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International Day of Persons with Disabilities (IDPD)

Legal victories must translate into lived realities. True inclusion of PWDs particularly women with disability (WWDs) requires dismantling barriers through enforcement, funding, and cultural shifts, empowering PWDs as active contributors to national development, not passive recipients of charity.

The Initiative for Research, Innovation and Advocacy in Development (IRIAD) and The Electoral Hub commemorate the 2025 International Day of Persons with Disabilities (IDPD) with a series of activities promoting knowledge, voice, and representation by engaging policymakers, FCT communities, and other critical stakeholders to create awareness on disability rights, legal compliance, enforcement mechanisms, and accountability

This year's theme, ***"Fostering Disability-Inclusive Societies for Advancing Social Progress"*** calls on Nigeria to bridge the gap between progressive legislation and tangible inclusion for over 29 million Nigerians with disabilities (PWDs), who constitute a vital part of our nation's human capital. By prioritizing disability rights, Nigeria can unlock social progress, economic growth, and equitable development for all.

Since the landmark Discrimination Against Persons with Disabilities (Prohibition) Act 2018 was signed into law over seven years ago, with a five-year moratorium for accessibility compliance expiring in 2023, implementation has fallen short of expectations. Critical challenges faced by PWDs and effective implementation of the 2018 Disability Act include: inadequate funding, weak enforcement mechanisms, low public awareness, and fragmented coordination among federal, state, and local ministries, departments, and agencies, resulting in persistent barriers to public infrastructure, healthcare, education, employment, and digital services. PWDs at the local government level and rural areas in particular suffer most from inaccessible transport, non-inclusive education and healthcare, and failure to meet 5% employment provision in the Act. Stigma, discriminatory policies, lack of disability-disaggregated data, and insufficient budgets exacerbate exclusion, particularly for women, children, and those with intellectual or multiple disabilities, undermining Nigeria's commitments under the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD).

Despite the above, there have been some wins since the advocacy on disability rights and justice. One of these wins is enactment of subnational legal frameworks and implementation. For instance, 17 States, including Abia, Anambra, Bauchi, Ekiti, Gombe, Kaduna, Kebbi, Kogi, Lagos, Nasarawa, Ondo, Osun, Oyo, Plateau, Sokoto, Yobe, and Zamfara, have fully enacted disability laws and established dedicated commissions to drive implementation. These achievements reflect progress toward domestication of the Discrimination Against Persons with Disabilities (Prohibition) Act 2018 at the subnational level, aligning with global calls for inclusive societies. Despite this progress, 16 states remain stalled in the legislative process, either awaiting gazetting after assent (e.g., Adamawa, Cross River, Edo, Enugu, FCT, Jigawa, Kano, Katsina, Kwara, Niger), passed but awaiting assent (Delta, Imo, Ogun), or with bills in

process (Benue, Borno, Taraba), and lacking functional disability rights commissions. Four states, including Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa, Ebonyi, and Rivers, show no legislative action, highlighting an uneven federal-state commitment to disability rights enforcement. These disparities risk deepening exclusion unless addressed through targeted advocacy and policy acceleration.

While State-level progress offers some hope, it also highlights persistent disparities. Commissions such as the Anambra State Disability Rights Commission (ASDRC) and Oyo State Agency for Persons with Disabilities (OYSAPD) have made valuable contributions through monitoring, awareness, and services. Yet challenges remain in enforcement, issuance of compliance certificates, and digital data management. Cultural barriers and funding constraints continue to obstruct the full realization of rights to free healthcare, priority services, and political participation.

In line with the 2025 IDPD theme, IRIAD is engaging in series of activities to raise awareness on disability rights, legal compliance, enforcement mechanisms, and accountability towards enhancing Nigeria's progress toward a fully inclusive society for PWDs. These include: research and documentation of PWDs issues, including the status of subnational compliance with domestication and implementation, to serve as a powerful advocacy tool,

Recognizing that legal frameworks alone are insufficient without societal change, IRIAD complements these efforts with publicisation and popularisation of Disability Act provisions, enforcement mechanisms, and legal compliance requirements, as well as the accountability of duty bearers. Public education campaigns leveraging infographics, street engagements, and community dialogues to dismantle stigma, promote behavioural change, challenge infrastructural exclusion, and cultivate a rights-based, inclusive society where PWDs participate equitably in governance, politics, socio-economic, and civic spaces.

Call to Action

IRIAD calls on key stakeholders to act decisively to foster a truly inclusive society:

- **Federal and State Governments:** Speed up the domestication process in lagging states by ensuring the timely gazetting of passed bills and operationalizing commissions. Allocate adequate resources for enforcement, conduct nationwide accessibility audits, and mainstream disability inclusion into national and local development plans. Produce and maintain disability-disaggregated data for evidence-based policymaking.
- **National Commission for Persons with Disabilities (NCPWD):** Enhance coordination and support for state disability commissions, lead nationwide awareness campaigns, and institutionalize regular consultations with Organizations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs), Disability Rights Advocates (DRA), and Organisations (DROs) to ensure inclusive policy development.
- **Civil Society:** support research, strengthen advocacy and accountability initiatives, conduct community-based stigma elimination programs, and empower PWDs with information and tools for effective self-advocacy.

- **Private Sector and Employers:** Enforce the 5% employment quota for PWDs, invest in barrier-free workplaces, and develop inclusive hiring and retention strategies. Embrace corporate social responsibility initiatives that promote disability rights and inclusion.
- **Media:** Support knowledge dissemination and inclusive narrative building to sensitize the public and policymakers. Promote inclusive storytelling that respects the dignity and agency of PWDs.
- **General Public:** Support efforts to foster positive attitudes by actively challenging discrimination and stigma against PWDs. Advocate for community-level accessibility improvements and participate in activities that promote equity and respect for the rights of persons with disabilities.

Together, these collective actions will help to dismantle the barriers that hinder persons with disabilities, ensuring they thrive as contributors and beneficiaries of Nigeria's social and economic progress.

#IDPD2025 #DisabilityInclusion #InclusiveSocieties #DisabilityRights #InclusionMatters

Signed

Princess Hamman-Obels, **Director|IRIAD-The Electoral Hub**

Phone: +234 908 6998 850 +234 704 7998 525

Twitter: @electoralhub and @iriadev

Instagram: @electoralhub, @theelectoralforum, and @iriadev

Facebook: @electoralhubng, @electoralforum, and @iriadev

LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/company/the-electoral-hub/>

<https://www.linkedin.com/company/iriadev/>;

<https://www.linkedin.com/company/the-electoral-forum/>

YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/@electoralhub1196>;

<https://www.youtube.com/@IRIADEV>; <https://www.youtube.com/@TheElectoralForum>

<https://www.youtube.com/@ElectoralAccountabilityWatchNG>;

Website: <https://www.electoralhub.org>, <https://www.iriadng.org> and electoralforum.electoralhub.org

ABOUT IRIAD AND THE ELECTORAL HUB

The **Initiative for Research, Innovation, and Advocacy in Development (IRIAD)** is an interdisciplinary knowledge and advocacy hub committed and focused on developing a critical understanding of governance processes and regimes from research, documentation, policy engagements, public education, and impact advocacy. Whilst promoting and encouraging active citizenship through citizens engagement, participation and representation in democratic governance.

The **Electoral Hub** is an interdisciplinary knowledge, policy, and advocacy hub committed to promoting electoral knowledge, integrity, and accountability in Nigeria. Our aim is to strengthen electoral governance and accountability in Nigeria through the provision of data,

critical and contextualized analysis, and solutions to improve the credibility and integrity of the electoral process.

Knowledge| Innovation | Inclusion|

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...promoting electoral knowledge, accountability, inclusion, and integrity