is 44% of 75% of normal employees.<sup>66</sup> Whether apparent or not, each day there are people with disabilities hard at work, serving employers and the public. But despite their abilities and performance, unemployment among people with developmental disabilities is far above that experienced by the general population.<sup>67</sup> Armed with good qualifications, desire and willingness to work, PWDs are most times not considered for employment.

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<sup>65</sup> Grassroots Researchers Associations Interview with PWD in Maiduguri Borno Sate on February 28, 2018.

<sup>66</sup> N.Rozali, S.Abdullah, SD.Ishak, AA.Azmi, NH, Akhmar. "Challenges faced By People with Disability for Getting Jobs: Entrepreneurship Solution for Unemployment" Vol.7. No. 3 (2017) p335  
[http://hrmars.com/hrmars\\_papers/Challenges\\_faced\\_By\\_People\\_with\\_Disability\\_for\\_Getting\\_Jobs\\_Entrepreneurship\\_Solution\\_for\\_Unemployment.pdf](http://hrmars.com/hrmars_papers/Challenges_faced_By_People_with_Disability_for_Getting_Jobs_Entrepreneurship_Solution_for_Unemployment.pdf) (Accessed April,2,2018)

<sup>67</sup> Department of Administration: "Council on Developmental Disabilities, The jobs Challenge for People with Disabilities" June 1, 2012; [http://mn.gov/mnddc/jobs\\_challenge/index.html](http://mn.gov/mnddc/jobs_challenge/index.html) (Accessed May 18,2018)

- **Discriminations in Employment Participation**

In both the private and public sector, employers aim to create equal opportunities for recruitment on the basis of experience and eligibility but in reality, they don't consider persons with disabilities at all; except in some rare cases in which PWDs are accepted base on their qualification despite their disabilities. A disabled person from Adamawa State recounted that:

"With my National Diploma certificate, July this year I went to apply for Post Primary Education recruitment, but the officials on reaching to purchase a form engaged in a debate as to how I can be employed with my disability, and that was how I didn't gain employment with the Adamawa State Post Primary Education. [The same thing happened with my application at the Adamawa State Auditor General's Office 2018."<sup>68</sup>

A 45-year-old disabled woman who teaches in a school told GRA that:

"In 2012, I had the opportunity to teach Qur'an on a temporary basis. I pleaded with the then-commissioner to make my appointment permanent but she refused due to the reason best known to her and eventually they stopped paying me, I decided to quit because I cannot continue teaching students without payment."<sup>69</sup>

- **Job Access and Service Opportunities**

A considerable number of interviewees we talked to explained that gaining access to job opportunities is always difficult. They recounted that information on the recruitment gives specific preference to able-bodied persons. In some cases, the job advisement is designed in a way that makes it difficult for PWD to access. The preference is comprehensive but is so much complicated that PWDs finds it difficult to understand the step-to-step guidelines on recruitment. A 22-year-old blind man from Borno State told GRA that:

"Employment is a serious challenge as quite a number of us who are educated are not employed. We end up begging on the streets."<sup>70</sup>

A similar experience was shared by another 55-year-old visually-impaired respondent from Maiduguri, who stated that:

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<sup>68</sup> Grassroots Researchers Association Interviews with PWDs in Jemata, Adamawa State, February 30th,2018

<sup>69</sup> Grassroots Researchers Associations Interviews with PWD in Maiduguri, Borno state on June 30, 2018

<sup>70</sup> Grassroots Researchers Associations Interviews with PWD in Maiduguri, Borno state on January 24, 2018.

“After I graduated from the university, it took me several years before I got a job. In fact, I went on radio and TV before I was given a job. Many others may not be as persistent as me.”<sup>71</sup>

## Transportation and Mobility:

People with disabilities have consistently described how transportation barriers affect their lives in important ways. Transportation services are often not accessible to individuals with disabilities as policies are not implemented and adequate funding is not provided. Public transit, which is the most affordable and flexible mode of passenger transportation for people with disabilities, does not follow fixed routes or schedule. There are no modified vans that are equipped with lifts to accommodate passengers who use wheelchairs. As a consequence, some operators shun the disabled as they do not have space to accommodate the wheelchair. Similarly, the way most vehicles are designed makes it difficult for the disabled to board them.

- **Discriminations in Public Transport**

Transportation is an extremely important policy issue for those with disabilities. Of the 70 respondents interviewed, 45 mentioned one or more forms of discrimination against them based on mobility disabilities and limitations in buildings and other environmental structures. A 58-year-old disabled man from Damaturu told GRA that:

“I could remember in 2012, I and a friend who is also blind like me boarded a lorry from Damaturu to Kano. During our journey, the driver realized that we are visually impaired and insisted that we had to get out of the vehicle and actually forced us to get out. We resisted but had to leave the vehicle to avoid being harmed by the driver. It was raining that day and we slept under a lorry.”<sup>72</sup>

Some of the typical cases relate to barriers to boarding on public transportation with their wheel chairs. Most of the ideas, designs and building codes are not disability-oriented. The features do not support or ease the movement of PWDs. A visit to some of the motor parks and “KEKE NAPEP” (tricycle) stations<sup>73</sup> in Damaturu showed that no special provision is set-up to cushion the plights of PWDs. A critical observation in the field revealed that it often takes an average of one hour for tricycles to stop to pick up PWDs. Even when they stop to pick them up,<sup>74</sup> the

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<sup>71</sup> Grassroots Researchers Associations Interviews with PWD in Maiduguri, Borno state on January 25, 2018

<sup>72</sup> Grassroots Researchers Associations Interviews with PWD in Damaturu, Yobe State on June 30, 2018

<sup>73</sup> Grassroots Researchers Association's Field Visit to Commercial Motor Park, to observe the challenges faced by PWDs in Damaturu, Yobe State on February 28, 2018

<sup>74</sup> Grassroots Researchers Association's Field Visit to Commercial Motor Park at Tashan Kano Maiduguri, Borno State on February 24, 2018 to observe the challenges faced by PWDs on January 24, 2018 in Borno State.

passengers are not used to accepting PWDs on board. In some instances, the motorists scared off the disabled person by blowing the horn. A 35-year-old crippled woman from Damaturu explained that:

"I face discriminations from motorist and tricycle riders whenever I go out on my wheelchair. Drivers blow their horns to pave their way. This has caused me to fall into culverts on several occasions. The most worrying part is that my wheelchair has been damaged and whenever I intend to go somewhere on commercial tricycle, I use to get shunned whenever riders realize that I have a disability. With my transport fare, they don't pick me up just because of my disability."<sup>75</sup>

- **Restrictions on Entrance, Doors, Lift and Access Road**

A critical survey through observations in 7 motors parks /tricycles parks in Jimeta and Yola of Adamawa state revealed that all the stations had one form of restriction or the other<sup>76</sup>. Almost all the car parks had rough stages with uneven landscapes which constitute restrictions. It is difficult for the stages to allow smooth transfer of disabled passengers from their wheel chairs to a car. A 55-year-old disabled civil servant from Adamawa State narrated that lack of inclusiveness in road designs for access by PWDs is their major challenge.

"Roads in Adamawa State are constructed with no provision for disabled path. This has led to the deaths of so many of our members. We, the disabled in society, are only seen, treated and called senseless beggars not as any other Nigerian with potential to improve the nation's economy."<sup>77</sup>

Similarly, most pedestrian bridges are constructed without consideration for access by persons on wheelchairs or tricycles. With no alternatives, some physically challenged persons will have to crawl or are physically lifted by their caregivers to cross to the other side of the bridge. Another disabled student recounted that:

"Zebra crossing road signs are made on roads purposely to assist children while crossing the road but provision has not been made to assist PWDs in the community while crossing the road."<sup>78</sup>

- **Affordability and Availability of Mobile Facilities**

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<sup>75</sup> Grassroots Researchers Associations Interviews with PWDs in Maiduguri at Geidam, Yobe State on June 30, 2018

<sup>76</sup> Grassroots Researchers Association's Field Visit to Commercial Motor Park at Jemeta Yola to observe the challenges faced by PWDs on February 26, 2018.

<sup>77</sup> Grassroots Researchers Associations Interviews with PWD in Yola, Adamawa state, January 28, 2018.

<sup>78</sup> Grassroots Researchers Associations Interviews with PWD in Yola, Adamawa state, January 28, 2018.

On general observation, gaining access routes to and around buildings is difficult for disabled peoples. Car parks and setting down points is another issue. Persons with disabilities need mobile facilities to ease their challenges. For instance, horizontal and vertical circulations, sanitary accommodations, toilets and building entrances are not PWDs-friendly. It was observed that the majority of the PWDs in the three states had no mobile facilities because they cannot afford it at all and in some instances, it is not even available. A 43-year-old disabled woman told GRA that:

"The modern mobile facilities that the disabled use is very expensive, many cannot afford to buy them, and they are very rare in our market. We need the government to place a discount rate for the disabled."<sup>79</sup>

Another interviewee in Adamawa State shared the same experience in a different way:

"It takes the Grace of God to get a KekeNapep (tricycle) that will pick me from my home town when I have things to do, as most of them won't stop, but if they eventually do stop, they charge me extra unlike other passengers."<sup>80</sup>

### **Marriage and Social Life:**

In reality, living with a disability is very difficult but it gets more complex when a disabled person is married without any form of economic support. Then life becomes more challenging for the PWD and his or her children, and the family may lack some basic needs.

Women with disabilities are considered less eligible for marriage. This is because women with disabilities are perceived as being unable to fulfill their gendered roles as wives and mothers, as they are seen as asexual, not able to give birth, and not able to undertake daily domestic tasks.<sup>81</sup> Furthermore, women who later become physically challenged in the course of their marriage may be neglected. Indeed, women who acquire a disability during their marriage may be abandoned by their partner who cannot cope with the stigma associated with disability.

- **Marriage Inequality**

Chances of getting married for woman with a disability are very low. Even though there are campaigns and advocacy to promote equality, they face terrible challenges. A 19-year-old having difficulty walking stated that:

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<sup>79</sup> Grassroots Researchers Associations Interviews with PWD in Maiduguri, Borno on June 30, 2018

<sup>80</sup> Grassroots Researchers Associations Interviews with PWD in Jimeta, Adamawa State on January 28, 2018

<sup>81</sup> INCLUSIVE FRIENDS & NSRP, WHAT VIOLENCE MEANS TO US, *supra* note 8, at 12.

"In the year 2011 at Bajabure Girei LGA Damare ward, a gentleman (not disabled) I used to date, made me believe what we had was real not for me to find out that he was only a scam and till now I feel relationship was never made for me as a disabled lady."<sup>82</sup>

Living with disability is incredibly expensive for married women because their husbands expects them to do domestic works despites their conditions. For some, living with their husband goes beyond just normal lifestyles of couples. The ignorance and the cultural factors put more pressure on the women to go through untold pains in the name of keeping their marriage. For instance, a disabled women child delivery and domestic activities is much more expensive and complicated because it will require many caregivers. The burdens of living in poverty and the societal belief that PWDs must rely on the relatives to feed their families is another problem. Things like medical bills and other basic needs for family upkeep are quite expensive. Unless the couple are wealthy, there is just no way they can cope with the perceptions of the people about them as PWDs. A 58-year-old blind man from Damaturu explained the level of inequality meted out on him when he was about to get married.

"I really suffered from childhood to my first marriage. I planned to marry a girl in Goniri, but then but her mother refused and prevented her marrying me just because I am blind. Because we love each other we took the matter to the village head to intervene and he decided to support us. He told the mother that he will use his capacity as community leader to take her to the Nigerian Police for detention and the marriage will still hold. Shekept on insisting that her daughter is too beautiful to marry a blind man. what about other able men, have they all got finished in the village for her to go for PWD. The community leader took his stand and we got married but the marriage did not last long because of the perpetual hatred and influence of the mother on the marriage."<sup>83</sup>

- ***Discrimination***

Regardless of religion, Christians and Muslims preach against discrimination and for equality. They encourage their worshippers to support the most vulnerable groups, especially PWDs. Nevertheless, the majority of people in Nigeria would not agree for their able-bodied children to marry a PWD. It is assumed that they should only be helped to get assistance but one should not be associate with them at any level of life. A caregiver in Borno told GRA that, "No Pastor or Imam who preaches against inequality will accept that his daughter or son marries a PWD. They just say what they cannot do themselves."<sup>84</sup> A 26-year-old PWD recounted that:

"We are faced with challenges when trying to get a life partner (marry), most parents of the bride go against the relationship as if we are cursed in our bloodline with disability

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<sup>82</sup> Grassroots Researchers Associations Interviews with PWD on June 30, 2018 at Jemeta Yola, Adamawa State.

<sup>83</sup> Grassroots Researchers Associations Interviews with PWD in Damaturu, Yobe State on June 20, 2018.

<sup>84</sup> GRA Interview with PWD Caregiver in Maiduguri, Borno Sate on February 28, 2018

thinking we don't have potential in us. It only takes the grace of God to get married when you are disabled, except maybe for the rich and wealthy ones."<sup>85</sup>

## **Housing Leasing and Apartment**

Page | 31 On a general note, owning a house is a difficult task in Nigeria due to high housing prices. The majority of people live in rented apartments at the mercy of landlords. PWDs and their family members face a severe housing crisis as they face discrimination when seeking housing. Apart from leasing issues, most buildings are not handicapped accessible leading to the prevailing accessibility issues. Some of the interviewees we spoke with stated that affordability, accessibility and housing discrimination are their major concerns.

- **Housing Discrimination**

Accounts from interviewees, housing agents, landlords and government officials suggest that PWDs are sometimes rejected or even forced out of apartments just because of their disabilities. In most instances, PWDs reported that, they are often denied a lease or forced to give up an apartment without the landlord stating the reason, but they suspect it is because of their disability. A 45-year-old PWD in Maiduguri explained that physically-challenged people in the state are facing housing difficulties as landlords in the state prefer able-bodied tenants to those with disabilities.

"Whenever seeking an apartment to rent, we usually put an able-bodied person to negotiate on our behalf. I did the same and paid for one year of rent. When the landlord saw that I am a person with disability, he came up overnight after spending four months in his house and decided to increase the rent by 40%. I refused to comply, and he sued me in a court to leave his house, but the presiding judge said the decision was null and void because my rent is still due. After my rent expired, I vacated the house but still he went and brought the police to arrest me in my new house until I involved the judge again before he let me free."<sup>86</sup>

Even when they are caught up in emergency situations due to the impact of the conflict, PWDs still face similar discrimination. In 2013, at the peaks of the conflict when thousands of people fled to neighboring countries and regions for safety, a 35-year-old disabled woman explained that she witnessed an insurgent attack that displaced her and her family of 14, and ultimately forced them to become refugees in the Niger republic.

"I got displaced to Damaturu, the capital of Yobe State, in 2013. On arrival as an IDP with a disability together with my household members numbering 14, I began to struggle for shelter. In the process, I went around the town without acceptance from landlords who turned down my request because of my disability, thinking that I may not [be able to]

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<sup>85</sup> Grassroots Researchers Associations Interviews with PWD in Maiduguri, Borno on June 30, 2018

<sup>86</sup> Grassroots Researchers Associations Interviews with PWDs in Maiduguri, Borno Sate on June 30, 2018

afford to pay for the rent, which I know is true because I didn't have cash with me. So, I stayed under the tree in an open place for 3 months with no one, government or its officials, coming to my aid and nobody came to assist me."<sup>87</sup>

- **Affordability, Availability and Accessibility**

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Some of the interviewees mentioned that getting access to accessible homes to the comfort of PWDs is difficult. Some of the features like kitchen counters, narrow doors and wheel-in showers are almost impossible to find. Even if they finally find such features, the costs are exorbitant and not affordable. A 58-year-old married disabled man narrated that PWDs should be considered by the Government:

I'm managing in a single room now which is not enough to accommodate my household. I could not rent another room because I cannot afford to pay. PWDs should be considered by government for shelter, more especially in this situation of insurgency where we got displaced and now return to our destroyed shelters or dilapidated houses, and no resources to repair or reconstruct them."<sup>88</sup>

A 43-year-old married disabled woman from Maiduguri noted that even government housing schemes that are built have no provision for PWDs.

"Many governments come and go. In their course of administration, they build estates and allocate it to many individuals, but unfortunately no disabled belonging to any association of physically challenged gets allocation from the government. For example, the 202, 303,505,707 and 1000 housing estates were built within the span of 19 years to ease a problem of accommodation, but PWDs did not even get one allocation."<sup>89</sup>

With all certainty, PWDs earn low income and typically, a large percentage of their income goes to rent. Even problems with the facilities, such as inadequately clean facilities, may have a more detrimental impact on PWDs. One of the common problems for most of the PWDs is the toilet. A 19-year-old disabled lady from Adamawa recounted that:

"Almost all the houses I have been to for rent I face problems especially a house with many tenants and a general toilet often not kept clean and sometimes I have to take my bath on my wheelchair."<sup>90</sup>

## **Communications Challenges**

Communication difficulties among individuals with hearing disabilities and the society is one of the key issues raised by many of the respondents we interviewed. The majority of the

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<sup>87</sup> Grassroots Researchers Associations Interviews with PWDs in Geidam of Yobe State on June 28, 2018.

<sup>88</sup> Grassroots Researchers Associations Interviews with PWDs in Damaturu, Yobe State on June 28, 2018

<sup>89</sup> Grassroots Researchers Associations Interviews with PWD in Maiduguri, Borno State on June 30, 2018

<sup>90</sup> Grassroots Researchers Associations Interviews with PWD in Jimeta Yola on June 29, 2018

interviewees from Adamawa and Borno stated that they were not given opportunities to express their views and even table their needs through public channels of communication. Among the factors they considered as crucial problems included the following:

- **Lack of Understanding/Attention and Inclusiveness**

There is a wide range of disconnect of communication styles between PWDs and the members of communities, more especially in the area of verbal fluency to understand a person with hearing disabilities. It is always difficult for them to communicate when they go to banks, hospitals, markets, academic institutions and other institutions. A 35-year-old interviewee with hearing disabilities in Adamawa state wrote in a paper that:

"Why are you talking so fast to a point that a sign interpreter cannot even capture all you said? How can you also understand all our plights, challenges and other needs until you don't have a better understanding of the sign language. I have to write down all we want so that you can include our view in your studies."<sup>91</sup>

Poor communication ability can have a wide negative impact on the PWDs. There is a real absence of support services that would assist the PWDs in communicating their challenges in banking industries, medical centers and academic institutions. More work needs to be done to better understand and respond to their needs. Apart from those that have severe forms of impairment, other PWDs that communicate fluently face discrimination and unfair treatment from the public as if they are beggars: A 19-year-old disabled lady from Adamawa told GRA that:

"As a disabled lady I have few friends that when I see them in town and try to engage in a conversation or greet them, they immediately create excuses and fake appointments thinking I'm trying to beg them for money or they feel obliged to give me alms."<sup>92</sup>

- **Negative Perceptions, Language Disorder and Access to Leaders**

The needs of PWDs with hearing disabilities are numerous and interactions with them may require careful attention, patience and special support. The major barrier is that people find it daunting to communicate with PWDs. A 22-year-old PWD from Demsa community of Adamawa State, noted that people avoid them in public institutions, gatherings and markets:

"I feel very bad when I go to shopping malls to do some shopping and am ignored and told to leave the shop on account of my disability. They thought I was there to beg for money."<sup>93</sup>

A 58-year-old visually-impaired man narrated his ordeals in the market or public places:

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<sup>91</sup> Grassroots Researchers Associations Interviews with PWD in Jimeta Yola on February 28, 2018:

<sup>92</sup> Grassroots Researchers Associations Interviews with PWD in Jimeta Yola on June 27, 2018

<sup>93</sup> Grassroots Researchers Associations Interviews with PWD in Demsa, Adamawa State on February 28, 2018

"There was a day I put my leg on fire in Damaturu market here in broad daylight with people around watching without an attempt to draw my attention to the danger. It was early in the morning. Instead of sympathizing with my situation, someone told me that if he sees a leper first in the morning hours, it attracts high sales but meeting with the blind brings him bad luck. I felt bad when he chased me out of his presence despite my plight."<sup>94</sup>

Another problem includes access to the leaders to present their basic needs. Their struggles to express their views to the leaders does not count in most cases. A 45-year-old PWD from Maiduguri narrated that:

"In November 2017 where the physically-challenged persons in the state matched and got to a certain commissioner's place, he refused to hear them out. Instead, he called the police to disperse them from his vicinity."<sup>95</sup>

### **Sports and Recreational Center's**

There is substantial evidence that the participation by people with disabilities in sports in Nigeria has recorded a great achievement with many PWDs involved in one game or the other. Persons with disabilities have formed several clubs and associations to promote their recreational needs. Although they have mental and physical limitations, they are very passionate to display their talents. Some of the interviewees shared their experience and mentioned some key factors that contribute to their challenges:

- **Government Negligence**

Beyond the psychological challenges, negative cultural norms, discrimination, stigmatization and negative attitudes towards disability in Northern Nigeria, the government plays a major role in worsening disabled persons' access to sports and recreational opportunities. There are no adequate materials, space, facilities, opportunities and enabling environments for PWDs. A 45-year-old disabled interviewee in Maiduguri explained that:

"The government of the state neglects our happiness in the sporting fields. Para-soccer for instance, we missed two tournaments in 2016 and one tournament in 2017 respectively due to the lack of support from the side of the government."<sup>96</sup>

Another female disabled respondent from Adamawa State stated that the Nigerian government should encouraged the community of PWDs to participate in sports:

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<sup>94</sup> Grassroots Researchers Associations Interviews with PWD in Damaturu, Yobe State on June 30, 2018

<sup>95</sup> Grassroots Researchers Associations Interviews with PWD in Maiduguri, Borno State on June 30, 2018

<sup>96</sup> Grassroots Researchers Associations Interviews with PWD in Maiduguri, Borno State on June 30, 2018

"Actually, I am not the sport type, but it would have be fun if the government or Non-Governmental Agencies put sporting facilities in place, so we could play amongst ourselves and forget our sorrows."<sup>97</sup>

Page | 35 Many sports are practiced by PWDs, some of which are available to be enjoyed by both mentally and physically challenged persons. They play games like wheelchair basketball, weightlifting, table tennis, swimming and others. Through sport, PWDs acquire vital social skills, develop strategies and get passionately empowered. All these cannot be easily achieved without the support of the government. A 43-year-old disabled women from Maiduguri narrated that:

"There is a provision for sporting but no back-up from the government. I remember when we won a trophy in a certain tournament, no government official had ever congratulated us for this gesture. As for the recreational centre, I doubt that there is any provision for that at all."<sup>98</sup>

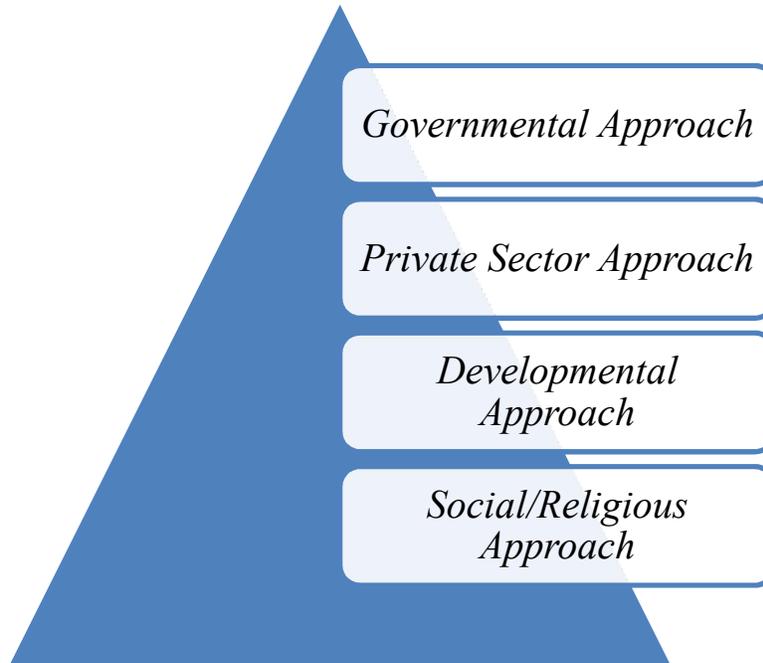
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<sup>97</sup> Grassroots Researchers Associations Interviews with PWD in Yola, Adamawa State on June 30, 2018

<sup>98</sup> Grassroots Researchers Associations Interviews with PWD In Maiduguri, Borno Sate on June 28, 2018

# Approaches / Inclusiveness of PWDs

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*1:3: Diagram showing Approaches/ Inclusiveness of PWD*

## **1:6 APPROACHES / INCLUSIVENESS OF PWDS**

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) maintains that many groups are excluded from development because of their gender, ethnicity, age, sexual orientation, disability or poverty. The effects of such exclusion are rising levels of inequality around the world. Development cannot effectively reduce poverty unless all groups contribute to the creation of opportunities, share the benefits of development and participate in decision-making. The goal of inclusive development is to achieve an inclusive society, able to accommodate differences and to value diversity.<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>99</sup> Handicap International "Disability and Development: Disability and International cooperation policies" [http://www.hiproweb.org/fileadmin/cdroms/Handicap\\_Developpement/www/en\\_page61.html](http://www.hiproweb.org/fileadmin/cdroms/Handicap_Developpement/www/en_page61.html) (Accessed June 16, 2018)

Disability-inclusive development, as defined by *International Disability and Development Consortium (IDDC)*,<sup>100</sup> refers to “ensuring that all phases of the development cycle (design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation) include a disability dimension and that PWDs are meaningfully and effectively participating in development processes and policies”. Inclusive development also implies a rights-based approach to development, understood in terms of a framework for human development as a process firmly grounded in international human rights standards and focused on the promotion and protection of human rights.<sup>101</sup>

The objective is to ensure that PWDs are recognized as rights-holding equal members of society who must be actively engaged in the development process irrespective of their impairment or other status such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national, ethnic, indigenous or social origin, property, birth, age or other status; and that development institutions, policies and programmes must take into account and be assessed in accordance with their impact on the lives of PWDs, and consistent with the promotion and protection of internationally recognized human rights.<sup>102</sup> Three key principles of disability-inclusive development include: participation, non-discrimination and accessibility.<sup>103</sup>

In Nigeria, over 25 million Nigerians have been estimated to be living with disabilities, according to the *National Bureau of Statistics 2016*. States affected with the highest levels of disability are Borno, Yobe, Taraba, and Adamawa in the North-East and Zamfara, Kano, and Sokoto in the North-West. With Nigeria’s current population, estimated at over 198 million by the *National Population Commission 2018*,<sup>104</sup> a whopping 21.2 million people (10.7%) living with disabilities is a source of great concern.

A recent assessment of livelihood and rights programming for PWDs in three North-East States of Nigeria including Borno, Yobe and Adamawa indicated the paucity of program mainstreaming for PWDs, despite their special needs, vulnerability and disadvantage, especially in crisis situations. They face negative and discriminatory attitudes from society, and other complexities such as lack of accessible transport, availability of conducive infrastructure and services to overcome various socio-economic-political constraints as well as abuses and

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<sup>100</sup> International Disability and International Consortium (IDDC), " Inclusion of persons with disabilities in outcome documents of 2018" April 27,2018: <https://www.iddcconsortium.net/news/inclusion-persons-disabilities-outcome-document-2018-ffd-forum> (Accessed on June 30, 2018)

<sup>101</sup>Handicap International "Disability and Development: Disability and International cooperation policies" [http://www.hiproweb.org/fileadmin/cdroms/Handicap\\_Developpement/www/en\\_page61.html](http://www.hiproweb.org/fileadmin/cdroms/Handicap_Developpement/www/en_page61.html) (Accessed June 15, 2018)

<sup>102</sup> IDDC " Inclusive development and the Comprehensive and Integral International Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights and Dignity of Persons with Disabilities" January 2015, <http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/enable/rights/ahc5docs/ahc5iddc.doc> (Accessed June 20, 2018)

<sup>103</sup>Handicap International "Disability and Development: Disability and International cooperation policies" [http://www.hiproweb.org/fileadmin/cdroms/Handicap\\_Developpement/www/en\\_page61.html](http://www.hiproweb.org/fileadmin/cdroms/Handicap_Developpement/www/en_page61.html) (Accessed June 13, 2018)

<sup>104</sup> National Population Commission (NPC) " Presentation on NDHS 2018 Training Seasons" January 2018, <http://population.gov.ng/> (Accessed June,18,2018)

violations of their rights. The loss of caregivers can also leave PWDs extremely vulnerable and exposed to protection risks.

Consistent with the *UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2006*,<sup>105</sup> which called for the mainstreaming of programs for PWDs to enable them to participate in all facets of society, on an equal basis with others, the following is a review of sectorial approaches to effective inclusion of PWDs in Nigeria.

### **Governmental Approach**

The government department responsible for promoting and protecting the rights and welfare of PWDs in Nigeria is the Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development. The Ministry is responsible for the formulation of policies and programmes for PWDs, among other related mandates. However, research findings indicate that the services provided by the Ministry are based on a charity/welfare approach to disability issues, with demand for such services far outstripping supply. Consequently, for the vast majority of disabled people living in Nigeria, particularly those living in rural areas, there is no access to disability services whatsoever.<sup>106</sup>

The charity-welfare approach reflects the common perception held by policymakers and the public at large, that disabled people and disability are charity and welfare issues. Consequently, this viewpoint is a significant, entrenched factor that seriously militates against the social inclusion of disabled people within the country. This is manifested in a number of ways. Firstly, at national level, there is no disability discrimination legislation that has been enacted within Nigeria, despite the fact that two bills have been introduced into the National Assembly. Secondly, there is no form of social protection for disabled people in Nigeria which exacerbates the level of poverty that they encounter.<sup>107</sup>

Civil society groups and other stakeholders have expressed concern about the inclusion of PWDs in welfare programs by the Federal Government of Nigeria and called on the Federal Government to recognize urgently its constitutional obligations for the welfare and protection of Nigerians with disabilities from exclusion and marginalization in the development of the country.

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<sup>105</sup> UN-Disability; Department of Economic and Social Affairs "Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)" [www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities.html](http://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities.html) (Accessed June 18, 2018)

<sup>106</sup> Raymond Lang and Lucy Upah "Scooping Study: Disability Issues in Nigeria" Commissioned by DFID, April 2008. [https://www.ucl.ac.uk/lc-ccr/downloads/scopingstudies/dfid\\_nigeriareport](https://www.ucl.ac.uk/lc-ccr/downloads/scopingstudies/dfid_nigeriareport) (Accessed June 12, 2018)

<sup>107</sup> Raymond Lang and Lucy Upah "Scooping Study: Disability Issues in Nigeria" Commissioned by DFID, April 2008. [https://www.ucl.ac.uk/lc-ccr/downloads/scopingstudies/dfid\\_nigeriareport](https://www.ucl.ac.uk/lc-ccr/downloads/scopingstudies/dfid_nigeriareport) (Accessed June 12, 2018)

Nigeria government needs to respond to the needs of PWDs with regard to the areas listed below:<sup>108</sup>

- **Access to public buildings:** Most public buildings in Nigeria are not accessible to PWDs. Only very few tertiary institutions and government offices have ramps, lifts with sound and floors with braille numbering;
- **Access to public transport:** Nigeria's public transport system is not sensitive to the plight of PWDs and there is no social inclusion project or programme envisaged;
- **Access to education, vocational training and health care:** The number of PWDs in mainstream schools is dismally low. They are usually kept in special schools and are prevented from having close interaction with other pupils and the community at large. Such discriminatory attitudes rob many children of important association and friendships in life; they lose the opportunity of having close contact and healthy interaction with the larger community, hence, perpetuating further their exclusion from mainstream society;<sup>109</sup>
- **Access to employment:** There are no policies or programmes to enable PWDs to gain full or even part time employment. Efforts to provide financial independence come largely from NGOs;
- **Access to recreation and sports:** Very few PWDs have access to recreation and sporting facilities. PWDs in rural areas are usually forgotten;
- **Develop a clear policy on disability:** They should have a related strategy and action plan;
- **Establish a disability focal point or unit:**, Get authority to influence decisions and budgets (and not only advisory)<sup>110</sup>.

### ***Developmental Approach***

Development agencies and practitioners are increasingly recognizing disability as a key issue, inexorably linked to poverty, the extension of human rights and citizenship. Notwithstanding the high profile given to disability and development issues, there remains scant consensus on what are the most appropriate, sustainable strategies and operational modalities that should be employed for effective interventions within the disability sector. There is therefore need for

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<sup>108</sup> Ngozi C. Umeh and Ramola Adeola "AFrican Disability Rights Yearbook": January 2013: <http://www.adry.up.ac.za/index.php/2013-1-section-b-country-reports/nigeria> (Accessed March 2018)

<sup>109</sup> Raymond Lang and Lucy Upah "Scooping Study: Disability Issues in Nigeria" Commissioned by DFID, April 2008. [https://www.ucl.ac.uk/lc-ccr/downloads/scopingstudies/dfid\\_nigeriareport](https://www.ucl.ac.uk/lc-ccr/downloads/scopingstudies/dfid_nigeriareport) (Accessed June 15, 2018)

<sup>110</sup> Handicap International "Disability and Development: Disability and International cooperation policies" [http://www.hiproweb.org/fileadmin/cdroms/Handicap\\_Developpement/www/en\\_page61.html](http://www.hiproweb.org/fileadmin/cdroms/Handicap_Developpement/www/en_page61.html) (Accessed June 18, 2018)

development agencies to develop effective, sustainable operational modalities for mainstreaming disability issues into generic development programmes.<sup>111</sup>

Our assessment of livelihood and rights programming for PWDs (PWDs) in three North-East States of Nigeria including Borno, Yobe and Adamawa indicated paucity of programme mainstreaming for PWDs, despite their special needs, vulnerability and disadvantage, especially in crisis situations. We also identified lack of synergy between welfare and rights-based interventions for the protection of PWDs. We found that even programs that are designed to include vulnerable and marginalized groups frequently do not include PWDs. If they do, children, women and men with disabilities are often the last to be considered. Almost without exception, most PWDs interviewed mentioned stigmatization, discrimination, exclusion and neglect of their special needs as a major concern, others recounted cases of violations and abuses.

The above findings indicate that apart from lack of disability mainstreaming, there is a synergy gap between medical/welfare and rights-based approaches in disability programming. Rather than a stand-alone approach, integrating welfare, social and rights intervention is necessary to remove barriers and to achieve lasting changes in society and in the lives of PWDs. In development, programmes are the 'heart' of the action and an essential tool for reducing poverty among people with disabilities and responding to the discrimination they face. To be effective, disability must be included in the very process of programming, i.e. at all stages of the project cycle.<sup>112</sup>

Including disability in programming involves the following<sup>113</sup>:

- Community consultation, including people with disabilities in identifying needs before developing a project;
- Implementation of a local participatory diagnosis/assessment to identify the priorities of a community, including those of people with disabilities;
- Include disability questions in any data collection;
- Determine disability-inclusive indicators within monitoring and evaluation systems;
- In an education project, include training of teachers, accessibility of schools, adaptation of teaching methods and materials, etc.;

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<sup>111</sup>Raymond Lang and Lucy Upah "Scoping Study: Disability Issues in Nigeria" Commissioned by DFID, April 2008. [https://www.ucl.ac.uk/lc-ccr/downloads/scopingstudies/dfid\\_nigeriareport](https://www.ucl.ac.uk/lc-ccr/downloads/scopingstudies/dfid_nigeriareport) (Accessed June 13, 2018)

<sup>112</sup>Handicap International "Disability and Development: Disability and International cooperation policies" [http://www.hiproweb.org/fileadmin/cdroms/Handicap\\_Developpement/www/en\\_page61.html](http://www.hiproweb.org/fileadmin/cdroms/Handicap_Developpement/www/en_page61.html) (Accessed June 18, 2018)

<sup>113</sup>Raymond Lang and Lucy Upah "Scoping Study: Disability Issues in Nigeria" Commissioned by DFID, April 2008. [https://www.ucl.ac.uk/lc-ccr/downloads/scopingstudies/dfid\\_nigeriareport](https://www.ucl.ac.uk/lc-ccr/downloads/scopingstudies/dfid_nigeriareport) (Accessed June 13, 2018)

<sup>113</sup>Handicap International "Disability and Development: Disability and International cooperation policies" [http://www.hiproweb.org/fileadmin/cdroms/Handicap\\_Developpement/www/en\\_page61.html](http://www.hiproweb.org/fileadmin/cdroms/Handicap_Developpement/www/en_page61.html) (Accessed June 18, 2018)

- In a health project, ensure that health service access points are accessible and provide information in alternative formats;
- Support the implementation of projects supporting Disabled People's Organizations to raise awareness on disability issues in the country of intervention;
- Support projects for the development of support services for people with disabilities (access to mobility aids, sign language etc.).

### **Social/Religious Approach:**

Society has historically imposed barriers that subject people with disabilities to lives of unjust dependency, segregation, isolation and exclusion from mainstream society. Religion and culture promote certain beliefs and attitudes about disability and people with disabilities that lead to discriminatory practices. It is a commonly held belief within some rural areas in Nigeria that disability is a result of a "curse" and so people with disabilities are treated as being helpless and charity dependent. In other climes, people believe that PWDs are not only inferior to those without disabilities but can also be used for social and economic benefits. That is, they lack characteristics that make them full humans and can be used in sacrifices in some communities in Nigeria in order to bring wealth or good luck. Other discriminatory practices against PWDs in the context of religion and culture include the trafficking and killing of persons with mental illness, people with oculocutaneous albinism and angular kyphosis, raping of women with mental illness and the use of children with disabilities for alms-begging.<sup>114</sup>

In some communities, it is believed that such persons have committed an abomination, that is, violated the tradition of the communities. In other cases, a mentally ill person is simply labeled as a witch and subsequently burnt to death.<sup>115</sup> Such negative beliefs reinforce and fuel the systemic discrimination and stereotype that relate poverty and disability. It is asserted that if PWDs are designated as if they are inferior or second-class citizens, they are likely to have negative self-concept and to view themselves as inferior.<sup>116</sup>

On the other hand, some parents or guardians of children with disabilities send their children out for alms-begging for economic reasons. Part of the appeal in using children with disabilities for economic gain is the assumption that they are likely to elicit sympathy, especially from members of the society that take alms-giving as a religious and cultural obligation.

<sup>114</sup>Edwin E and Odirin O " Religion, culture, and discrimination against persons with disabilities in Nigeria" Vol 5, No 1 (2016) <https://ajod.org/index.php/ajod/article/view/192/506> (Accessed May 16, 2018)

<sup>115</sup>Edwin E and Odirin O., " Religion, culture, and discrimination against persons with disabilities in Nigeria" Vol 5, No 1 (2016) <https://ajod.org/index.php/ajod/article/view/192/506> (Accessed May 16, 2018)

<sup>116</sup> Christopher Chitereke, " People with Disabilities and the Role of Social Workers in Lesotho" Vol,8 No 1(2010) Retrieved from: <https://www.socwork.net/sws/article/view/25/69> (Accessed June 11, 2018)

To ensure that PWDs are treated fairly and to combat stereotypes, prejudices and harmful practices relating to PWDs, the Nigerian government should draft legislation that can target cultural and religious practices that are discriminatory against PWDs. There is need for a deliberate collaboration by the government of Nigeria, community institutions, civil society groups and faith-based organizations to undertake effective and appropriate measures aimed at raising awareness throughout Nigeria about PWDs.<sup>117</sup>

### ***Private Sector Approach***

There is low labour market absorption of PWDs in Nigeria, resulting in a very high unemployment rate of PWDs in the country. Research pertaining to the employment of people with disabilities in Nigeria shows that the private sector in the country is absorbing into its workforce fewer than expected people with disabilities. There is therefore considerable scope to increase the employment of people with disabilities in the private sector.

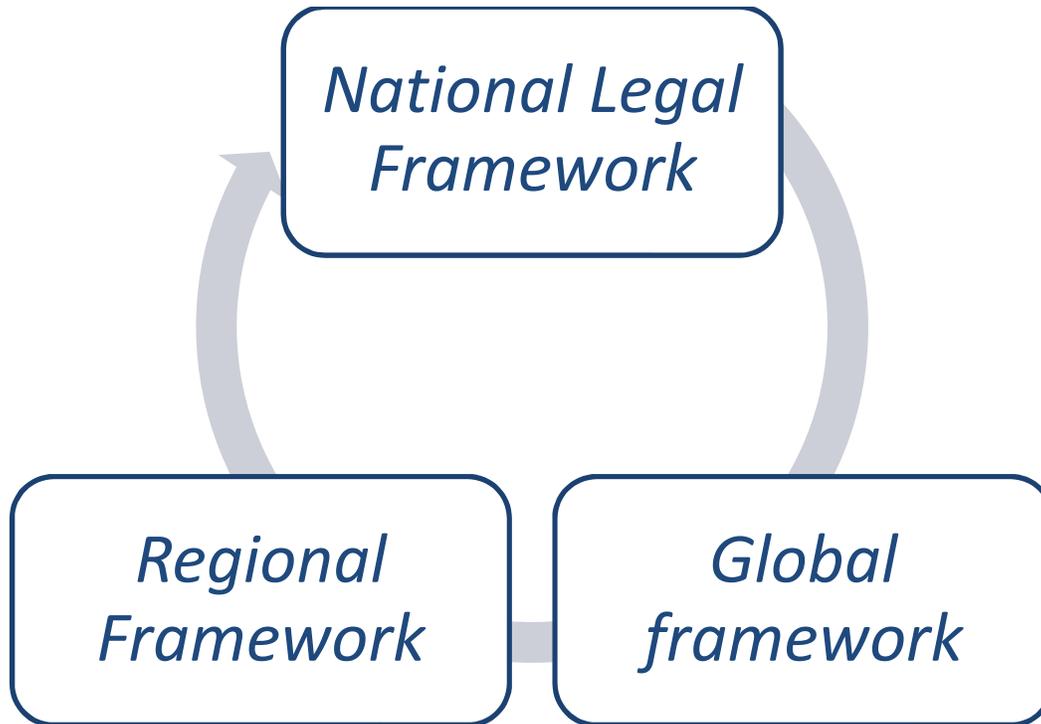
The private sector in Nigeria as part of its corporate social responsibility should initiate programs that will support the PWDs in Nigeria in living up their dreams.

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<sup>117</sup>Christopher Chitereke, " People with Disabilities and the Role of Social Workers in Lesotho" Vol,8 No 1(2010)  
Retrieved from: <https://www.socwork.net/sws/article/view/25/69> (Accessed June 11, 2018)

# Legal Framework To Protect The Rights Of PWDs

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*1:4: Diagram showing Legal Framework to Protect the right of PWD*

## **1:7 LEGAL FRAMEWORK TO PROTECT THE RIGHTS OF PWDS**

### ***National Legal Framework***

In Nigeria, despite the existence of the document “Nigerians with Disability Decree 1993”<sup>118</sup> under the Military regime, there is no functional legal framework to protect people with disabilities from exclusion and discrimination, which has aggravated the plight of PWDs in Nigeria. The purpose of the Decree was to provide a clear and comprehensive legal protection and security for Nigerians with disability, as well as establish standards for enforcement of the rights and privileges guaranteed under this decrees and other law applicable to the disabled in the

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<sup>118</sup> Disability rights Education and Defense Fund (DREDF) ."Nigeria- Disability Decree" Retrieved from: <https://dredf.org/legal-advocacy/international-disability-rights/international-laws/nigeria-disability-decree/>. (Accessed on September 24, 2018)

country. The decree comprises fourteen sections covering different challenges faced by PWDs ranging from interpretation to voting access.

A disability bill was first passed by the 6<sup>th</sup> National Assembly under the former President Olusegun Obasanjo. It was titled “A Bill to ensure full integration of PWDs into the society and to establish a national commission for PWDs and vest it with the responsibilities for their education, health care, social economic and civil rights (Establishment, etc)”. The bill never received the assent of the former president to make it a law before the end of that administration.<sup>119</sup>

The 7<sup>th</sup> National Assembly equally passed the bill and sent it for assent on January 30, 2015 to the former president Goodluck Jonathan who did not sign it into law despite several campaigns from PWDs and advocates for these vulnerable populations in the society<sup>120</sup>.

The same bill was presented to the 8<sup>th</sup> National Assembly and went through first and second reading in October and December 2015 respectively before it was passed by the Senate on 13<sup>th</sup> July 2016. Up till now the disability bill is yet to receive the Presidential assent despite being part of this administration’s outstanding campaign promises. It is worthy of note that legislation on disability can be found in some states in Nigeria, including in Anambra state, which passed a bill for full integration of PWDs into the society as well as to prohibit all forms of discrimination against PWDs,<sup>121</sup> Nasarawa state with its bill protecting the rights of PWDs,<sup>122</sup> and Lagos state with Special People’s Law 2011 is also the creation of an Office of Disability Affairs to improve the lives of disabled persons in the State.

The main objective of the Bill submitted to the President is to enact a law for the social protection of PWDs against any discrimination that they may suffer from and also to establish a national commission for PWDs that will be responsible for their education, healthcare, social, economic, and civil rights as contained in Section 15 (Political objective), 16 (Economic objective), and 33 (Rights to life) both under the directive principles of State Policy and Fundamental Rights in the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. Part of the Bill provides for Prohibition of Discrimination and Harmful Treatment and any offender of this section is liable to a fine of N1million for corporate organizations or N100,000 for individuals; and six months imprisonment or both. Another section of the Bill talks about accessibility to

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<sup>119</sup>Fact check: "Disability bill not missing; National Assembly", Interview by Titilope Fadare. December 8,2017, <https://www.orderpaper.ng/fact-check-disability-bill-not-missing/> (Accessed July 2018)

<sup>120</sup> Vanguard "Disability bill: A legislation as a phoenix" August 13,2016. Retrieved from <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2016/08/disability-bill-legislation-phoenix/> (Accessed June 13, 2018)

<sup>121</sup> Von Nigeria. "Anambra Assembly passes Disability bill". September 15,2018. Retrieved from: <https://www.von.gov.ng/anambra-assembly-passes-disability-bill/> (Accessed September 19, 2018)

<sup>122</sup> Premium Times "Nasarawa Assembly passes Disability Rights Commission bill into law" February 19, 2018. Retrieved from: <https://www.premiumtimesng.com/regional/north-central/259169-nasarawa-assembly-passes-disability-rights-commission-bill-law.html> (Accessed June 9, 2018)

physical structures and makes it mandatory for public buildings, roads, walk ways and others to be constructed so that a PWD can access them like every other person without hindrance<sup>123</sup>.

Furthermore, Nigeria's fourth report on human rights incidences and interventions to the Committee on the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR) did not report specifically on the rights of PWDs.<sup>124</sup> The report referred to the constitutional, administrative and judicial measures adopted towards the protection of the family and rights of women, children, the aged and the disabled, to the extent that government directs its policies towards ensuring that suitable and adequate shelter, food and welfare of the disabled and other citizens are provided.

In addition, the Nigeria report on the status of implementation of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC)<sup>125</sup> did not mention the rights of PWDs.

The Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities and its Optional Protocols which Nigeria signed and ratified 30 March 2007 and 24 September 2007 respectively<sup>126</sup> is also yet to be implemented by the country.

## **Regional Framework**

### **African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR)**

The African Charter is a regional instrument designed to promote and protect human rights and basic freedoms in the African continent. Oversight and interpretation of the Charter is the task of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, which was set up in 1987 and is now headquartered in Banjul, Gambia. A protocol to the Charter was subsequently adopted in 1998 whereby an African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights was to be created. The protocol came into effect on 25 January 2005<sup>127</sup>. The Commission adopted a draft protocol on the rights of PWDs, intended to complement the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights and address

<sup>123</sup> Vanguard "Disability bill: A legislation as a phoenix" August 13,2016. Retrieved from, <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2016/08/disability-bill-legislation-phoenix/> (Accessed June,13,2018)

<sup>124</sup> ACERWC " General comment and releases" retrieved from: <http://www.acerwc.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/English-ACERWC-Initial-State-Report-Nigeria.pdf>. (Accessed on June 12, 2018)

<sup>125</sup> Enoch MacDonnell Chilemba, "The Right to primary Education of the Children with Disabilities" Retrieved from: [http://www.achpr.org/files/sessions/50th/state-reports/4th-2008-2010/staterep4\\_nigeria\\_2011\\_eng.pdf](http://www.achpr.org/files/sessions/50th/state-reports/4th-2008-2010/staterep4_nigeria_2011_eng.pdf) (accessed September 24, 2018).

<sup>126</sup> Consolidated disability findings from the 2010 US State Department Country Reports on Human Rights practices. Retrieved from: April 15, 2013. [http://www.usicd.org/doc/africa\\_disability\\_references1](http://www.usicd.org/doc/africa_disability_references1). <http://www.un.org/en/rights/html> (accessed July 8, 2018); E-mail communication from Prof O Nnamdi on April 19, 2013

<sup>127</sup> African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights, Legal instruments. Retrieved from: <http://www.achpr.org/instruments/achpr/>, (Accessed on September 24, 2018).

continued exclusion, harmful practices, and discrimination affecting those with disabilities, especially women, children, and the elderly.<sup>128</sup>

The protocol, adopted during the ACHPR's 19th Extraordinary Sessions, is the culmination of the African Union's focus on the rights of PWDs, which began in 1999 with the declaration of the African decade for persons with disabilities and the creation of a Working Group tasked with drafting the new instrument. The protocol guarantees equal protection of economic, social, cultural, civil, and political rights to individuals with "physical, mental, intellectual, developmental or sensory impairments" and will require States parties to implement affirmative actions to advance their equality.

The intent in drafting the protocol was to lay out the rights of PWDs in a continental context, drawing from the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities but also addressing additional issues specific to Africa.

The protocol requires States parties to ensure that people with disabilities are not discriminated against and that they enjoy equality. The text details the particular rights of PWDs to: life, liberty, security of person, to be free from harmful practices, to protection in situations of risk, to equal recognition before the law, access to justice, to live in the community, accessibility, education, health, rehabilitation and habilitation, work, an adequate standard of living and social protection, participation in political and public life, self-representation, freedom of expression and opinion, participation in recreation and culture, and family.

Now that the African Commission has adopted the draft protocol, the next step is to transmit it to the treaty-making process of the African Union (AU), through which it can become a binding legal instrument open to ratification by Member States.

### ***Global framework***

The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), which was adopted in 2006 and entered into force on May 3 2008, has been integral to advancing recognition of the human rights of PWDs. The CRPD provides a comprehensive approach to realizing the rights of PWDs. The purpose of the Convention was to promote, protect and ensure the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by all PWDs, and to promote respect for their inherent dignity. PWDs face wide-ranging human rights abuses including institutionalization, isolation, stigma and discrimination, and lack of access to health, education and employment opportunities. The CRPD sets out a wide range of rights that address all aspects of life, such as respect for home and the family, education, employment, health, participation in political and public life, participation in cultural life, recreation, leisure and sport, the right to life, freedom from torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment and the right to equal protection and equal benefit of the law. The CRPD seeks to "ensure the full

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<sup>128</sup>International Justice Resource Center posted April 20, 2016. Retrieved from <https://ijrcenter.org/2016/04/20/african-commission-adopts-draft-protocol-on-persons-with-disabilities-rights/> (Accessed March 18, 2018)

and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by all PWDs and to promote respect for their inherent dignity.”<sup>129</sup>

The CRPD imposes new legal obligations on States and supersedes any prior non-binding international, regional or domestic standards. However, there are many binding regional and domestic standards that fall short of, or conflict with, the more recent and expansive CRPD standards. For example some standards and case law address forced treatment or confinement where due process was not maintained, but do not question the legitimacy of forced treatment or confinement. Likewise, some standards and case law qualify the right to live in the community, rather than protecting the right absolutely.

## **1.8 Conclusion**

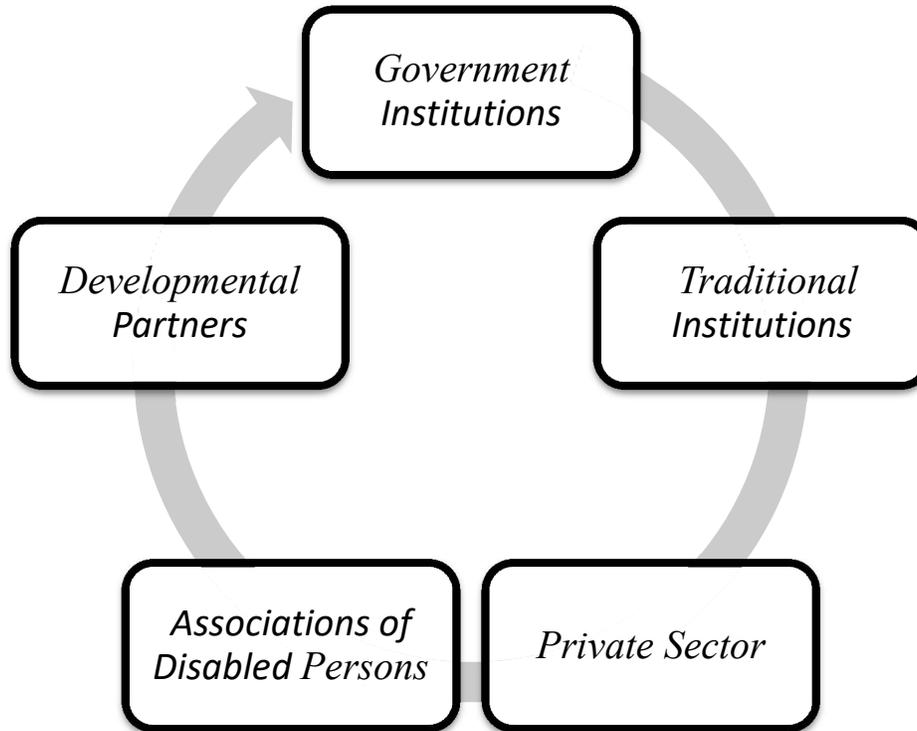
With a population of 25 million PWDs in Nigeria, assessing and recognizing the structural challenges handicapped individuals face in their daily lives is a crucial undertaking that has been long overdue. Although Boko Haram extremism remains a major threat and factor that contributed to the plight of PWDs it combined with the devastating humanitarian crisis in the north-east which remains dire. This report, which has been based on qualitative research carried out in Adamawa, Borno and Yobe State by the Grassroots Researchers Associations (GRA), contributes to the creation of a knowledge base that helps to design necessary policy responses. Hence, the evidence presented does not only portrayal the economic, social and cultural challenges of PWDs in Nigeria but is an urgent call to action for all actors, from the local to the regional level, that are engaged in and responsible for safeguarding and promoting the rights of PWDs. The often marginalized voices of those directly affected have been foreshadowed to finally initiate a process that prioritizes PWDs’ perspectives in advocacy, policy formulation, decision-making, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. Without doing so, an inclusive and equitable Nigerian society will further remain out of reach.

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<sup>129</sup>United Nations General Assembly, Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, A/RES/61/106, Art. 1 (2006). Retrieved from:<https://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/CRPD/Pages/ConventionRightsPersonsWithDisabilities.aspx> (Accessed on September 24, 2018).

# Recommendations:

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*1:5: Diagram showing Recommendations*

## **1:9 RECOMMENDATIONS:**

### **Government Institutions:**

- **The Federal Government** should as matter of urgency consider accenting the Disability Bill that was passed by National Assembly recently to address the perpetual plights, needs and vulnerability of PWDs in Nigeria.
- **North-Eastern State Governors** should consider the vulnerability and direct impact of the conflict on PWDs to regularly support them with employment slots, affordable education, standardized medical bills, political appointments and easy accessibilities to other social amenities.
- **Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development (MoWASD)** should invest in psychosocial support/counseling **and** effectively work with local disability groups to identify information gaps or barriers that exclude, sideline and discriminate against PWDs

- **National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA)** should develop strategies by designing a unique mechanism to create special units that would prioritize the needs of PWDs in conflict situations, more especially on women and children with disabilities.
- **Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC)** should in Preparation for 2019 elections consider alternative ways of creating enabling voting centers for PWDs where they can comfortably participate in elections without waiting for hours in queues.
- **National Directorates of Employment (NDE)** should analyze data of employed and unemployed PWDs to ensure employment slots for them, hence, removing barriers to recruitment and participation at all levels using Federal Character Mechanism.

#### **Developmental Partners:**

- Encourage preliminary research on how best to represent and include the needs of PWDs in program design, implementation and evaluation.
- **INGOs:** Prioritize initiatives that mainstream aid programs on the livelihood of PWDs and include disabilities in all developmental projects.
- **NGOs:** Encourage direct engagement with PWDs in decision-making, service plans and support to live independently.
- **Embassy:** Support local initiatives and programs that represent the interests and rights of PWDs.

#### **Religious Institutions:**

- Challenge the negative beliefs and attitudes toward PWDs and support them with basic needs that would discourage them from street-begging and other activities that are harmful in societies.
- Create an enabling environment for PWDs by including them in public duties, activities, leaderships, programs and pilgrimage to the holy lands.
- Preach against stigmatization, discrimination and non-inclusion of PWDs. Quote all the passages in Holy Books that support equality.

#### **Traditional Institutions**

- Provide avenue for participation in traditional activities, festivals and related issues that promote their status in societies with a sense of authority.
- Challenge violence and bullying of PWDs by giving them traditional titles, land ownership and sense of belonging in the community to promote their status and that of their family members, children and dependents.
- Avoid sectionalism or discrimination in all forms of opportunities by encouraging equality and inclusiveness of PWDs.

#### **Associations of Disabled Persons:**

- Participate in programs as a team and promote the activities that support PWDs at the local, national and international level.
- Advocate and campaign on the Rights of PWDs by representing the views of the groups constitutionally, objectively and peacefully.

- Become involved in awareness by collaborating with government agencies, developmental partners, Communities/Religious leaders and ordinary citizen to promote public awareness without violence.

### **Private Sector**

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- Support PWDs with reasonable employment opportunities, affordable accommodation, partial tuition fees, light medical bills, special services and other day to day needs.
- Ensure adequate access for PWDs in construction projects such as banks, shopping complexes, housing estates, public transport, sport centers, public toilets and other facilities.
- Provide technical assistance and easy access to PWDs to obtain loans to engage in any kind of business with any barriers.