



PRESS STATEMENT BY THE JOINT NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES (JONAPWD) ON THE BASELINE SURVEY CONDUCTED AS PART OF ITS PROJECT ON INCLUSIVE UNIVERSAL BASIC EDUCATION FOR CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES IN NIGERIA WITH SUPPORT FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE THROUGH THE USAID’S STRENGTHENING ADVOCACY AND CIVIC ENGAGEMENT (SACE) PROJECT IN NIGERIA.

MEDIA LAUNCH

Venue: Hotel De Bently, Abuja

Date: 19th April, 2016

His Excellency, the Honourable Minister of Education
Her Excellency, the Honourable Minister of Women and Social Development
The Executive Secretary, Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC)
Distinguished Senators
Distinguished Members of the House of Representatives
Your Excellences, High Commissioners and Ambassadors,
The Guest Speaker
MDA representatives here present
Members of the Civil Society and DPOs
International Development Partners
Gentlemen of the Press
Distinguished ladies and gentlemen.

On behalf of the Board of Trustees and National Executive Council (NEC) of the Joint National Association of Persons With Disabilities (JONAPWD), it is my pleasure to welcome you to this Media Launch to report on the Baseline Survey Conducted in Akwa-Ibom , Kwara States and the FCT as part of the ongoing project on Advocacy for Inclusive and Accessible Universal Basic Education For Children With Disabilities In Nigeria With Support from USAID Strengthening Advocacy And Civic Engagement (SACE) Programme in Nigeria.

Introduction:

The Joint National Association of Persons with Disabilities (JONAPWD), an umbrella body of all Disabled Peoples Organizations in Nigeria, was formed in 1992 as the umbrella body of associations and organizations of and for PWDs in Nigeria. JONAPWD was established to promote the rights and development of Nigerians with disabilities. Since inception till date,

JONAPWD has gained official recognition by governments at all levels, the private sector, international development agencies, civil society and the media as the legitimate voice for Persons with Disabilities in Nigeria.

In its over 2 decades of existence, JONAPWD has evolved to become a hub and repository on disability issues in Nigeria; supporting the government and other stakeholders to build capacity on disability issues and to effectively include interests of PWDs in their policies and programmes. Accordingly, with support mostly from international development agencies, JONAPWD has made tremendous impacts on key sectors including the political and electoral process, education, health, infrastructural development, assistive technologies, transport, etc; ensuring that the rights, inclusion and access for PWDs are enhanced and sustained.

Since the advent of democratic governance in 1999, JONAPWD's key priority has been advocacy for the enactment of a National Disability Law in Nigeria to protect and promote the rights of PWDs. While this has remained far-fetched due to lack of political will on the part of the government, JONAPWD has nonetheless been making giant strides to secure the rights, inclusion and access for PWDs in all sectors of governance in Nigeria.

Background:

Development of persons with disabilities on the demand side has been observed to be extremely slow, basically because of the high rate of illiteracy in the community. The World Bank reported that less than 3% of persons with disabilities receive any formal of education, especially in the Global South, Nigeria being one those countries listed. JONAPWD, chose to prioritize the education sector upon the realization that, with sound education people with disability can effective participate effectively in governance contributing their quota to National development.

Furthermore research has shown that children with disabilities constitute more than 50% of the over 10 million out of school children in Nigeria despite the provision of the Universal Basic Education Act of 2004 that basic education is free and compulsory for all children. JONAPWD observed with great concern the fact that even if all primary and secondary schools were adequate for all school-age children in Nigeria, children with disabilities would still remain out of school because virtually all primary and secondary schools in Nigeria are designed, built and managed in ways that is totally not inclusive of, and not accessible to children with disabilities.

According to UNICEF, about 95% of children with disabilities amounting to about 7 million children with disabilities are out of school in Nigeria. This is because their education is confined to the very few, outdated, poorly funded and inadequately staffed special schools which are mostly sited in very distant hard-to-reach locations. The system of special school is being rejected because of its contribution to the sustenance of negative practices against PWDs and the denial of the rights of children with disabilities to family and community life.

Nigeria has signed and ratified the UN Convention on Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Article 24 of which provides that all schools must be inclusive of, and accessible to all children including those with disabilities. Nigeria has equally signed-up to the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Goal 4 of which targets that by 2030, all school-age children including those with disabilities must have access to qualitative, functional and effective basic education. The National Policy on Education provides that education must be inclusive and that all children including those with disabilities have the right to qualitative, functional and effective basic education. The Universal Basic Education Act of 2004 provides that basic education is free and compulsory for all school-age children.

The JONAPWD-SACE 4 –Year Project:

Pursuant to the urgent need to make all primary and secondary schools inclusive of, and accessible to children with disabilities, JONAPWD requested for and received a 4-year grant from the USAID through its Strengthening Advocacy and Civic Engagement (SACE) programme in Nigeria. The Grant is to facilitate JONAPWD’s advocacy for the review of the Universal Basic Education Act of 2004; development and implementation of a National Policy on Inclusive Education; the development and adoption of a Model for Accessible and Inclusive School Environment (MAISE); and the promotion of inclusive basic education.

The 4-year project commenced in effect through a baseline survey on the implementation of inclusive education in the 3 project locations. Objective of the survey included:

- To identify the existence or non-existence of state level legislative and policy frameworks on inclusive basic education in Akwa-Ibom state, Kwara state and FCT Abuja;
- To investigate the nature and scope of budgetary allocations for the implementation of inclusive basic education in Akwa-Ibom state, Kwara state and FCT Abuja;
- To determine the level of inclusion and accessibility of children with disabilities to mainstream basic schools (primary and junior secondary) in Akwa-Ibom state, Kwara state and FCT Abuja;
- To identify and map critical stakeholders on inclusive basic education (teachers, educational administrators, parents, PWDs, civil society groups, the media and other stakeholders) in Akwa-Ibom state, Kwara state and FCT Abuja
- To evaluate the level of public awareness on the idea and practice of inclusive basic education especially among critical stakeholders (teachers, educational administrators, parents, PWDs, civil society groups, the media and other stakeholders) in Akwa-Ibom state, Kwara state and FCT Abuja;

The baseline survey is also to serve as guide for the overall implementation of the 4-year project.

Some of the key findings of the Baseline Survey include:

1. This Baseline Survey reveals that only two of the three project locations: FCT Abuja and Kwara state currently have a documented policy on inclusive education. Akwa-Ibom state is yet to develop a policy in this regard.
2. It is also established that there is no adequate national legal, policy and institutional framework required to drive the implementation of inclusive education in Nigeria. While the UBE Act of 2004 is found to be insensitive and poorly funded to implement inclusive education for children with disabilities, other policy instruments including the draft National Policy on Special Needs Education and the National Policy on Education, as well as the state-level policies on inclusive education (in Kwara state and FCT Abuja) are found to contain some technical deficiencies and have remained virtually on paper.
3. Across the three project locations, special education (special schools) for children with disabilities is still widely implemented. However, Akwa-Ibom and Kwara states present evidence on the process of integrating children with disabilities into separate classrooms within regular schools.
4. Through interactions with policy-makers across the three project locations, we find a clear demonstration of very positive perception, attitude and the willingness to fully support the implementation of inclusive education. Policy-makers fully acknowledge their capacity and institutional gaps as well as the gaps in existing legal and policy frameworks (especially the UBE act) and are willing to facilitate the process of legal, policy and institutional reforms.
5. On the contrary, we find a mixture of perceptions within the disability community with regard to inclusive education. While majority of the disability clusters express positive perception, attitude and support for the idea and practice of inclusive education, the deaf community express some reservations and fear; noting that due to the language and communication needs peculiarities of deaf children, and due to human and institutional capacity gaps, deaf children may not get adequate support in inclusive schools if improperly implemented.
6. This survey establishes the prevalence of weak partnership and collaboration between and among stakeholders in the implementation of inclusive education in the three project locations. Expectedly, MDAs enjoy more partnership with other stakeholders because of its central statutory role in the management of the educational sector. However, there is weak relationship with other stakeholders especially the media and the private sector in all the three locations.
7. This research establishes the prevalence of low technical and professional capacity among policy-makers and practitioners in the delivery of inclusive education. This trend cuts across the three project locations.
8. We find a state of very high level of awareness among stakeholders on issues of inclusive education across the three project locations. It also appears that most stakeholders have come across information on inclusive education through advocacy tools like handbooks, manuals, factsheets as well as the media. However, there is a generally low use of the social media by stakeholders to drive public awareness on inclusive education.
9. Generally, this baseline survey establishes the presence of a fairly conducive socio-political atmosphere for the implementation of inclusive education in Nigeria. Despite the prevailing legal, policy, institutional, technical and human inadequacies, most stakeholders have clearly demonstrated appreciable knowledge, interest and willingness to support implementation of inclusive education. This study also discovers the willingness of

stakeholders to develop and strengthen partnerships and collaborations for the purpose of promoting the practice of inclusive education in Nigeria.

10. Finally, for the first time ever in Nigeria, this survey has established possibilities and capacity of DPOs like JONAPWD to lead and drive development and social inclusion of the disability community through strategic engagement with government and other stakeholders.

The key recommendations proposed to identify gaps include:

1. The first step towards promoting and supporting the implementation of inclusive education in Nigeria is for stakeholders to collaborate for the review of existing legal and policy frameworks including the UBE Act of 2004, the draft National Policy on Special Needs Education and the National Policy on Education. Stakeholders in the state governments also need to initiate policies in this direction while those states with policies on inclusive education should work towards full implementation.

2. While developing and/or working towards implementing existing legal and policy frameworks, federal and state governments should also set-up appropriate institutional structures and processes as provided by the appropriate laws and policies required to oversee the full implementation of the laws and policies on inclusive education. In addition, short, medium and long term strategic implementation plans should be put in place. This must be proactive and realistic and take into consideration the peculiar and undeveloped nature of special and inclusive education in Nigeria.

3. Specifically, the states and federal government should provide required infrastructure and facilities like accessible classrooms, toilets, playgrounds, offices, assistive technologies, mobility aides, visual aids, hearing aids, etc. All these infrastructure and facilities should be on ground before the take-off of full inclusive basic education. Government does not have to build new schools. Rather, existing regular basic schools should be rehabilitated and provided with the mentioned infrastructure and facilities to make them inclusive of and accessible to children with disabilities.

4. Strategic and intensive capacity-building should be the priority of the state and federal government in order to fill the capacity gaps. Regular teachers should be adequately exposed to the nature, practice and demands of special and inclusive education. Although the education policy provides for a compulsory component of Elements of Special Education for all teacher education students, there are still some teacher education institutions (especially in the universities) which are yet to implement this important policy provision. In addition to getting these institutions to implement the projects, more course units on special and inclusive education should be made compulsory for all teachers-to-be, especially those going to teach at primary and secondary school levels.

5. States and the federal government should launch aggressive public awareness and enlightenment campaigns; targeting all categories of stakeholders especially parents, local communities, faith-based organizations, CSOs, professional groups and the private sector on the need to support educational inclusion and access of children with disabilities in regular school systems.

6. Federal and state governments should encourage and strengthen partnerships and collaborations with other stakeholders especially DPOs, CSOs, the media, parents forum, professional groups, the private sector and development agencies especially with regard to

funding and monitoring of the implementation of inclusive education within their immediate localities.

7. Federal and state governments should set-up Special Fund for the implementation of inclusive education. Meanwhile, adequate annual budgetary allocations should be made, duly appropriated and transparently implemented to ensure proper delivery and sustainable effective impacts of inclusive basic education for children with disabilities in Nigeria.

8. Media organizations should rethink their educational programmes, features, documentaries, articles, news, etc to effectively mainstream issues of PWDs.

9. Finally, there is also the need to identify and reiterate possible ways of improving the roles and responsibilities of critical stakeholders whose participation and collaboration is inevitable if inclusive education is to be achieved in Nigeria.

Conclusion:

JONAPWD calls on the President Muhammadu Buhari led administration to, through relevant MDAs, review and create legal policy frameworks on inclusive education at the national and state levels that would assuage the increasing number of out-of-school children with disabilities in Nigeria and implement the 2016 budget with high consideration for persons with disabilities. It is also expected that a pilot or demonstrative implementation of inclusive education policy would have commenced in at least 9 primary and secondary schools in each of the 3 project locations.

JONAPWD's major innovative approach to the implementation of this 4-year project is its creation of a Model on Accessible and Inclusive School Environment (MAISE). This model is based on international best practice and standard, but in full recognition of Nigeria's peculiar socio-economic, infrastructural and technological development, JONAPWD intends to drive the implementation of this MAISE campaign through the facilitation of public private sector partnership and support. It is expected that the implementation of this 4-year project by JONAPWD will greatly enhance Nigeria's capacity to achieve the targets of Goal 4 of the SDGs, as well as the objectives of Article 24 of the UNCRPD, the National Policy on Education and the UBEC Act of 2004. Ultimately, JONAPWD's target is to ensure that by 2030, all primary and secondary schools in Nigeria are inclusive of, and accessible to all children with disabilities.

Thank you for listening.

God Bless Nigeria.

Ekaete Umoh
National President
JONAPWD

For enquiries, kindly *contact: Programme Manager; JONAPWD National secretariat, phone (+234 8103905087 or email: info@jonapwd.org)*

Office Address: National Women Development Centre, CBD, opposite Central Bank of Nigeria, ABUJA.

Email: info@jonapwd.org

Web address: www.jonapwd.org , Office Line: 092920764

"Improve Access for Inclusive Basic Education for Children With Disabilities in Nigeria"