We Can Work

Context and Barrier analysis report, Nigeria.

Disability Inclusion: Young Person with disabilities access to dignify and fulfilling job.

Contents

1. Background of the Research

Nigeria, a nation renowned for its vibrant cultural diversity, is currently home to a population of 225,238,062 individuals, according to the latest United Nations data available as of October 8, 2023. Within this dynamic and populous country, there exists a significant percentage of people living with disabilities. According to the World Health Organization's 2018 data, approximately 29 million individuals among Nigeria's 195 million people have been with some form of disability. This data, however, underestimates the true prevalence of disabilities within the nation. The nature of disability experienced in Nigeria is multifaceted, with difficulty in seeing being the most reported impairment, followed by challenges in walking and difficulties in carrying out self-care tasks such as dressing and washing[1].

A disheartening revelation concerning the education and employment status of persons with disabilities in Nigeria is that a substantial portion of these young individuals face significant challenges. As per the ILOSTAT database, 63% of youth with disabilities are not in education, employment, or training (NEET), a stark contrast to the 21% NEET rate observed for those without disabilities. What's more, their monthly earnings represent only 49% of what a person living without disabilities earns, underscoring the economic disparities they endure[2].

The poverty status of persons with disabilities in Nigeria is equally alarming. Employment opportunities are limited, making it exceedingly difficult for them to break free from the clutches of poverty. A study conducted

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[1] world bank Publication: Disability Inclusion in Nigeria: A Rapid Assessment, World Bank group.
https://documents.worldbank.org/en/publication/documents-
reports/documentdetail/780571593336878236/disability-inclusion-in-nigeria-a-rapid-assessment

[2] ILOSTAT, Nigeria DHS data - LSHTM Research Nigeria

by the Nigerian Institute of Advanced Legal Studies indicates that approximately 9 out of 10 persons with disabilities in Nigeria live below the poverty line (NIALS 2010, Haruna 2017).

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Within this intricate socio-cultural and economic backdrop, young persons with disabilities in Nigeria are determined to secure dignified and fulfilling employment opportunities that reflect their capabilities and aspirations. However, they confront a myriad of challenges, from societal attitudes that range from empathy to discrimination, to governmental efforts striving for inclusion with little or no impact during and after implementation. Additionally, they encounter obstacles during their transition to the workforce, such as financial difficulties, accessibility concerns, and the need for a stable job or entrepreneurial venture.

Against the above background, this research seeks to provide a comprehensive analysis of the contextual factors and barriers that hinder young persons with disabilities in Nigeria from accessing dignified and fulfilling job opportunities. By revealing these challenges, this study aims to contribute to the body of knowledge, particularly as it relates to effective strategies to increase representation and participation of young persons with disabilities in the Nigerian workforce, which in turn will lead to fostering an equitable and empowering environment for all.

2. Objective

Major objective:

Collect data and insights regarding the prevailing situation concerning access to dignified employment for youth with disabilities and integrate this information into the co-creation phase of the WCW program.

Specific objectives

- Create a comprehensive stakeholder map, identifying potential partners and system actors who can contribute to co-creation sessions and future program implementation.
- Identify existing initiatives and programs related to Economic Empowerment for young persons with disabilities, with the intent of leveraging this collective knowledge.
- Conduct an in-depth assessment of the challenges encountered by young individuals with disabilities in their pursuit of dignified employment.
- Discover and document potential opportunities that can be harnessed to enhance the program's impact and efficacy.

3. Methodology

Design:
This research employed a qualitative action research approach, internally conducted by JONAPWD staff and DIFs (Disabled Individuals' Facilitators) who played a pivotal role in facilitating Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs). The research encompassed two distinct geographical settings in Nigeria:

Lagos - Urban Setting

Bwari, Abuja - Rural Setting

Sampling:

A purposive sampling method was utilized to ensure that participants were selected based on their relevance to the research objectives. This approach allowed for the inclusion of a diverse range of perspectives from various stakeholders.

Data Collection Phase:

This phase began on August 15, 2032, in Abuja, representing the rural setting. Key Informant Interviews (KII) were conducted with various individuals and organizations between August 15th and August 19th, 2023. A total of 13 participants were interviewed, encompassing a diverse range of stakeholders, including government officials, private sector representatives, Organizations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs), disabilities inclusion experts, student leaders, and community leaders, among others.

In addition, planned Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) were conducted from August 21st to 24th, 2023. Each day, two FGD groups were conducted. The rural setting saw a total of 7 FGDs conducted, engaging 43 participants.

In the urban setting (Lagos), the data collection phase followed a similar approach, commencing with FGDs Like the rural setting. Two (2) FGD groups were conducted per day, except on the last day. A total of 7 FGD groups were conducted, involving diverse stakeholders, including community leaders, community members, youths with disabilities, and caregivers. These FGDs focused on various themes such as access to employment, youth-led advocacy, community development, mindset, entrepreneurship, and more. In total, 40 participants were interviewed in the urban setting.

Additionally, the KII phase followed the FGDs and lasted for a week. It is worth noting that some of the participants were interviewed virtually due to considerations of their availability and scheduling constraints. A total of 11 participants were interviewed. Overall, 83 participants were interviewed with 42% female for the focus group discussion and 24 participants were for the KII with 33% female across the two settings of Lagos and Abuja.

Percentage of female to male participants
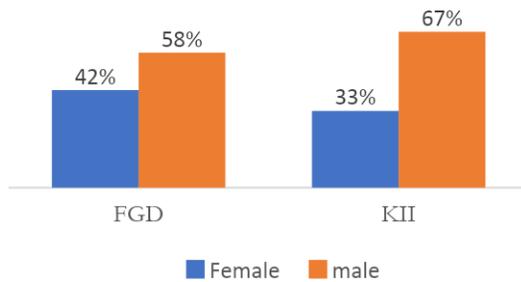
Disaggregation of FGD Participants by Impairments

None	32
Physical impairment	17
Hearing impairment/Deaf	12
Other	11
Visual impairment	9
Intellectual impairment	1
Multiple impairments	1
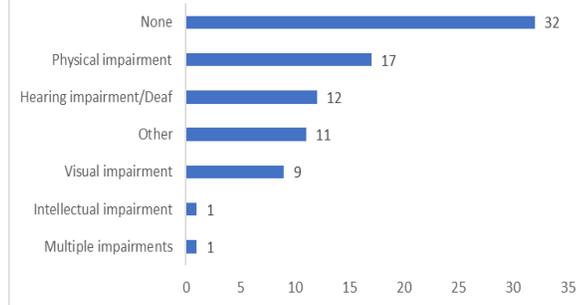
Desk Review:

A comprehensive desk review was carried out to gather existing information and insights related to the study. This included reviewing relevant literature, reports, and data sources to complement the primary data collection, providing an in-depth analysis of existing literature, policies, and reports relevant to the research focus.

Data Management:

Data from the research was efficiently managed using an online system, specifically the "Activity Info" platform. This facilitated the organization and storage of research data. Ensuring secure storage and easy access for analysis and reporting.

Analysis:

The research data was analyzed using thematic analysis, a method that allowed for the identification and exploration of key themes and patterns within the data. The qualitative data from FGDs, KIIs, and the desk review were systematically organized into themes and sub-themes, facilitating a comprehensive understanding of the prevailing barriers and opportunities This approach helped uncover insights, barriers, and opportunities related to the access to dignified employment for youth with disabilities in Nigeria. Thematic analysis ensured a structured and systematic evaluation of the qualitative data collected during the study.

4. Findings

Summarized below are the study's findings on mindset and beliefs, access to work, entrepreneurship, access to markets and finance, community building, representation and leadership, government policy, research, and advocacy.

I. Mindset and beliefs

Societal Attitudes and Beliefs about Youth with Disabilities in Nigeria

The societal attitudes and beliefs about youth with disabilities in Nigeria are complex and multifaceted, influenced by the specific settings in which these young individuals reside. While some people tend to distance themselves or hold negative perceptions, others demonstrate love, encouragement, and support towards individuals with disabilities. Discrimination and prejudice are still prevalent in society, with some individuals viewing those with disabilities as less capable or even as less than fully human. Shared experiences include feelings of being pitied, discouraged, and underestimated based on their disabilities. These perceptions encompass a wide range of experiences, highlighting both progress and challenges in how society interacts with and perceives youth with disabilities.

- **Discrimination and Rejection:** In some instances, especially concerning children with disabilities, experiences of discrimination and rejection have occurred within families and communities. Within the family unit, some members express discomfort or even hostility toward the child with a disability, sometimes viewing them as an outsider. Similar negative attitudes can manifest in religious and social settings, where misconceptions or discomfort often led to distancing from children with disabilities.

   "I once experienced discrimination when attending an event as an invited artist. At the gate, the security denied me access, assuming I was a beggar simply because I was in a wheelchair. Despite my neat appearance, they judged me solely based on my disability." FGD _ Access to work _ Male _Physical _ rural setting_ Bwari, Abuja.

- **Teasing and Negative Comments:** Children with disabilities sometimes encounter teasing and negative comments from their peers. In response to these challenges, parents and caregivers have taken on the role of encouraging these children to respond positively and educate their peers about their condition.
- **Pity and Sympathy:** It's noteworthy that society often perceives persons with disabilities with feelings of pity and sympathy. While these sentiments are well-intentioned, they can sometimes come across as patronizing, affecting how individuals with disabilities are treated and perceived.

Mixed Perspective in Rural Settings

In Rural settings, the attitudes, and beliefs about youth with disabilities exhibit a wide spectrum of perspectives. Some communities have established robust support systems and foster inclusivity. Within these environments, individuals with disabilities not only thrive but also showcase remarkable strength and talent. These individuals are determined to be self-sufficient and actively take charge of their lives. In these areas, the efforts of local governments have led to noticeable improvements in the inclusion of individuals with disabilities, and there's a strong sense of companionship and mutual support between individuals with and without disabilities. However, challenges persist in some areas, including past experiences of isolation and a lingering fear associated with disabilities. In certain instances, some people continue to perceive disabilities as potential dangers to themselves and the community, leading to apprehension and reluctance.

Government Representatives Perspective

Societal attitudes and beliefs about youth with disabilities in the program area reflect a complex landscape. There is recognition of the need to provide work opportunities that are accessible and dignified for individuals with disabilities, considering the evolving nature of work. While there is an emphasis on equipping individuals with disabilities with the skills required for modern workplaces, it's acknowledged that government employment alone cannot cater to everyone. Efforts have been made to offer job opportunities to individuals with disabilities, with consideration for their physical capabilities. The overarching belief is that all individuals, regardless of their disabilities, are inherently equal, and there is a commitment to advancing social inclusion and ensuring that no one is left behind. Various initiatives and programs have been implemented to engage with individuals with disabilities, provide training on self-confidence, resilience, and integration into society,

and eradicate stigmatization and stereotypes. Sensitization programs are conducted at both state and federal levels to promote inclusive practices. Additionally, there is a commitment to social security programs aimed at empowering vulnerable individuals, including persons with disabilities, to enhance social inclusion at the grassroots level.

"Accessibility features are also available, including ramps, parking spaces, signs, and accessible bathrooms, which have been integrated into the ministry. Moreover, priority is given to people with disabilities in queues. These services aim to eliminate stereotypes and enhance the lives of individuals with disabilities, particularly those who rely on wheelchairs. Such provisions are essential for facilitating their workplace participation." KII _ Government Representative _director of social and security department, Ministry of Labor _ Abuja

Government Initiatives for Youth Involvement, Collaboration, and Inclusion Efforts

Nigeria, specifically Lagos State, has established a Youth Parliament under the Ministry for Youths and Social Development, striving to engage youth across the states. Nevertheless, there exist challenges in fully integrating disability considerations into these initiatives. Moreover, while government programs do not specifically target youth, they encompass a wide range of beneficiaries, encompassing persons with disabilities. The Nigerian government's interest in partnering with organizations working with youth and people with disabilities can be described as moderate. The extent of interest is contingent on the readiness, consistency, and persistence of the individuals involved. Collaborations with NGOs demonstrate the commitment to supporting persons with disabilities and fostering social inclusion.

"Well, so far, persons with disabilities who are willing and capable of work are given job opportunities at different levels, but we are mindful not to give them jobs that require a lot of physical work. The current chairman has employed three persons with disabilities." KII _Government Representative – Male- Bwari area council _ Abuja.

Awareness of Disability Services in Nigeria

The Nigerian community, particularly in Lagos State, possesses a general awareness of available services for persons with disabilities. However, not all members of the community are fully informed about the range of

services. Skill acquisition centers have played a crucial role in empowering individuals with disabilities, resulting in notable progress and productivity.

Services Provided and Public Perception

The Women Affairs and Poverty Alleviation (WAPA) department in Lagos State offers vocational skills training across local governments, aiming to equip persons with disabilities for employment or entrepreneurial pursuits. Despite the accessible opportunities, there is an underutilization of these services by individuals with disabilities. However, the perception is gradually changing, with active engagement and integration of persons with disabilities into various community roles.

Achievements and Opportunities for Inclusion

Successes in inclusion initiatives in Nigeria encompass entrepreneurship programs, the Youth Parliament, and vocational training. Opportunities for further inclusion lie in dispelling misconceptions, creating safe spaces, and expanding job opportunities for individuals with disabilities. Positive impacts have been witnessed across various Nigerian regions, showcasing ongoing efforts to enhance social security programs for the benefit of persons with disabilities and vulnerable citizens, underscoring a commitment to inclusivity and expansion. Also, there is a recognition of the importance of inclusivity and equal opportunities for individuals with disabilities in the program area. Efforts have been made to create a more inclusive society, but challenges and the need for continued work in this regard are also acknowledged.

OPDs Perspective

The perceptions of young people with disabilities vary depending on the lens through which society views them, whether cultural, religious, or social. From a religious perspective, some see them as individuals in need of help, while culturally, they are revered. However, socially, there is a stereotype associated with persons with disabilities, and this perception is not uniform across all segments of society. There is also a gender disparity in how men and women with disabilities are perceived. Men with disabilities tend to have an advantage, making it easier for them to get married, whereas women with disabilities often face significant challenges in finding a spouse. This perception stems from the belief that it's man's world. Even within the disability community, there are variations in how disabilities are perceived. Some clusters, like the Albinism cluster, may not be widely recognized as persons with disabilities, despite having low vision. This lack of recognition can lead to a sense of superiority among other disability clusters. The deaf community faces similar challenges in terms of perception.

"It depends on which side of society you are looking up from, either cultural, religious, or social lens. From the religious lens, at times they see them as persons that need to be helped; culturally they are revered; socially there is the stereotyping of persons with disabilities, so it does not cut clean clear across various strata of the society, for instance, some people see persons with albinism as small gods, while others see them as bad omens." KII_OPD leader _ male_ Lagos.

Regarding stigmatizing behavior, personal experiences include instances of discrimination in public schools and restrictions on participation in certain activities. Overcoming these challenges often involves demonstrating one's capabilities and value. In some cases, stigma from in-laws existed initially but diminished as they became more acquainted with the individual's capabilities. Additionally, there have been instances of harassment and derogatory comments when seeking preferential treatment due to disability-related challenges, such as standing

for extended periods in a bank queue. These experiences highlight the importance of addressing societal misconceptions and biases surrounding disabilities.

"I attended public schools and of course I had to go through a lot of stigmatizations; people would say I couldn't see during the day, even though I walk without hitting my head against the wall. I was not allowed to take part in some activities, but as I created value for myself by pursuing my education to the fullest, that toned down because I put my value on the table as I began to socialize, and even joined my peers in going to the farm." KII_OPD leader _ male_ Lagos.

Challenges and Concerns of Transitioning to the World of Work for Young Graduates with Disabilities

The respondents expressed concerns about the transition to the world of work after their studies, primarily related to financial difficulties, accessibility challenges, and the need for a stable job or business to ensure a smooth transition. Additionally, worries about adapting to a working environment, job security, and social interaction difficulties were mentioned, highlighting the need for proper orientation and training.

Addressing Fears and Concerns:

To address the fears and concerns, the respondents suggested empowerment programs focusing on digital skills, especially for persons with disabilities, as these skills allow for remote work and can enhance employability. They also emphasized educating and informing students, particularly those with disabilities, about the challenges and expectations they may face. Collaboration with civil organizations, NGOs, and educational institutions was highlighted as a crucial approach to facilitate support and partnerships.

Supporting Dreams and Aspirations:

They emphasized the importance of community, mentors, and a support network to guide young people with disabilities, helping them realize their dreams. They also acknowledged the need for scholarships, grants, and collaboration with educational institutions to provide financial support and an enabling environment for academic success. Additionally, procuring modern gadgets and materials tailored to specific disability needs was recognized as a significant initiative to empower and support education for individuals with disabilities.

Recommendations:

1. Promote Awareness and Education: Launch awareness campaigns and educational programs at both state and federal levels to dispel misconceptions and stereotypes about individuals with disabilities. These programs should emphasize the capabilities and potential of youth with disabilities.
2. Enhance Employment Opportunities: Create job opportunities that are accessible and dignified for individuals with disabilities, taking into consideration their evolving skill sets. Encourage public and private sectors to provide equal employment opportunities for all, regardless of disability.

3. Empower Youth with Disabilities: Develop empowerment programs with a focus on digital skills, enabling youth with disabilities to engage in remote work and enhance their employability. These programs should also include mentorship and support networks to guide young individuals with disabilities toward achieving their dreams.

4. Financial Support: Provide scholarships, grants, and financial assistance tailored to the needs of individuals with disabilities. Collaborate with educational institutions to create an enabling environment for academic success.
5. Accessible Materials and Technology: Ensure that modern gadgets and materials are accessible to individuals with disabilities. Tailor technology and tools to specific disability needs to facilitate education and skill development.
6. Inclusive Initiatives: Collaborate with civil organizations, NGOs, and educational institutions to provide comprehensive support and foster partnerships. Inclusion should be a key focus in all youth-related initiatives.

Lessons Learned:

1. Societal attitudes toward youth with disabilities in Nigeria are diverse, with varying degrees of support, empathy, and discrimination.
2. Awareness campaigns and advocacy efforts have led to positive changes in public interactions and acceptance of individuals with disabilities.
3. Discrimination and negative perceptions still exist, particularly in the job market, affecting relationships and career opportunities.

II.   Access to work

Definition of decent work

"*Decent work*" encompasses a broad set of principles in the context of employment. It refers to work that not only provides a means to meet basic financial needs but also offers opportunities for personal and professional fulfillment. This includes jobs that align with an individual's passion, interests, and skills, ensuring that they find enjoyment and dignity in their work. Moreover, decent work extends beyond mere economic considerations; it entails respect for the rights and equality of individuals in the workplace, irrespective of their circumstances or abilities.

For individuals with disabilities, the concept of decent work takes on added significance. It emphasizes the importance of creating inclusive and accommodating work environments that consider the unique needs and capabilities of these individuals. These workplaces should enable them to fully participate in economic and societal activities, breaking down barriers and ensuring they have the same opportunities for personal growth and career advancement as anyone else. In essence, decent work strives to create equitable, respectful, and sustainable employment opportunities that contribute positively to an individual's overall well-being and livelihood.

"A decent job is one that provides income, respects dignity, and is socially acceptable, whether you have a disability or not." FGD_ Access to work _ Male_ Hearing impairment/Deaf _ Bwari, Abuja.

"Decent work is any job that caters to my needs, provides income, and allows me time to care for my family, just like my business of selling water and drinks." FGD _ Parent/Caregivers _ Female _ Lagos.

"Decent work is a job that won't stress me as a person with a disability and can be done comfortably." FGD _ Young Female with Disabilities _ Lagos.

Preference between waged employment and Entrepreneurship

In Nigeria, young persons with disabilities have varying preferences when it comes to choosing between waged employment and entrepreneurship. Some parents/Caregivers believe that entrepreneurship offers young persons with disabilities (YWD) the opportunity to showcase their abilities and become self-reliant. However, others trust YWD's choices and are willing to support them in pursuing waged employment, especially if it aligns with their career aspirations. Some individuals with disabilities themselves prefer entrepreneurship, while others favor waged employment for its stability and monthly income. However, the economic challenges in Nigeria can influence these preferences, with entrepreneurship often seen as financial independence and flexibility.

Education plays a crucial role in empowering individuals with disabilities to make informed decisions about their careers. It instills confidence and opens opportunities for them to lead comfortable lives. Entrepreneurship is particularly appealing as it allows for financial independence, accommodation of their specific needs, and flexibility in working hours. However, accessing financial support can be challenging, making cooperative efforts and government programs essential for overcoming this hurdle. Caregiver/Parent involvement can also be beneficial, as a thriving business can provide compensation for their services. Furthermore, networks and social media platforms can help disseminate information about decent work opportunities and promote inclusivity in the workplace. Ultimately, the choice between waged employment and entrepreneurship depends on individual circumstances and aspirations, with both paths offering unique advantages and challenges.

"As a parent, I cannot decide for my child because he has already chosen his path in the medical field. I support his decision wholeheartedly because he understands his own aspirations, possesses a deep knowledge of individuals with special needs, and has experienced it firsthand. He is determined to make a difference and prevent others from enduring the challenges he faced." FGD _ Parent/Caregiver_ Female _ Lagos.

"In my opinion, it's more advantageous for individuals with disabilities to engage in waged employment because it ensures a steady income, unlike running a business where customer patronage is uncertain." FGD_ Male _ Community Members _ Lagos

"I would like to start my own business. I'd prefer to be my own boss, enabling me to employ people to work for me while I create time to take care of my child." FGD_ Young Female with Disabilities/Physical _ Abuja.

Perceptions towards waged employment

The perceptions of young persons with disabilities towards waged employment vary, but certain common themes emerge:

- **Reliability and Stability:** Waged employment viewed positively due to the consistent and stable income it provides. Waged employment is seen as a reliable source of financial security, offering a steady paycheck and often essential benefits.
- Education as a Stepping Stone: Education is considered a stepping stone to obtaining waged employment, emphasizing the role of qualifications and skills in securing a job.
- Transition to Entrepreneurship: Some see waged employment as a starting point that can later lead to entrepreneurship, providing valuable experience and financial resources.
- Access to Loans and Opportunities: Individuals highlight the advantage of waged employment in facilitating access to loans and financial opportunities, such as building a house or starting a business.
- Consideration of Disability-Related Challenges: The choice of waged employment is also influenced by the challenges related to disabilities, such as mobility issues, making a stable job with fixed hours more appealing.
- Security and Future Planning: Waged employment is perceived to achieve financial security and planning, including caring for family members, and creating a stable life.

These perceptions collectively underscore the importance of waged employment for individuals with disabilities, providing financial stability, opportunities for growth, and a sense of security that is crucial in achieving a balanced and fulfilling life.

Barriers faced by youth with disabilities to access job or entrepreneurship opportunities.

Youth with disabilities face a multitude of barriers when it comes to accessing job or entrepreneurship opportunities. These challenges encompass various aspects, ranging from education and skills development to societal attitudes and accessibility. Here are some of the key barriers they encounter:

- Educational Qualification and Skill Development: Obtaining the right qualifications and skills is essential for pursuing job or entrepreneurship opportunities. However, many young people with disabilities face difficulties in accessing quality education and training programs that are inclusive and accommodating of their specific needs. In some cases, they may require specialized resources and support to fully participate in educational activities.
- Stigma and Discrimination: Stigma and discrimination continue to be significant hurdles for youth with disabilities. Negative attitudes and biases from employers and society at large can lead to exclusion and rejection. This discrimination often manifests during the job application process, where individuals with disabilities may face prejudice and unequal treatment.
- Lack of Access to Information: Access to information is crucial for identifying job or entrepreneurial opportunities. However, many individuals with disabilities still struggle with limited access to information due to barriers in information and communication technologies (ICT). They may not have

access to the internet, which hinders their ability to search for job openings, network, or explore entrepreneurial ideas online.

- Attitudinal Barriers in the Workplace: Even if young people with disabilities manage to secure a job or entrepreneurial opportunity, they may encounter attitudinal barriers within the workplace. These barriers include negative perceptions and biases held by employers and colleagues, which can limit their career advancement and opportunities for growth.

- Low Priority for Inclusion: Activities aimed at promoting the inclusion of persons with disabilities have not been given a high priority by trade unions in Nigeria. This lack of focus on disability inclusion hampers the efforts to address the specific needs and challenges faced by youth with disabilities.

- Unaddressed Discrimination: Trade unions in Nigeria have been largely unsuccessful in addressing issues of discrimination, employment security, unfair work conditions, unequal wages, and the lack of reasonable accommodation for persons with disabilities. This leaves youth with disabilities vulnerable to various forms of workplace discrimination and inequality.

- Absence of Disability Policies: Nigerian trade unions typically lack a disability policy and often do not mainstream disability concerns into their union activities. The absence of specific policies and practices designed to support individuals with disabilities hinders their access to employment opportunities.

- Lack of Disability Rights Training: Trade union representatives are often not adequately trained in disability rights empowerment and management. This knowledge gap limits their ability to advocate for the rights and needs of individuals with disabilities within the workplace and society at large.

"The study holds the following views: there is a manifestation of a lack of political will on the part of government and trade unions alike in realizing the provisions for persons with disabilities; trade unions in Nigeria are not disability-inclusive and have been largely unsuccessful in addressing issues of discrimination, employment security, unfair work conditions, unequal wages, and the lack of reasonable accommodation for persons with disabilities; Nigerian trade unions do not have a disability policy and hardly mainstream disability in union activities; and trade union representatives have no training in disability rights empowerment and management." Desk review _ Inclusive Futures | Inclusion Works - Labor Market Assessment - Nigeria

- Accessibility Challenges: Physical accessibility is a significant issue for individuals with disabilities. Many workplaces and entrepreneurial environments are not designed to accommodate people with diverse disabilities, such as those using wheelchairs or requiring assistive technologies. This lack of accessibility can prevent them from fully participating in their chosen fields.

- Economic Barriers: Economic disparities can compound the challenges faced by youth with disabilities. Some may lack the financial resources to invest in education, training, or starting a business. Additionally, the cost of assistive devices and services can be prohibitive, limiting their ability to fully engage in the workforce or entrepreneurial activities.

- Transportation and Mobility Issues: Limited accessible transportation options can pose significant challenges for individuals with disabilities when commuting to work or managing business operations. Inadequate public transportation or a lack of accessible vehicles can hinder their independence and mobility.

- Social Isolation: Youth with disabilities may experience social isolation, which can impact their access to networking opportunities, mentorship, and social support. Building professional connections and receiving guidance from experienced individuals can be critical for career development and entrepreneurship.

Control ownership of assets

Young people with disabilities encounter specific challenges and opportunities related to asset ownership, such as farmland, livestock, or businesses. These experiences can be summarized as follows:

- Inherited Property and Rights: In many communities, property, especially farmland, is passed down through generations. However, individuals with disabilities often struggle to assert their ownership rights due to societal biases and discrimination. It's essential to remember that money itself doesn't have any form of disability. With proper awareness and education, people with disabilities can protect their property rights.
- Government Support and Grants: Despite the availability of government agricultural grants and land access, misconceptions about the capabilities of individuals with disabilities may exclude them from these opportunities. Nevertheless, some well-informed individuals successfully navigate these challenges to access resources and assert their rights.
- Entrepreneurship and Business Ownership: Entrepreneurship provides a viable avenue for individuals with disabilities to gain asset control. They can successfully create and manage businesses, offering products or services in demand while providing excellent customer service. Positive experiences, such as the absence of stigmatization or discrimination, boost their confidence and business prospects.
- Information and Awareness: Lack of information poses a significant barrier for young people with disabilities. Access to information about their rights, available resources, and opportunities is essential for informed decision-making and asset ownership assertion. Awareness campaigns and support networks play a vital role in providing this information, empowering individuals to take control of their economic futures and asset ownership.

Role of your OPD to enhance access to waged or self-employment.

The responses provided above outline the significant role that the Organization of Persons with Disabilities (OPD) plays in empowering individuals with disabilities, particularly the youth, to access waged or self-employment opportunities. Here is a general overview of the OPD's roles based on the findings:

- Education and Skill Development: The OPD places a strong emphasis on education and skill development. They provide training to their members on important aspects such as crafting effective CVs, interview preparation, and acquiring valuable skills. This prepares individuals with disabilities for employment and entrepreneurial endeavors.
- Economic Empowerment: The OPD's overarching goal is to empower individuals with disabilities economically. They achieve this by offering livelihood training programs, entrepreneurship

support, and opportunities to access capital for starting businesses. This focus on economic stability is crucial for enhancing the financial independence and self-sufficiency of their members.

"At our OPD, we train graduates with disabilities on how to draft a good CV, how to answer interview questions, and we provide skills training. We collaborate with organizations that specialize in training persons with disabilities and teach some of our members' skills acquisition. The major challenge is capital. It's one thing to train someone, and it's another for the person to set up their own business. Most of them lack capital. Last year, from October to December, we conducted a project in Kaduna where we trained women with disabilities in various skills, including tailoring, weaving, soap making, and tie and dye. After the training, we provided them with startup kits and developed plans to follow up and monitor their activities. The program is currently ongoing, with about 50 women trained, thanks to the support from the Feminist Humanitarian Network (FHN), a sub-grant from Women in Humanitarian Response in Nigeria.". KII_ OPD _youth led_ Female _Physical_ Abuja

- Addressing Capital Challenges: Recognizing the financial barriers faced by many individuals with disabilities in starting their own businesses, the OPD actively addresses this challenge. They implement projects and initiatives that provide startup kits and support to members, helping them overcome the initial hurdle of capital.
- Collaborative Efforts: The organization often collaborates with other entities, such as the Feminist Humanitarian Network (FHN) and Women in Humanitarian Response in Nigeria, to amplify their impact. These collaborations allow them to reach a broader audience and provide more comprehensive support to their members.
- Advocacy and Awareness: The OPD is committed to advocacy efforts aimed at raising awareness about the rights and capabilities of individuals with disabilities. They work persistently to challenge misconceptions and discrimination, thereby creating an environment that is more inclusive and conducive to their economic success.

In general, the OPD's roles are centered around empowering individuals with disabilities through education, skill development, entrepreneurship support, and addressing financial barriers. Their dedication to advocacy and collaboration underscores their commitment to creating opportunities for economic stability and prosperity among the disability community.

Key Recommendations from OPDs

- Enhanced Government Representation: The government should prioritize the inclusion of young men and women with disabilities in all its programs. This includes active participation in policymaking processes and program implementation. It is essential to ensure that individuals with disabilities are not excluded from key decision-making roles. For example, in initiatives like the fuel subsidy intervention, there should be representation from persons with disabilities to better address their unique needs.

- Quota for Persons with Disabilities: To promote equal opportunities and representation, the government should establish and preserve a 5% quota for persons with disabilities in all employment and programs. This quota system can help address the historical underrepresentation and exclusion faced by individuals with disabilities, providing them with a fair chance to contribute to society.
- Continuous Personal Development: Young people with disabilities should actively engage in continuous personal development. This involves seeking opportunities to enhance their professional, academic, and economic capacities. By investing in personal growth, individuals with disabilities can overcome barriers and excel in various aspects of life, ultimately contributing to society.
- Promoting Inclusion: Inclusion should be promoted in all aspects of social life, political participation, and employment. It is crucial to ensure that persons with disabilities have equal access to opportunities and are not marginalized. This includes addressing issues like gender-based violence against women and girls with disabilities, raising awareness, and taking action to protect their rights and well-being.
- Changing Perceptions: Efforts should be made to change societal perceptions about disability. It's important to shift from a charity-based approach to a more comprehensive and inclusive perspective. Building awareness about the capabilities and rights of individuals with disabilities can lead to a more equitable society.
- Government Empathy: Government officials should have a deeper understanding of the challenges faced by persons with disabilities. Encouraging them to experience a day in the life of a person with a disability can foster empathy and lead to more informed and effective policymaking.

Examples of successful persons with disabilities

"With unwavering confidence, I proudly identify as both an entrepreneur and a civil servant. Professionally, I possess the expertise to create over 50 consumable chemicals and delectable pastries. I have also conducted training sessions for women and youth with disabilities, empowering them with these skills, and they are now successfully earning a livelihood from them." KII_OPD _Women led_ Abuja.

"This is just the tip of the iceberg as there exists a significant number of individuals like me who excel in their chosen careers. For instance, Madam Ekaete stands as the first female national president of the Joint National Association of Persons with Disabilities (JONAPWD) and presently serves as the Country Director of CBM Global in Nigeria. In Nigeria's music scene, Cobhams Asuquo, a visually impaired musician, enjoys widespread popularity. Men and women with disabilities are soaring across various fields, defying their impairments and achieving remarkable success." KII_ Umbrella OPD _ Female _ Abuja.

"A successful entrepreneur, I think I know. Musbahu Lawal Didi (with a physical disability) has a rice mill. Yes, a very, very big one, and he is seen as a successful entrepreneur. We have some women in our network. We have Amil; she stays in Cameroon. Okay, yes, when you go to her Facebook page, she's doing very well in business. We have a lot of them in our

network, you know. For example, we have Avi; she's a baker, and she's doing very well." KII_ OPD _ Youth led _ female _ Abuja.

Lesson Learned:

1. Decent Work as a Holistic Concept: Decent work is not solely about financial security but also encompasses personal and professional fulfillment, dignity, and respect for individuals in the workplace. This broader definition highlights the importance of creating inclusive and accommodating work environments for individuals with disabilities to enable them to fully participate in economic and societal activities.

2. Individual Preferences Matter: The choice between waged employment and entrepreneurship varies among individuals with disabilities. Their preferences are influenced by personal. aspirations, career goals, economic conditions, and accessibility to resources. Education plays a pivotal role in empowering them to make informed decisions.

3. Importance of Education and Skill Development: Education and skill development are essential components of empowering individuals with disabilities. These factors instill confidence, open opportunities, and prepare them for success in their chosen career paths, whether it be waged employment or entrepreneurship.

4. Collaboration and Support: Collaboration with organizations, government initiatives, and support networks is crucial in addressing the financial challenges individuals with disabilities face, especially when starting their businesses. Cooperative efforts and government programs can help bridge the capital gap and promote financial independence.

5. Advocacy and Awareness: Advocacy efforts are necessary to challenge societal perceptions, discrimination, and attitudinal barriers faced by individuals with disabilities in the workplace. Raising awareness about their rights and capabilities is essential for fostering inclusivity and promoting equal opportunities.

6. Access to Information: Limited access to information is a significant barrier for individuals with disabilities. Providing them with information about available resources and opportunities is essential for informed decision-making and economic empowerment.

7. Asset Ownership and Rights: The issue of asset ownership and property rights is particularly significant for individuals with disabilities. It underscores the importance of creating awareness about property rights and dispelling societal biases that may hinder them from asserting their ownership rights.

8. Government Representation and Quotas: Government representation and the establishment of quotas for persons with disabilities in all employment and programs are crucial steps to ensure equal opportunities and representation. This promotes inclusivity and addresses historical underrepresentation.

9. Changing Perceptions: Shifting from a charity-based approach to a more inclusive perspective is vital in changing societal perceptions about disability. Emphasizing the capabilities and rights of individuals with disabilities can contribute to a more equitable society.

Recommendations:

1. Promoting Inclusive Approaches: Encourage a shift from a charity-based approach to a more inclusive perspective when addressing disability matters. Emphasize the importance of considering multiple approaches to disability inclusion, considering cultural and religious factors that may impact societal perceptions.

2. Continuous Personal Development: Highlight the significance of continuous personal development for individuals with disabilities. Recommend that young people with disabilities actively seek opportunities to enhance their professional, academic, and economic capacities. Emphasize that personal development can empower them to overcome barriers and excel in various aspects of life, transcending the limitations of disability.

3. Promoting Inclusion: Advocate for the promotion of inclusion in all aspects of social life, political participation, and employment. Stress the importance of actively including persons with disabilities in these areas to ensure equal opportunities and representation.

4. Empathy and Understanding: Suggest that government officials and policymakers gain a deeper understanding of the challenges faced by persons with disabilities. Encourage them to participate in experiences that simulate disability challenges, fostering empathy and a better understanding of the disability community's needs.

5. Awareness on Gender-Based Violence: Highlight the urgent need for increased awareness and action regarding gender-based violence against women and girls with disabilities. Recommend the development and implementation of awareness campaigns and support programs aimed at addressing this issue and ensuring the safety and well-being of individuals within the disability community.

6. Age Barriers in Recruitment: Advocate for the removal of age barriers in recruitment processes for persons with disabilities. Stress that age restrictions can disproportionately affect individuals who may not have had the opportunity to enroll in school at a typical age due to disability-related challenges. Encourage government agencies and employers to consider qualifications and abilities rather than age when recruiting individuals with disabilities.

III.   Representation in Leadership

The findings demonstrate the vibrant involvement of youth with disabilities in leadership positions, both in urban and rural settings. In urban areas, these young leaders are dedicated to championing inclusivity and equal opportunities for individuals with disabilities. They manage music organizations, lead efforts to promote the community of persons with disabilities and strive to influence policies related to disability employment and support. As one youth leader emphasized,

"In our cluster, we embrace diversity. We have two youths with albinism as members of the board. I launched a campaign, securing sponsors to support members battling skin cancer, bringing benefits to many. We've also introduced membership dues to strengthen our mission." FGD_ Youth _led _advocacy _ Blind _ Male _Lagos.

In rural settings, youth with disabilities take on leadership roles within community associations and church groups, where they focus on promoting transparency, empowerment, and representation. They lead initiatives that provide support during local festivities and actively work to enhance accessibility and awareness, particularly for individuals with disabilities. Across both urban and rural settings, the common theme is the unwavering commitment of youth with disabilities to effect positive change and advocate for the rights and well-being of their communities, emphasizing the importance of their participation in leadership roles and decision-making processes to drive inclusivity and equal opportunities.

"As the treasurer of the Bwari Association of Persons with Disability for a year, I've served with unwavering transparency, dedicated to fostering youth empowerment. Our efforts have garnered support from the local government chairman." FGD_ Youth _led _advocacy _ Male _ Physical _ Bwari, Abuja

"Yes, Anuoluwa, a visually impaired individual, coordinates activities of persons with disabilities at the local government." KII _ OPD _Physical _OPD Umbrella body _Female_ Bwari, Abuja

Government and Institutional Support

Government representatives recognize the paramount importance of involving youth with disabilities and advocating for equal opportunities. They stress the imperative nature of implementing training, capacity-building, and awareness programs. These representatives highlight that collaboration and synergy have been indispensable in their efforts, even though managing perceptions and expectations of individuals with disabilities has presented significant challenges. They have also grappled with navigating bureaucratic processes and addressing issues related to accessibility and entitlement. Notably, direct engagement with persons with disabilities is encouraged, with the area council actively supporting their needs, providing essential provisions, and fostering an environment where they can voice their concerns.

Furthermore, following the enactment of the Disability Act, initiatives have been put in motion to allocate 5% of employment opportunities to persons with disabilities. Substantial progress has been made in fulfilling this commitment, with individuals with disabilities now employed in various departments at both state and headquarters levels. The Act includes provisions that underscore the paramount importance of complete inclusion for persons with disabilities. It places a strong emphasis on the necessity of quality inclusive education and mandates a 5% employment quota for people with disabilities across all public organizations. Additionally, the Act led to the establishment of the National Commission for Persons with Disability (NCPD), tasked with combating discrimination against persons with disabilities and ensuring their inclusion across all sectors. The Government maintains a steadfast commitment to achieving the 5% employment quota and continually endeavors to bridge the existing gap.

"To mainstream persons with disabilities into formal employment, upon an advocacy with key recommendation on employment of persons with disabilities to the formal Lagos State Governor in 2015, the State recruited persons with disabilities at the rate of 2 persons with disabilities per Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) in the state and 3 persons with disabilities per Local Government Area. Another dimension of progress in supporting mainstreaming of persons with disabilities into formal employment within the state secretariat in Lagos is reflected in the government effort to make the office blocks accessible to persons with disabilities." Inclusive Futures | Inclusion Works - Labor Market Assessment - Nigeria_ pg. 24.

Challenges and Hesitations

The findings reveal a notable hesitation among individuals with disabilities to actively engage in leadership roles, primarily due to prevailing discrimination and fear of societal bias, which is particularly pronounced in Nigeria. Discrimination remains a significant obstacle, dissuading some from pursuing leadership positions. The fear of societal non-acceptance underscores the importance of government intervention in ensuring equal rights. Efforts are required to instill confidence and empower these individuals to surmount societal barriers. Insights from focus group discussions (FGDs) with caregivers and community members in both urban and rural settings offer a nuanced perspective. Approximately 65% of FGD participants acknowledged the discrimination faced by individuals with disabilities. They highlighted the imperative of inclusive policies and support structures. However, amidst challenges, 80% of participants, across both settings, acknowledged instances of remarkable leadership achievements by individuals with disabilities.

Recommendations

- Access to Education: Prioritize accessible and inclusive education for youth with disabilities to equip them with the knowledge and skills essential for leadership roles.
- Training and Knowledge: Provide continuous training to build essential skills and keep youth with disabilities informed about relevant topics such as their rights and building their self-esteem.
- Support and Unity: Encourage individuals with disabilities to foster a supportive community among themselves, focusing on shared goals and advocating for their needs and rights.
- Stepping Out of Comfort Zones: Encourage individuals with disabilities to actively participate in decision-making processes and challenge societal norms. As another government representative expressed,

"Young persons with disabilities can rise to leadership roles if they are ready to work hard. Changing from an entitlement mentality to a mindset of productivity is crucial. There is a campaign for the inclusion of persons with disabilities in appointments, which can provide opportunities for leadership roles." KII _ Government _ Representative Ministry of labor_ Female _ Bwari _ Abuja

- Networking and Mentoring: Promote networking and mentorship opportunities to provide guidance and support for leadership development.
- Sensitization and Awareness: Conduct sensitization and awareness campaigns in rural areas to break down barriers and promote inclusivity.
- Participation at All Levels: Encourage persons with disabilities to actively participate in community decision-making processes.
- Capacity Building in ICT: Focus on capacity building in information and communication technology to enhance economic opportunities.
- Access to Beneficial Programs: Ensure equitable access to programs such as vocational training, healthcare, and social support services.

- Government Initiatives: Encourage government support by organizing programs, providing training, and offering grants for startup businesses for persons with disabilities, fostering economic independence.

Lesson Learnt

- **Diverse Leadership Engagement**: YWD in both urban and rural settings are actively engaged in leadership positions, showcasing their commitment to championing inclusivity and equal opportunities. This highlights the diverse talent and dedication within the disability community.
- **Community-Centric Leadership:** YWD in rural areas often lead initiatives that promote transparency, empowerment, and representation within their local communities. Their leadership extends to support during local festivities and efforts to enhance accessibility and awareness, emphasizing the community-centric approach of YWD leaders.
- **Government Support Matters:** Government representatives acknowledge the importance of involving YWD in leadership and advocating for equal opportunities. Government initiatives, such as the Disability Act and the commitment to allocate 5% of employment opportunities to persons with disabilities, demonstrate the impact of policy support.
- **Challenges and Hesitations Exist**: Despite the vibrant involvement of YWD in leadership, discrimination and societal bias remain significant barriers. Many individuals with disabilities hesitate to engage in leadership roles due to fear of discrimination. This highlights the ongoing challenges in achieving full inclusion.
- **Awareness and Empowerment Are Vital:** The findings emphasize the need for awareness campaigns, empowerment programs, and continuous training to build the skills and confidence of YWD. Education, self-esteem building, and mentorship play essential roles in encouraging leadership participation.
- **Community Support:** Creating a supportive community among individuals with disabilities is crucial. Shared goals and advocacy for their rights are essential factors in fostering leadership among YWD.
- **Networking and Mentoring:** Networking opportunities and mentorship programs can provide valuable guidance and support for YWD to develop leadership skills and navigate societal barriers.
- **Education and ICT Capacity Building:** Prioritizing accessible and inclusive education and capacity building in information and communication technology (ICT) are crucial for equipping YWD with the knowledge and skills necessary for leadership roles.
- **Economic Independence:** Initiatives that support economic independence, such as vocational training, healthcare access, and grants for startup businesses, are essential to empower YWD and reduce societal barriers.

Conclusion

Youth with disabilities are actively contributing to leadership roles in both urban and rural settings. Their unwavering dedication to inclusivity and equal opportunities is evident. While they face challenges, government support, awareness campaigns, and education are crucial for increasing their involvement and promoting a more inclusive society. By implementing the recommendations provided, society can empower these young leaders to drive positive change and advocate for the rights and well-being of their communities.

IV. Governance-Policy

The current landscape of government policies and manuals in place does show some promise for addressing the needs of youth with disabilities, particularly in terms of employment and engagement in productive work. However, there remains a notable gap between policy formulation and effective implementation. While there are policies that explicitly support the economic empowerment of youths with disabilities, such as employment quotas and provisions for inclusive education, the level of implementation varies.

In Lagos State, for example, there is a law mandating that 1% of employees in companies should be persons with disabilities, while the Nigerian Discrimination Against Persons with Disabilities Act of 2019 calls for a 5% representation. Compliance with these laws could set positive precedents and encourage adherence to federal laws. Nonetheless, despite these policies, the implementation is not consistently impressive, and there are concerns about the actual integration of persons with disabilities into the labor market.

To bridge the gap between policy and practice, stakeholders emphasize the need to empower the Commission for Persons with Disabilities and provide it with the authority and resources to enforce these laws effectively. This agency could play a pivotal role in certifying organizations that are inclusive in their programs, policies, and processes, potentially serving as an incentive for organizations to become more inclusive themselves.

Ultimately, while there is a foundation of policies supporting the rights and inclusion of persons with disabilities in Nigeria, there is a pressing call for improved implementation, stronger policies that foster accessible workplaces and environments, and a shift in perception to view persons with disabilities as deserving members of society rather than recipients of charity.

"To make a real impact, we need to empower the Commission for Persons with Disabilities. This agency should have the authority and resources to enforce our laws effectively. It should be able to certify organizations that are inclusive in their programs, policies, and processes. This certification could serve as an incentive for organizations to become more inclusive." KII _ Disabilities _inclusion _ expert _ Lagos.

Perceptions of youth with disabilities to government policies

Based on the provided findings, the perceptions of youth with disabilities regarding government policies can be summarized as follows:

● Recognition of Policies but Concerns about Implementation: Youth with disabilities acknowledge the existence of government policies aimed at addressing their needs, particularly in the context of employment and engagement in productive work. However, there is a consensus that having policies in place is not enough. There are concerns about the actual implementation and enforcement of these policies to create tangible benefits for youth with disabilities.

● Advocacy for Inclusivity and Stronger Policies: Youth with disabilities advocate for stronger, more comprehensive policies that focus on creating accessible workplaces and environments. They

emphasize the need for policies that promote inclusivity and go beyond mere representation by ensuring active participation and involvement of persons with disabilities in various sectors.

- Concerns about Representation and Participation: There is a perception that the representation of persons with disabilities, especially youth, in various government boards and decision-making processes is inadequate. This lack of representation raises concerns about the inclusivity of the policies and the degree to which the voices of youth with disabilities are considered in policy development and implementation.

- Empowerment and Skill Development: Youth with disabilities seek policies that promote empowerment, skill development, and economic opportunities. They express the need for policies that enable them to acquire the necessary skills to participate effectively in the workforce and contribute to society. Skill acquisition centers and training programs are seen as vital components of empowerment.

- Expectations for Inclusive Engagement: Youth with disabilities expect the government to engage them inclusively in the planning, budgeting, and decision-making processes. They stress the importance of being informed about government processes to actively contribute and ensure that policies adequately address their unique needs and circumstances.

- Desire for a Shift in Perception: There is a strong desire among youth with disabilities for a shift in societal perception. They emphasize that persons with disabilities should be viewed as deserving members of society, capable of meaningful contributions, rather than being seen as individuals who require charity or sympathy.

"We need stronger policies that aid in creating more accessible workplaces and environments. We must break away from viewing persons with disabilities as charity recipients and instead foster policies that enable their active participation, not just representation." KII _ Disability Inclusion Expert: CP kids foundation _ female _ Cerebral Palsy_ Lagos.

"There is still a significant gap between policy and implementation. More work needs to be done in this regard. It is a critical period, and persons with disabilities need to make themselves relevant during this time. Collaboration and cooperation are essential for improving implementation." KII _ Government Representatives _ Male _ Physical_ Lagos

Generally, while youth with disabilities acknowledge the existence of policies, they are calling for more meaningful and inclusive engagement, stronger policies, improved representation, and a shift in societal perceptions to better address their needs and facilitate their active participation in various aspects of life, especially in the workforce.

Level of transparency and disability consultation/Inclusion in government planning budgeting policy formulation, review.

Based on the insights gleaned from the findings, the level of transparency and disability consultation/inclusion in government planning, budgeting, and policy formulation/review can be outlined as follows:

- Transparency and Consultation Efforts Exist: There is acknowledgment that the government is making efforts to engage and consult with persons with disabilities during planning, budgeting, and policy formulation processes. While the extent of this engagement might vary, efforts are being made to involve individuals with disabilities in these crucial processes.

  "Well, so far, persons with disabilities who are willing and capable of work are given job opportunities at different levels, but we are mindful not to give them jobs that require a lot of physical work. The current chairman has employed three persons with disabilities as his special advisors." KII _ Government representative _ male _ Bwari area council, Abuja.

- Inclusive Budgeting and Planning for Disabilities: Efforts are being made to ensure that budgeting and planning processes are inclusive of persons with disabilities. Specific attention is given to disability-related considerations, such as the 5% employment quota for people with disabilities and the provision of training programs to equip them with necessary skills.
- Optimism for Inclusive Implementation: Despite acknowledging the existing policy gap, there is optimism regarding the government's approach to implementation, with expectations of greater emphasis on inclusion during policy implementation. This indicates a positive outlook toward the future, anticipating more inclusive policies translating into inclusive practices.
- Representation in Decision-Making: The representation of persons with disabilities in various government boards and decision-making processes is seen as lacking. However, there is recognition that persons with disabilities in senior positions can represent and advocate for their needs in decision-making forums.
- Need for Collaboration and Cooperation: Collaboration and cooperation are emphasized as essential elements for improving the implementation of policies related to disability inclusion. This underscores the importance of working together across stakeholders to bridge the gap between policy and practice.
- Opportunities for Engagement: The study highlights the need for youth with disabilities to equip themselves with knowledge about government processes to enhance their engagement and influence in policy making. This indicates a recognition of the potential for increased involvement and contribution of persons with disabilities in policy-related discussions.

While there are efforts and recognition of the need for inclusive planning, budgeting, and policy formulation/review related to disability inclusion, there is room for improvement in transparency, engagement, and representation of persons with disabilities in these processes. Collaboration and informed engagement are emphasized to enhance the effectiveness and inclusivity of government policies and actions concerning individuals with disabilities.

Existing government policies / schemes / programs related to economic empowerment of persons with disabilities and level of implementation.

Based on the findings provided, here's a summary of the existing government policies, schemes, and programs related to the economic empowerment of persons with disabilities and the observed level of implementation:

- Quotas for Employment: The Nigerian government has established policies that mandate a certain percentage of employees in both public and private organizations to be persons with disabilities. For instance, in Lagos State, a law stipulates that 1% of employees in companies should be persons with disabilities. Additionally, the Nigerian Discrimination Against Persons with Disabilities Act of 2019 calls for a 5% representation. However, there are concerns about the effective implementation of these quotas.

- Skill Acquisition Centers: The government has initiatives in place to equip persons with disabilities with skills through various skill acquisition centers. These programs aim to enhance their employability and economic independence. Notably, most persons with disabilities have acquired skills from these centers, making them more productive in the workforce.

- Special Training Programs: Specialized training programs are being provided to persons with disabilities to empower them with the necessary skills to engage in different Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs). These programs intend to equip them with specific skills that compensate for their physical limitations, making them suitable for various work opportunities.

- Distribution of Machines and Tools: Certain policies have been enacted to support persons with disabilities by distributing electric and manual machines to aid them in their work. This policy is aimed at assisting them in utilizing tools effectively for different job roles and thereby contributing to their economic empowerment.

"Affirmatively, these policies favor persons with disabilities. The problem with Nigeria remains implementation of policies but with the tireless and dedicated efforts of our chairman, we have been able to implement a policy where items such as electric and manual machines are distributed to those who would put it to relevant usage, this is done in every tenure." KII _ Government representative _ Male _ Bwari, Abuja.

- National Commission for Persons with Disability (NCPD): The establishment of the National Commission for Persons with Disability (NCPD) is a significant step by the government. The NCPD focuses on combating discrimination against persons with disabilities and ensuring their inclusion across all sectors. However, there's a need to strengthen the commission's authority and resources for effective enforcement and implementation of policies.

- Ratification of International Agreements: The Nigerian government has ratified international agreements like the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD). This showcases a commitment to upholding the rights of individuals with disabilities and fostering a more inclusive society.

Regulatory framework around entrepreneurship including business registration.

Based on the findings, the regulatory framework around entrepreneurship, including business registration, is influenced by various government policies and legislation, with the aim of promoting the inclusion of persons with disabilities in economic activities. Here are some key points regarding the regulatory framework:

- National Legislation: Nigeria has enacted the Discrimination Against Persons with Disabilities (Prohibition) Act 2018. This legislation includes provisions aimed at protecting the rights of persons with disabilities, including those related to economic empowerment and entrepreneurship. It emphasizes the need for quality inclusive education and mandates a 5% employment quota for people with disabilities in all public organizations.
- Business Registration: While the findings do not explicitly mention the process of business registration, it can be inferred that persons with disabilities, like any other entrepreneurs, would need to adhere to the standard business registration procedures and regulations set by the government. These processes typically involve registering a business with the appropriate government agency, obtaining necessary licenses and permits, and complying with tax regulations.
- Support for Disability-Focused Enterprises: The regulatory framework is expected to provide support for enterprises that focus on providing opportunities for persons with disabilities. For example, the framework may encourage businesses to employ persons with disabilities and provide training programs to equip them with the necessary skills to participate in different Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs).
- Inclusivity and Compliance: The regulatory framework should emphasize inclusivity and compliance with disability-related policies and laws. This includes making workplaces and business environments accessible to persons with disabilities, ensuring that reasonable accommodations are provided, and promoting equal opportunities in entrepreneurship.
- Collaboration for Implementation: Collaboration between government agencies, disability organizations, and the private sector is crucial for effective implementation of the regulatory framework. This collaborative approach can help bridge the gap between policy and practice and promote the economic empowerment of persons with disabilities through entrepreneurship.

Overall, the regulatory framework around entrepreneurship and business registration for persons with disabilities in Nigeria is influenced by national legislation that aims to protect their rights and promote inclusion. While there are policies and laws in place, challenges related to implementation and compliance may exist, highlighting the importance of collaboration and ongoing efforts to ensure meaningful economic empowerment for persons with disabilities in the entrepreneurial sector.

V.   Community Building

The young people with disabilities define a community as a group of individuals who share common values, beliefs, or goals, whether they come from the same culture or geographical area. They stressed the importance of mutual support, inclusivity, and resource sharing within these communities. Communities were seen as places where individuals can learn and grow while living in peace and harmony with one another. Additionally, they emphasized the significance of both personal and communal benefits, such as knowledge acquisition and empowerment opportunities, arising from these social connections.

"Community, in my understanding, is a group of people with like minds, looking out for each other and sharing in each other's happy and sad times." FGD _ Community Building _ Male _ Phydsical_ Bwari, Abuja.

Communities (online and offline) young persons with disabilities engage in and perceive added value.

Based on the insights gathered from the discussion, young persons with disabilities actively engage in various communities, both online and offline, and perceive significant added value from these engagements. Here's a more detailed breakdown of these communities and their perceived benefits:

Offline Communities:

- **Religious Communities:** Many participants highlighted their involvement in religious communities where they regularly attend congregational gatherings, worship services, and religious events. In these settings, they find a supportive and welcoming environment, which contributes to their emotional well-being. Religious communities often offer opportunities for spiritual growth and personal development, allowing individuals to strengthen their faith and connect with others who share their beliefs.
- **Disability Associations:** Several speakers mentioned active participation in disability associations or organizations that cater specifically to persons with disabilities. These associations serve as crucial support networks, providing a sense of belonging and understanding that can be challenging to find elsewhere. Participants often access resources, information, and services related to disability rights, advocacy, and empowerment through these associations. Skill acquisition programs and vocational training are commonly offered, enabling individuals to acquire new skills and improve their employability.

- **Educational Communities**: Educational institutions, such as schools and colleges, play a significant role in creating a sense of community for students with disabilities. Within these settings, students receive academic support, accommodations, and access to assistive technologies to facilitate their learning. These communities also offer opportunities for students to interact with peers, share experiences, and build friendships.
- **Workplace Communities:** Some participants mentioned their engagement in workplace communities where they are employed. These communities provide job opportunities and a supportive work environment that fosters inclusivity and equal treatment. Colleagues often help, contributing to positive work experience.

"My place of work as a teacher has really helped me; they make me feel good whenever I am around them. My boss encourages me to advance my studies. Additionally, I belong to a girls-only group called 'Abinke girl.' We are paired with mentors. I value that group, as it has positively impacted my life." FGD _ Community Building _female _ Lagos.

Online Communities:
Social Media Communities:

Many participants are active in online communities through social media platforms such as WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. These virtual spaces serve as platforms for connecting with peers, sharing personal experiences, and accessing valuable information and resources. Online communities offer a sense of belonging to a wider network of individuals with similar backgrounds and challenges.

Perceived Added Value from Offline and Online Communities:

- **Emotional Support:** Participants highlighted the emotional support they receive from both online and offline communities during challenging times. These communities provide a safe space for individuals to share their feelings, concerns, and triumphs, reducing feelings of isolation.
- **Networking and Information Sharing:** Young persons with disabilities find that communities facilitate networking opportunities, helping them connect with others who can offer advice, guidance, and mentorship. Information sharing within these communities is highly valued, as it allows individuals to stay informed about disability-related resources, services, and events.
- **Skill Acquisition and Empowerment:** Disability associations and educational communities are particularly instrumental in offering skill acquisition programs and empowerment initiatives. These opportunities enable individuals to enhance their skill sets, making them more self-reliant and improving their overall quality of life.
- **Advocacy and Awareness:** Active participation in disability associations allows individuals to engage in advocacy efforts and raise awareness about the challenges faced by persons with disabilities. By working collectively, they can influence policies, promote inclusivity, and challenge stigmas and misconceptions.
- **Sense of Belonging:** Perhaps most importantly, these communities offer a profound sense of belonging and acceptance. Young persons with disabilities appreciate that they can connect with others who share similar experiences, offering a sense of unity and solidarity.

Ways that Young person's With Disabilities connect with their peers/ both with and without disabilities (online and offline)

Based on the findings, young persons with disabilities connect with their peers, both with and without disabilities, through various means, both online and offline. Here are the ways they establish connections:

Offline Connections:

- **Religious Gatherings:** Many young persons with disabilities connect with both with and without disabilities peers in religious communities. Attending religious services, gatherings, and events allows them to build relationships based on shared faith and values.
- **Educational Institutions:** Schools and colleges serve as vital platforms for connecting with peers. These institutions often have inclusive policies and support systems, enabling students with disabilities to interact with their non-disabled counterparts.
- **Workplace:** Young persons with disabilities establish connections with colleagues in their workplaces. Employment provides an opportunity to engage with individuals from diverse backgrounds, fostering professional relationships.

- **Disability Associations:** Being part of disability-specific associations and organizations facilitates connections with peers who share similar experiences and challenges related to disabilities. These associations often host meetings, workshops, and events for networking.
- **Social Gatherings:** Offline social gatherings, such as family events, parties, and community functions, offer opportunities for young persons with disabilities to socialize with both disabled and non-disabled peers.
- **Volunteering and Community Service:** Engaging in volunteer work and community service projects allows individuals to connect with like-minded peers who are passionate about making a positive impact.

Online Connections:
- **Social Media:** Online communities on platforms like WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter serve as hubs for connecting with peers, both with and without disabilities. Participants join disability-related groups and follow accounts that share information and experiences.
- **Online Forums and Support Groups**: Young persons with disabilities often participate in online forums and support groups dedicated to specific disabilities or topics of interest. These platforms provide a safe space for sharing experiences and seeking advice.
- **Messaging Apps:** Messaging apps like WhatsApp are used for one-on-one and group chats. These apps facilitate direct communication with peers and friends, allowing for instant interaction and support.
- **Video Calls:** Video calling features on platforms like WhatsApp and Zoom enable individuals to engage in face-to-face conversations, fostering a deeper connection with peers, especially those at a distance.
- **Email:** Email communication is a common way to connect with peers, share information, and collaborate on projects or initiatives.
- **Online Gaming Communities**: Some young persons with disabilities connect with others through online gaming communities, where they can collaborate, compete, and build friendships based on shared gaming interests.
- **Virtual Events and Webinars:** Attending virtual events, webinars, and conferences related to disability issues allows individuals to connect with experts and peers in their field of interest.
- **Social Inclusion Apps:** There are specific apps designed to promote social inclusion and connect individuals with disabilities to peers. These apps often include features for messaging, event planning, and networking.

In both offline and online settings, young persons with disabilities leverage various avenues to connect with their peers. These connections offer valuable social, emotional, and professional support, allowing them to build meaningful relationships and actively participate in their communities.

The role of online platforms to access peer to peer support.

The findings highlight the significant role of online platforms in facilitating peer-to-peer support for young people with disabilities. Here are the key roles that online platforms play in accessing such support:

- **Communication and Connection:** Online platforms provide channels for individuals to communicate and connect with peers who may share similar experiences and challenges related to disabilities. These platforms break down geographical barriers, allowing individuals to reach out to a diverse range of people.
- **Information Sharing:** Online communities and forums enable the sharing of valuable information related to disability issues, coping strategies, and resources. Participants can seek advice, access educational content, and stay informed about developments in the disability community.
- **Peer Counseling:** Online platforms create opportunities for peer counseling and emotional support. Individuals can openly discuss their feelings, frustrations, and triumphs with peers who understand their unique experiences. This form of support can be especially beneficial during times of emotional distress.
- **Skill and Knowledge Exchange:** Online platforms facilitate skill and knowledge exchange among peers. Participants can share expertise in various areas, such as advocacy, employment, assistive technology, and accessibility. This exchange empowers individuals to learn from one another and develop new skills.
- **Advocacy and Awareness:** Online platforms serve as advocacy tools, allowing individuals to raise awareness about disability-related issues. Participants can collaborate on campaigns, share personal stories, and engage with a broader audience to drive positive change.
- **Event Promotion:** Online communities often promote events, workshops, webinars, and conferences related to disability. These events provide opportunities for individuals to connect with experts and peers who share their interests.
- **Accessibility Features**: Many online platforms prioritize accessibility features to ensure that individuals with disabilities can fully participate. These features may include screen readers, captioning, and accessible design, making it easier for everyone to engage.
- **Privacy and Support Groups:** Online support groups and closed communities offer a safe and private space for individuals to discuss sensitive topics, seek guidance, and share experiences without judgment. Privacy settings can protect the identity of participants, allowing for candid discussions.
- **Peer Networking:** Online platforms allow for the establishment of networks with peers from diverse backgrounds and experiences. These networks can lead to valuable collaborations, mentorship opportunities, and friendships.
- **Resource Sharing:** Participants often share resources such as assistive technology reviews, educational materials, and job opportunities. This resource-sharing fosters empowerment and independence among young persons with disabilities.
- **Accessible Content:** Online platforms can provide content in accessible formats, including text-to-speech features, alt text for images, and video captions. This ensures that individuals with various disabilities can access and engage with the content.

Online platforms play a multifaceted role in providing peer-to-peer support for young persons with disabilities. They serve as hubs for communication, information sharing, emotional support, advocacy, and skill development. These platforms empower individuals to connect, learn, and thrive in a digital age that values inclusivity and accessibility.

Differences in urban/rural and different impairments

- **Community Connection:** Participants, both from urban and rural areas, perceive online platforms as bridges that connect them to a broader community of individuals who share their experiences, offering a sense of belonging and understanding that might be lacking in offline settings.
- **Resource Sharing:** Young people with disabilities view online platforms as valuable spaces for sharing practical information, advice, and resources. Those from rural areas appreciate the ability to access knowledge and support that may not be readily available locally.
- **Emotional Support Networks:** Many participants emphasize the importance of online communities in providing emotional support. They find solace in connecting with peers who can relate to their challenges, offering a safe space to share feelings, frustrations, and triumphs.
- **Advocacy and Awareness:** Participants recognize that online platforms serve as powerful tools for advocacy and raising awareness about disability-related issues. They appreciate the ability to amplify their voices, whether it's advocating for better urban accessibility or addressing specific rural concerns.
- **Skills Development and Education:** Young persons with disabilities value online platforms as learning hubs. Urban participants seek opportunities for skill development and education tailored to their career aspirations, while rural participants find resources for enhancing their livelihoods, such as agricultural skills.
- **Tailored Accessibility Features:** Participants stress the need for online platforms to offer accessible features that cater to their specific impairments. They believe these features should be inclusive, ensuring everyone can engage with the content and community.
- **Local Peer Support:** In rural areas, participants find online platforms invaluable for connecting with peers in their localities. They appreciate the opportunity to form close-knit networks with those facing similar challenges unique to rural life.
- **Cross-Impairment Collaboration:** Participants see online platforms as places where individuals with diverse disabilities can come together. They believe that cross-impairment collaboration fosters creativity and innovative problem-solving, ultimately benefiting the entire disability community.
- **Overcoming Physical Barriers:** Several participants with mobility impairments mentioned how online platforms help them overcome physical barriers they face in both urban and rural environments. These platforms provide a level playing field for engagement.
- **Continuous Learning:** Participants highlight the value of online platforms in promoting continuous learning. They appreciate the ability to stay updated on disability-related developments, strategies, and opportunities, regardless of their geographical location.

In essence, the perceptions of the participants underscore the role of online platforms as essential tools for connection, resource-sharing, emotional support, advocacy, and education, with a focus on addressing specific urban/rural dynamics and diverse impairments. These platforms empower young persons with disabilities to navigate their unique challenges and work collectively toward a more inclusive society.

VI. Research & Evidence-based advocacy agenda

- **Knowledge on rights of persons with disability**: Findings from the data collection exercise indicate that participants demonstrated varying levels of awareness regarding the rights of persons with disabilities. Some participants exhibited a comprehensive understanding of these rights, including access to quality education, employment, healthcare, and freedom from discrimination. However, others had limited knowledge of their rights, and a few participants were entirely unaware of disability rights and policies. In addition, the Key Informant Interviews highlighted barriers to youth engagement, such as fear, negative perceptions, education limitations, and financial challenges, emphasizing the importance of education, mentorship, and fostering self-confidence for meaningful involvement in decision-making processes. These findings underscore the need for improved awareness and education about the rights of persons with disabilities, particularly among young people with disabilities.

  "I am familiar with the right to education for persons with disabilities, the importance of assistive materials, and our right to non-discrimination. I've also experienced the right to preferential treatment in queues". FGD_ Youth Led advocacy_ Female _ Visual impairment _ Lagos.

  "As a person with disability, I have some rights. I know about disability law, the association of the deaf also has laws in their constitution at the national level and I have read significant parts of it". FGD_ Youth Led advocacy _ Female _Hearing impairment/Deaf _ Abuja.

  "I am not aware of any disability rights or policies that ensure access to service". FGD_ Youth Led advocacy_ male _ Visual impairment _ Abuja.

- **Perceptions on disability (models):** The FGD and KII discussions shed light on varied perceptions of disability models. Participants in the FGD demonstrated an evolving perspective, acknowledging the importance of a rights-based approach, inclusive education, and equal opportunities for persons with disabilities. They advocated for increased awareness campaigns to challenge traditional views and stereotypes. Meanwhile, the Key Informant Interviews highlighted the importance of a social model that emphasizes societal barriers as the primary hindrance to inclusion, emphasizing the need to reshape attitudes, policies, and environments to foster a more inclusive society. Overall, there is a growing awareness of the need for a shift from medical models to models that prioritize empowerment, inclusivity, and societal change for persons with disabilities.

- **Knowledge of existing policies and legislation:** knowledge among young persons with disabilities about existing policies and legislation. Some participants exhibited a solid grasp of disability-related laws and policies, recognizing key acts and conventions such as the Disability Act and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD). However, some of the participants expressed limited awareness, with some not being fully informed about the policies in place to safeguard the rights of persons with disabilities. These findings underscore the need for

more extensive awareness campaigns, advocacy efforts, and educational programs to ensure that young individuals with disabilities have access to essential information about the existing policies and legislation designed to protect their rights and promote their inclusion in society.

"I have read the disability acts and the UNCRPD both online and offline." FGD_ Youth Led advocacy_ male _Hearing impairment/Deaf _ Abuja. Abuja.

- **Youth led advocacy**: The findings from the FGD on Youth Led Advocacy indicate varying levels of knowledge and engagement among young persons with disabilities in advocacy efforts. Some participants displayed a solid understanding of their rights, emphasizing key areas like education, employment, and healthcare, while others exhibited limited awareness. The participants acknowledged the importance of involving persons with disabilities in app/software development, inclusive education, and challenging stereotypes, emphasizing the significance of a rights-based approach. However, barriers to youth engagement in advocacy initiatives were identified, including fear, negative perceptions, self-esteem issues, education-related challenges, financial constraints, and a lack of mentorship. Recommendations for enhancing youth participation in leadership and advocacy included increased access to education, awareness campaigns, sensitization, networking, and mentorship. Additionally, the Key Informant Interviews stressed the importance of OPDs being led by persons with disabilities and the need for a balanced representation of both experience and youthful energy in leadership roles to facilitate effective advocacy and representation for young people with disabilities.

- **Advocacy agenda priorities for youth with disabilities: Advocacy** Agenda Priorities for Youth with Disabilities Based on Participants' Perspectives
    1. **Inclusive Entrepreneurship Training Programs:** Advocate for the development and implementation of entrepreneurship training programs that are inclusive and accessible to individuals with disabilities. Encourage training providers to tailor programs to accommodate various disabilities, ensuring equal access and opportunities.
    2. **Financial Support and Accessibility:** Advocate for financial support mechanisms to alleviate the financial barriers faced by youth with disabilities in accessing entrepreneurship training. This could include grants, subsidies, or scholarship programs specifically designed for individuals with disabilities.
    3. **Enhanced Awareness and Communication:** Advocate for improved communication strategies to raise awareness about entrepreneurship training opportunities for youth with disabilities. Encourage the use of accessible communication channels, such as digital platforms with screen reader compatibility and sign language interpretation, to disseminate information effectively.
    4. **Policy Reforms for Inclusion:** Advocate for policy reforms that mandate inclusive practices in entrepreneurship training. Push for policies that emphasize equal access to training opportunities and promote the active involvement of individuals with disabilities in the entrepreneurial ecosystem.

5. Showcasing Success Stories: Advocate for the promotion of success stories and role models among entrepreneurs with disabilities. Highlight these success stories to inspire and motivate other youth with disabilities to pursue entrepreneurship, showcasing the possibilities and potential within the disabled community.

6. **Collaborations and Partnerships:** Advocate for collaborations between government bodies, non-governmental organizations, private sectors, and disability-focused organizations to jointly support entrepreneurship initiatives for youth with disabilities. Encourage partnerships that lead to the development of comprehensive and accessible entrepreneurship programs.

7. **Skills Development and Capacity Building:** Advocate for comprehensive skills development and capacity-building programs that empower youth with disabilities with the necessary skills to excel in entrepreneurship. Promote training in areas like business planning, financial management, and marketing, tailored to the needs and abilities of individuals with disabilities.

8. **Accessible Training Resources:** Advocate for the creation and dissemination of accessible training materials, including digital content and resources, in formats suitable for various disabilities. Encourage the use of inclusive design principles to ensure that training materials are accessible to all, regardless of disability.

- **Youth with disabilities as leads in research:** Youth with disabilities should be at the forefront of research initiatives, bringing their unique perspectives and insights to the table. To achieve this, it's vital to provide them with the necessary training, accessible research tools, and mentorship opportunities. Advocacy should focus on securing dedicated research funding and fostering inclusive collaborations, while dispelling stereotypes and biases that may hinder their active participation. By promoting inclusivity and providing the right support systems, we can enable youth with disabilities to lead in research, contributing to a more diverse and impactful research landscape.
  In summary, enabling youth with disabilities to lead in research requires a multi-faceted approach that emphasizes accessibility, training, funding, mentorship, and the elimination of bias to ensure their valuable contributions to the research community.

- **Capacities/skills of young people with disabilities to conduct research:** Based on the findings, the capacities, and skills of young people with disabilities to conduct research include:
  1. Inclusivity: They emphasize inclusivity in their research approaches, ensuring that research processes consider the diverse experiences and perspectives of individuals with disabilities.
  2. Adaptability: Young researchers with disabilities demonstrate adaptability by using available tools and technologies, making necessary modifications, and seeking support when needed to overcome physical, sensory, or cognitive barriers.
  3. Strong Advocacy Skills: They possess strong advocacy skills, advocating for disability-inclusive research and raising awareness about the importance of their involvement in the research process.
  4. Problem-Solving: These researchers show excellent problem-solving abilities when faced with challenges related to their disabilities, aiming to find innovative solutions to research obstacles.

5. Interdisciplinary Collaboration: They engage in interdisciplinary collaboration, reaching out to experts and professionals in various fields to ensure that their research is comprehensive and well-informed.
6. Use of Assistive Technologies: Young researchers with disabilities are proficient in using assistive technologies, which allow them to access information, collect data, and communicate effectively during their research.
7. Strong Communication Skills: Effective communication is a crucial skill, enabling them to convey their research findings, insights, and recommendations to diverse audiences, including those without disabilities.
8. Resilience: They exhibit resilience when facing adversity or encountering barriers, demonstrating a determination to overcome challenges and continue their research work.
9. Capacity for Independent Work: Many young researchers with disabilities have developed a capacity for independent work, allowing them to conduct research autonomously and efficiently.
10. Research Funding Knowledge: They understand the landscape of research funding opportunities and know how to navigate the application process to secure funding for their projects.

Role of OPDs

Based on the perspectives shared by the participants, the roles and functions of Organizations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs) in promoting the active engagement of youth with disabilities in research, advocacy, and leadership initiatives are as follows:

1. Mentorship and Guidance: Participants view OPDs as valuable mentors and guides who can offer insights and advice based on their own experiences. These organizations help young individuals with disabilities navigate the challenges of research, advocacy, and leadership roles.
2. Advocacy and Representation: The participants see OPDs as instrumental in advocating for the rights and interests of young people with disabilities. These organizations act as strong voices and representatives for the entire community, working to address issues and push for positive change.
3. Awareness and Education: According to the participants, OPDs play a pivotal role in raising awareness about the unique challenges faced by youth with disabilities. They also educate these young individuals about their rights, opportunities, and available resources.
4. Capacity Building: OPDs are recognized for their efforts in providing training and capacity-building programs. These programs empower young people with disabilities by enhancing their skills and knowledge, preparing them for effective participation in research and advocacy activities.
5. Collaboration and Networking: Participants emphasize the importance of collaboration and networking facilitated by OPDs. These organizations create opportunities for young individuals to connect with peers and external stakeholders. This fosters partnerships that drive research and advocacy initiatives forward.
6. Resource Mobilization: The participants acknowledge that OPDs are instrumental in mobilizing resources, including financial support. This resource mobilization helps fund research and advocacy projects led by young people with disabilities.

7. Influencing Policy: According to the participants, OPDs work to influence policies and guidelines to ensure they are inclusive and responsive to the needs and rights of young individuals with disabilities engaged in research and advocacy.

8. Creating Inclusive Spaces: Participants appreciate that OPDs create inclusive spaces where young people with disabilities can openly share their research findings, experiences, and challenges. This inclusivity fosters a sense of belonging within the research and advocacy communities.

9. Acknowledging Achievements: OPDs are seen as organizations that acknowledge and celebrate the accomplishments and contributions of young researchers and advocates with disabilities. This recognition helps showcase these individuals as role models for others.

10. Disseminating Information: Participants note that OPDs serve as important information hubs, disseminating knowledge about research opportunities, advocacy campaigns, and relevant policies. This ensures that young individuals with disabilities have access to critical information.

In conclusion, the participants' perspectives underscore the multifaceted roles of Organizations of Persons with Disabilities in supporting and empowering youth with disabilities to actively engage in research, advocacy, and leadership endeavors. OPDs serve as mentors, advocates, educators, and facilitators, creating inclusive environments and equipping young individuals with the tools they need to become active participants in these important areas.

VII.   Waged Employment

Knowledge, Attitudes, Experiences, and Practices of Different Stakeholders on Waged/Formal Employment of Youth with Disabilities:

Disabilities Inclusion Expert: The Disabilities Inclusion Expert emphasizes the role of attitudes and mindsets alongside skills in facilitating waged employment for youth with disabilities. They emphasize the significance of recognizing vulnerabilities that can lead individuals with disabilities to question their employability, extending the narrative beyond mere skills assessment. The expert advocates for a transformative shift in the perceptions held by both individuals with disabilities and employers. They spotlight the glaring lack of awareness and understanding exhibited by employers, who may often view individuals with disabilities through a charitable lens rather than as valuable contributors to the workforce.

Drawing from their experiences, the Disabilities Inclusion Expert highlights the various challenges and experiences of individuals with disabilities that contribute to feelings of vulnerability and job-seeking reluctance. These real-life experiences offer a deeper understanding of the complex dynamics at play.

"Additionally, there's a need to broaden the aspirations of people with disabilities. Many tend to pursue specific courses or careers based on societal attitudes and expectations, which may not align with their true interests and abilities. This can limit their options and potential." KII _ Disability inclusion expert _ Lagos

KII HR/HR Managers: In the realm of knowledge, HR Managers are acutely aware of their key role in shaping disability-inclusive workplaces and preparing youth with disabilities for employment. They acknowledge their responsibilities in providing guidance and motivation to enable individuals with disabilities to follow their

passions and realize their career aspirations. Within the context of attitudes, HR Managers emphasize the critical importance of determination and passion in the journey of individuals with disabilities. Their personal experiences highlight the resilience required to navigate challenges, including inaccessible educational environments and adverse weather conditions. These narratives serve as a testament to the determination necessary for success.

From their experiences, HR Managers underline the significance of being indispensable and delivering outstanding job performance to secure employment opportunities. They draw attention to the need for employers to foster awareness, understanding, and accommodation for people with disabilities within the workforce, recognizing the importance of fair competition and equal opportunities.

"The journey for a person with a disability is not easy. To attain this level, it required determination, consistency, and a continuous struggle to pursue one's passion and goals. Determination and passion have been my driving forces in reaching this point." KII_ HR Manager_ female _ Abuja.

Private Sector Actors: In this perspective, individuals from the private sector discuss their knowledge of employment opportunities for persons with disabilities. They highlight two key areas: biases and the absence of appropriate educational tools. They point out that there's a significant problem with biases where people often underestimate the abilities of those with disabilities, despite these individuals having substantial potential. Moreover, they address the issue of insufficient educational tools, which can hinder the learning process for people with disabilities. These individuals also share their experiences related to disability inclusion initiatives. For instance, they mention working on projects aimed at enhancing accessibility for individuals with disabilities, particularly in the context of exams. Through these experiences, they stress the importance of raising awareness about disability-related issues and the need for investment in tools and accommodations to support individuals with disabilities effectively.

Light For the World (LFTW) Staff: In this perspective, staff members from the organization LFTW discuss the opportunities available for young people with disabilities in the realm of waged employment, with a particular emphasis on the significance of digital skills. He expresses concerns related to the financial challenges and issues of accessibility that young individuals with disabilities might face once they graduate. He shed light on the absence of a strong career-oriented culture and the need for mentorship and guidance for these young graduates. To address these challenges, he recommends the implementation of empowerment programs tailored to these individuals, providing them with training in digital skills. Additionally, he proposes establishing partnerships with other organizations to better support students with disabilities.

These insights collectively offer a comprehensive understanding of the obstacles and prospects in the pursuit of more inclusive workplaces and the fulfillment of career aspirations for young individuals with disabilities.

"The primary challenge lies in the absence of knowledge about effectively integrating individuals with disabilities into the workplace. While numerous companies exist, a significant gap exists in their understanding of accommodating persons with disabilities, coupled with uncertainty about the capabilities of employees with disabilities." KII_ Light For the World (LFTW) Staff _ Male _ Deaf.

The roles of different participants in enhancing access to waged employment for youth with disabilities.

Disabilities Inclusion Expert:

The expert stresses the importance of attitudes and mindsets in supporting youth with disabilities in waged employment. They also emphasize understanding the experiences of individuals with disabilities, which often contribute to feelings of vulnerability and self-doubt regarding job opportunities. The expert advocates for addressing attitudes, awareness, communication skills, and aspirations to create effective programs and opportunities for people with disabilities.

HR/HR Managers:

HR managers play a significant role in creating disability-inclusive workplaces and preparing young people with disabilities for work. They emphasize setting an example and encouraging individuals with disabilities to pursue their passions and build their capacity for desired career paths. They also focus on fair competition and advocating for promotions based on merit.

National Business and Disability Networks:

- Advocacy and Awareness: These networks advocate for the rights and inclusion of individuals with disabilities in the workforce. They raise awareness among employers about the benefits of hiring individuals with disabilities, such as diverse perspectives, skills, and talents.
- Policy Development: They often contribute to the development and promotion of policies and regulations that support disability inclusion in the workplace. This may include advocating for anti-discrimination laws and accessibility standards.
- Resource Sharing: National Business and Disability Networks provide resources and best practices to employers on how to create inclusive hiring processes and workplace environments. They offer guidance on reasonable accommodations, accessible technologies, and disability etiquette.
- Training and Education: These networks offer training programs and workshops to educate employers and employees about disability-related issues. This includes disability awareness training, which helps reduce bias and stereotypes.
- Connecting Employers with Talent: They serve as a bridge between employers and individuals with disabilities seeking employment. By facilitating connections, they help match qualified candidates with job opportunities.
- Promoting Inclusive Recruitment: National Business and Disability Networks encourage employers to adopt inclusive recruitment practices, such as using accessible job postings, offering accessible interview formats, and conducting outreach to disability-focused organizations.
- Monitoring and Reporting: They may monitor progress and collect data on disability inclusion in the workplace. This data helps identify areas for improvement and measure the impact of inclusion efforts.
- Peer Learning and Collaboration: These networks create opportunities for employers to share their experiences and learn from one another. Collaboration between companies can lead to innovative approaches to disability inclusion.

- Celebrating Success: They recognize and celebrate companies that have demonstrated exemplary practices in disability inclusion. This recognition encourages other organizations to follow suit.
- Creating a Supportive Ecosystem: National Business and Disability Networks foster a supportive ecosystem that encourages collaboration among businesses, government agencies, disability advocacy groups, and educational institutions to create a more inclusive workforce.

Barriers faced by youth with disabilities in accessing waged employment.

"One of my primary concerns for these students revolves around the issue of 'Acceptance,' as I mentioned earlier. Many of them may face challenges in being accepted due to their appearance or physical structure, despite having the necessary skills and capabilities to excel. This lack of acceptance is a significant worry for me when it comes to these individuals." KII _ Leader of Student Association _ male _ Bwari, Abuja.

Here are the key barriers faced by youth with disabilities in accessing waged employment:

- **Attitudinal Barriers:** Many youths with disabilities face negative attitudes and biases from both employers and society, which can impact their confidence and deter them from applying for jobs. Employers may lack awareness and understanding of disabilities, viewing individuals with disabilities as charity cases rather than productive employees.
- **Communication Skills Gap:** Effective communication skills are crucial for expressing needs and accessing opportunities, but many youths with disabilities lack these skills, which can hinder their ability to secure employment.
- **Limited Aspirations:** Societal attitudes and expectations can limit the aspirations of youth with disabilities, pushing them towards certain courses or careers that may not align with their true interests and abilities.
- **Inadequate Skills and Tools:** Many youths with disabilities lack access to proper tools, equipment, and assistive technologies necessary to develop skills and participate effectively in certain industries or roles.
- **Bias in Hiring and Education:** Bias against individuals with disabilities in the hiring process and limited provisions for them in educational settings can deter them from pursuing certain career paths or gaining appropriate skills.
- **Financial and Accessibility Barriers:** Economic challenges and lack of accessibility, including physical barriers in the environment, can impede the ability of youth with disabilities to participate fully in the workforce.
- **Limited Employment Opportunities**: The scarcity of job opportunities, especially white-collar jobs, can hinder the ability of youth with disabilities to secure waged employment.
- **Fear of Discrimination:** Fear of discrimination and concerns about workplace acceptance and accommodation can deter youth with disabilities from seeking employment.
- **Lack of Knowledge and Awareness:** Insufficient knowledge and awareness about disability inclusion, rights, and available support systems among employers and society at large contribute to barriers faced by youth with disabilities in accessing waged employment.

- **Educational Gaps:** Educational gaps, including limited knowledge on CV writing, motivation letters, and essential job-seeking skills, can hinder the transition of youth with disabilities from education to the world of work.

Barriers faced by employers/ HR managers in recruiting persons with disabilities.

Here are the barriers faced by employers/HR managers in recruiting persons with disabilities:

- **Attitudinal and Perceptual Barriers:** People with disabilities may doubt their ability to find and retain jobs due to societal attitudes and stereotypes. Employers may lack awareness and understanding of disabilities, perceiving individuals with disabilities as charity cases rather than productive employees.
- **Communication Skills:** Effective communication is crucial, but many individuals with disabilities may lack these skills, hindering their ability to confidently express their needs and access opportunities.
- **Limited Aspirations**: Societal attitudes and expectations may limit the career options pursued by people with disabilities, restricting their potential and opportunities.
- Skill Gaps:
- Lack of certain skills, including communication skills, can pose a significant barrier to employment for individuals with disabilities.
- **Financial Barriers:** High costs of assistive technologies and tools required by individuals with disabilities may pose financial challenges, limiting their productivity and employability.
- **Limited Awareness and Knowledge:** Employers and HR managers may lack knowledge about how to effectively hire and work with people with disabilities, including understanding accommodations and support needed.
- **Limited Sourcing Channels**: Limited use of diverse sourcing channels for recruiting applicants with disabilities can restrict access to a diverse pool of candidates.
- **Job Seeker Attitudes:** Job seekers with disabilities may face challenges due to societal biases and may struggle to be perceived as capable and competent candidates.
- **Lack of Interventions and Opportunities:** The absence of effective interventions and opportunities tailored to the needs of job seekers with disabilities can impede their successful integration into the workforce.
- **Policy Implementation Challenges**: Inconsistent implementation of policies related to disability inclusion, such as the 5% employment allocation for persons with disabilities, can hinder progress in creating inclusive workplaces.

What works/ what does not work? With attention for employability training, work experience placements/ internships, training and coaching for employers.

Summary of what works and what does not work for supporting young people with disabilities in relation to waged employment, based on the provided responses:

What Works:

- Empowerment Programs: Specialized training and empowerment programs, particularly focused on digital skills, are considered effective in preparing individuals with disabilities for waged employment. These programs can enhance their capabilities and employability.
- Awareness and Sensitization: Creating awareness among employers and the public about the abilities of persons with disabilities, challenging biases and stigmas, is seen as crucial for improving their employment opportunities.
- Inclusive Hiring and Workplace Practices: Engaging employers to create an inclusive hiring process and workplace, accommodating persons with disabilities, and offering the necessary tools and resources are essential for successful employment.
- Partnerships and Collaborations: Collaborations between organizations, NGOs, educational institutions, and individuals can significantly contribute to providing support, scholarships, gadgets, and opportunities for persons with disabilities.
- Career Guidance and Mentorship: Providing career guidance, mentorship, and a supportive community can help individuals with disabilities navigate their career paths, access information, and realize their aspirations.

What Does Not Work:

- Lack of Accessibility and Accommodations: The absence of accessible environments, technologies, and accommodations in the workplace can hinder the engagement and productivity of persons with disabilities in waged employment.
- Bias and Discrimination: Prejudices, biases, and discrimination against persons with disabilities can significantly impact their attitude towards waged employment and hinder their opportunities.
- Ineffective Internship Programs: Traditional internship programs might not be suitable for graduates with disabilities. Adaptations to the internship approach, considering their unique needs and potential, may be required to ensure a successful transition to employment.
- Lack of Career Culture: Insufficient emphasis on developing a strong career culture among youth with disabilities can lead to uncertainty about career paths and inadequate preparation for the world of work.
- Limited Knowledge and Skills: Insufficient knowledge, skills, and access to education or appropriate training, particularly in critical areas like communication and technology, can restrict the employability of persons with disabilities.

Lesson Learned

The insights offer several lessons and recommendations related to supporting young people with disabilities in achieving waged employment and addressing the challenges they face. Here are some key takeaways:

- Attitudes and Mindsets Matter: The attitudes and mindsets of both individuals with disabilities and employers play a significant role in the employment process. People with disabilities may doubt their abilities due to past experiences, while employers may lack awareness and may perceive them as charity cases. Addressing these attitudes is crucial.

- Communication Skills Are Vital: Effective communication skills, including the ability to express one's needs and use technology, are essential for accessing job opportunities. Many individuals with disabilities may lack these skills and need support to develop them.
- Broaden Aspirations: It's important to encourage people with disabilities to pursue careers and courses based on their true interests and abilities rather than societal expectations. This can expand their options and potential for waged employment.
- Addressing Lack of Awareness: Many employers lack knowledge about how to hire and work effectively with people with disabilities. Education and awareness programs for employers can help bridge this gap.
- Support and Advocacy: HR managers can play a crucial role in championing disability inclusion in their organizations. This includes advocating against stigmatization and discrimination and ensuring that fair competition and hard work are recognized.
- Sourcing Applicants with Disabilities: Employers use various channels, including social media and conventional media, to inform the public about job openings. Encouraging diversity and inclusion in hiring practices is essential.
- Youth Attitudes Toward Waged Employment: Attitudes among young job seekers with disabilities can vary widely. It's important to encourage them to explore various opportunities, including entrepreneurship and SMEs, rather than solely relying on white-collar jobs.
- Challenges in Sourcing Applicants with Disabilities: Some of the challenges faced in reaching out to job seekers with disabilities include biases, lack of proper tools for education, and the expense of assistive technology.
- Role of National Business and Disability Networks: These networks play a vital role in sensitizing organizations and individuals to the importance of disability inclusion. However, there is a need for more awareness and improvement in their performance.
- Sustainability of Inclusive Workplaces: Efforts to drive inclusive workplaces and waged employment need to be sustained. Policies should evolve to match innovations in the field, and conversations about inclusion should continue.
- Opportunities for Waged Employment: There are numerous opportunities for young people with disabilities in the waged employment sector, especially if they receive proper training and support.
- Barriers Faced by Young People with Disabilities: The key barriers include a lack of knowledge on how to work with people with disabilities, doubts about their capacity, and a lack of acceptance due to appearance or physical structure.
- Solutions to Barriers: Solutions include introducing employers to the abilities of people with disabilities, creating accessible environments, and organizing career fairs for interaction between employers and job seekers with disabilities.
- Best Practices in Employability Training: Providing specialized training tailored to the unique needs of students with disabilities, offering internships that resemble employment, and fostering partnerships with organizations are some best practices.
- Engaging Youth in Research and Advocacy: Involving young persons with disabilities in research and advocacy efforts and working closely with umbrella organizations for the disability community are effective approaches.

- Barriers to Entering Leadership Positions: Barriers include reluctance among older leaders to work with young graduates with disabilities and a lack of career culture and guidance for young people with disabilities.
- Expectations and Fears for Transition to the World of Work: Fears include financial difficulties and accessibility issues, while support can be provided through community, mentorship, and information on workshops and opportunities.
- Support for Realizing Dreams: Young people with disabilities can be better supported through mentorship, community, and access to information and opportunities, along with initiatives that empower them with skills and resources.
- These insights emphasize the importance of addressing not only practical barriers but also attitudinal and awareness-related challenges to create a more inclusive and supportive environment for young people with disabilities seeking waged employment.

Entrepreneurship and Disabilities

Based on the responses of the participants, here are the factors that influence entrepreneurship from their perspective:

- Access to Training: Access to skills and entrepreneurship training is seen as a significant factor influencing entrepreneurship. Participants value the knowledge and skills gained through training programs.
- Highlights of Training: Participants mentioned that the quality and content of the training are vital factors. They appreciate training that covers relevant topics and provides practical knowledge.
- Follow-Up and Support: The presence or absence of follow-up and support after training is emphasized. Participants noted that ongoing support can significantly impact their ability to establish and sustain businesses.
- Resources and Tools: Access to necessary resources and tools, such as equipment or capital, is considered crucial for entrepreneurship.
- Inclusive Policies: Participants highlighted the importance of inclusive policies and initiatives that promote equal opportunities for individuals with disabilities. Inclusive policies can encourage entrepreneurship in this group.
- Financial Support: Access to financial support or loans is recognized as a critical factor in starting and growing a business. Lack of access to funding is viewed as a barrier to entrepreneurship.
- Access transformation: Access to information about entrepreneurship opportunities, grants, and programs is considered essential. Communication channels and formats accessible to people with disabilities are emphasized.
- Changing Mindsets and Perceptions: Changing societal perceptions and attitudes towards people with disabilities in entrepreneurship is mentioned. Participants believe that recognizing their capabilities and potential can promote entrepreneurship in this group.

- Role Models: The presence of successful entrepreneurs with disabilities as role models is seen as inspiring and motivating. Participants appreciate having individuals to look up to in their entrepreneurial journeys.
- Motivation and Self-Belief: Personal motivation and self-confidence are acknowledged as crucial factors in entrepreneurship. Belief in one's ability to succeed is highlighted.
- Partnerships and Collaborations: Participants recognize the importance of partnering with organizations, government agencies, and stakeholders to create a supportive ecosystem for entrepreneurs with disabilities.

Access to Skills Training: Entrepreneurship

Participants in various focus group discussions and interviews shared insights on the accessibility of entrepreneurship training for people with disabilities. Many highlighted the limited awareness of available programs and communication barriers that hindered their access to training opportunities. While some had received training from organizations such as the Ministry of Wealth Creation Lagos State, Mokota Foundation, and Sight Savers, they stressed the importance of ongoing support, mentorship, and the provision of tools and capital for starting businesses. Participants emphasize the challenges faced by persons with disabilities, including the need for accessible venues and transportation, funding constraints, and societal misconceptions. Their recommendations encompassed creating an inclusive environment, adopting hybrid training approaches, nurturing role models, implementing inclusive policies, improving communication channels, and fostering partnerships among stakeholders to address these multifaceted challenges and ensure equal opportunities for aspiring entrepreneurs with disabilities.

"I attended catering training from Sight Savers Foundation in 2021 at Maitama, Abuja, and it took three months for training; they provided me with a transport allowance." FGD _ Young Female with Disabilities/Deaf _ Abuja

"We were taught different skills like catering, computer repairs, and I.C.T. Our major challenge was mobility as we were attending daily, and as a person in a wheelchair, most times I got there almost at the end of training. So there really wasn't decent accommodation, and even the building being used wasn't accessible for persons on wheelchairs." FGD _ Access to work _ Physical _ Lagos

Leading to Establishment of Enterprise/Business

While some participants managed to transition into establishing businesses, many faced impediments. A recurring challenge was the lack of capital/start-up kits and substantial follow-up support post-training, inhibiting the transformation of training into actual ventures.

"Yes, he makes beads and bags in Abuja." FGD _ Parent/Caregiver _ Female _ Bwari, Abuja.

"After the training I kick started my business with the help of the capital I received." FGD _ Access to work _ Lagos

Disability Inclusion Expert

From the perspective of a Disability Inclusion Expert, in the realm of entrepreneurship, our goal was to enhance support for young women and men with disabilities. Often, individuals with disabilities enter the world of entrepreneurship out of necessity rather than choice. Our primary approach involves providing tailored entrepreneurship classes and programs, equipping them with the knowledge and confidence needed for success, which is of utmost importance.

Moreover, there is a significant gap in the education system when it comes to teaching essential business skills, particularly for those with disabilities. Additionally, addressing systemic barriers such as high business costs, limited access to funding, and challenges in reaching customers is crucial. To truly empower individuals with disabilities in their entrepreneurial endeavors, we must work towards eliminating these obstacles and establishing more inclusive policies and infrastructure.

Challenges for Aspiring Entrepreneurs, Especially People with Disabilities:

- Funds: Acquiring sufficient funds to start a business is a major hurdle. Limited access to loans due to stringent banking requirements and prejudiced attitudes towards disability further exacerbates this challenge.
- Knowledge and Skill Gap: Many entrepreneurs, including those with disabilities, face a gap between their proposed ideas on paper and the practical realities of implementing them. Practical knowledge and hands-on skills are crucial for navigating challenges effectively.
- Community and Self-Perception: Societal and self-perceived limitations hinder entrepreneurship. Discrimination and societal beliefs that people with disabilities cannot excel in business create barriers to entry and success.
- Policy and Accessibility Issues: Existing policies often do not favor entrepreneurs with disabilities, particularly concerning accessible transportation and reasonable accommodations. The lack of inclusivity amplifies the cost of doing business for individuals with disabilities.

Possible Solutions:

- Changing Perceptions: Showcasing successful entrepreneurs with disabilities as role models can shift societal attitudes, demonstrating that individuals with disabilities are capable entrepreneurs. This could be achieved through media campaigns and highlighting success stories.
- Empowerment and Motivation: Providing mentorship and motivational platforms for aspiring entrepreneurs with disabilities can instill confidence and encourage them to pursue their entrepreneurial dreams.
- Accessible Information: Ensuring that information about entrepreneurship and opportunities is disseminated in accessible formats can bridge the knowledge gap and enable aspiring entrepreneurs to make informed decisions.
- Advocacy for Inclusive Policies: Advocacy for policies that prioritize accessibility and financial support for entrepreneurs with disabilities is crucial. This may include advocating for accessible transportation,

reasonable accommodations, and grants that address the unique challenges faced by entrepreneurs with disabilities.

Recommendations for Future Training

The participants in the focus group discussions and interviews offered several valuable recommendations for future entrepreneurship training programs:

- Increase Startup Capital: Many participants stressed the need for higher startup capital, considering the rising costs of materials and resources required for businesses.
- Enhance Safety Measures: Safety was a paramount concern, with a strong recommendation to prioritize the use of safety guards and protective measures during training sessions to ensure the well-being of participants.
- Promote Inclusivity: To foster inclusivity, participants urged the organizers to design programs that are accessible to all, considering various disabilities. This includes accessible venues, communication channels, and materials.
- Mentorship and Follow-Up: Participants emphasized the importance of mentorship and continuous follow-up after training to provide guidance and support for participants as they embark on their entrepreneurial journeys.
- Financial Support: Access to financial support and loans with flexible terms and conditions was identified as crucial for entrepreneurs with disabilities enabling them to scale their businesses.
- Role Models: The introduction of successful entrepreneurs with disabilities as role models was proposed to inspire and motivate aspiring entrepreneurs within the disability community.
- Awareness and Communication: Creating awareness about available entrepreneurship programs and improving communication channels to reach individuals with disabilities was suggested to ensure they are informed about opportunities.
- Accessible Training Materials: Providing accessible training materials, including digital resources and materials compatible with assistive technologies, was deemed essential.
- Policy Reforms: Participants called for policy reforms that address the unique challenges faced by entrepreneurs with disabilities, such as reducing the extra costs incurred due to disability-related needs.
- Partnerships: Collaborative efforts among stakeholders, including government bodies, NGOs, and private organizations, were encouraged to pool resources, expertise, and support for entrepreneurship training and opportunities.

These recommendations collectively aim to create an inclusive and supportive environment for future entrepreneurship training, enabling individuals with disabilities to overcome barriers and pursue their entrepreneurial aspirations successfully.

"Personally, I'd prefer a hybrid training approach, combining both online and in-person sessions. For instance, having three days of in-person training and two days of online sessions, with occasional provision of meals". FGD _ Access to work_ Lagos.

"I will really recommend an increase in the startup capital as the cost of materials is on the rise," and "I would solely recommend the use of safety guards and protective measures if such training is to occur again in the future." FGD _ Access to work _ Abuja.

Access to Employability Training

The participants discussed their access to employability training, revealing varying levels of participation. While some had accessed training through the Lagos State Employment Trust Fund (LSCTF), NDLEA, Project Enable, Sight saver etc., others had limited access. A few shared their experiences during work placements, and some mentioned finding waged jobs afterward. However, not all participants transitioned to paid employment directly.

"Certainly, following the training, they assigned mentors to us, and for those who met the qualifications, they were offered employment opportunities." FGD _ Young female with disabilities _ Physical _ Bwari, Abuja.

Leading to a Waged Job

The participants in the employability training discussions highlighted their experiences related to leading to a waged job. They mentioned varying levels of success, with some individuals finding waged employment after completing their training programs, while others faced challenges in this regard. The discussions also touched upon issues such as the lack of proper support during work placements and the need for improved inclusion of people with disabilities in the workforce.

Recommendations for Future Employability Training

The participants in the employability training discussions emphasized the need for improved support and accessibility in future training programs. They recommended the provision of proper information dissemination, transport stipends, and accessible venues to make training more inclusive for people with disabilities. Additionally, participants called for increased collaboration with organizations supporting individuals with disabilities and the inclusion of persons with disabilities in decision-making bodies for better policy formulation.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the participants' responses shed light on the complex landscape of access to entrepreneurship training, employability training, and the pursuit of waged jobs for individuals with disabilities. These discussions highlighted both the potential opportunities and persistent challenges faced by this demographic. It is evident that while some individuals have found success in entrepreneurship and waged employment, many others encounter barriers related to funding, societal perceptions, lack of information, and inaccessible infrastructure.

4. Challenges during data collection

1. Some participants in the Focused Group Discussions (FGDs) did not adhere to the scheduled time, making it difficult to conclude the sessions within the specified timeframe.

2. In rural areas, it was observed that certain organizations, such as research institutes and disabilities inclusion experts, were not present as expected.
3. Securing appointments with key urban stakeholders, such as the National Business and Disability Network representative secretariat, proved to be challenging. Efforts to arrange virtual interviews were also unsuccessful.
4. Language comprehension was a challenge in the rural setting of Abuja, particularly as some participants did not have a proficient understanding of English. An interpreter had to be sourced to facilitate effective communication during the interviews.
5. FGD participants expressed concerns about the lengthy duration of the 2-hour interviews, as it often required them to take time off from their businesses or work to participate.
6. A notable challenge was encountered with the inclusion of elderly individuals with disabilities who expressed a strong desire to participate in the sessions, particularly in the rural setting.
7. Securing female respondents for the FGDs posed a significant challenge, especially within the rural setting, highlighting gender disparity in participation.
8. The removal of fuel subsidies in Nigeria led to increased logistic costs, resulting in some participants requesting transport allowances upfront to attend the sessions. Unfortunately, this led to a decrease in overall participant attendance.

5. Lessons Learned from the Data Collection:

1. Striking a balance in the duration of FGDs is essential to ensure meaningful participation, particularly by addressing concerns about extended sessions and potential disruptions to participants' daily routines.
2. Conducting a thorough assessment of the intended survey locations, particularly in rural settings, is imperative to confirm the presence of listed organizations, avoiding assumptions that may lead to inaccuracies.
3. The challenge of recruiting female participants in certain settings emphasizes the significance of promoting gender diversity and the need for tailored recruitment strategies to ensure balanced representation.
4. The removal of fuel subsidies impacted logistic costs. CMU learned the importance of budgeting for such unforeseen changes and exploring alternative transportation arrangements to mitigate participant dropouts due to financial constraints.

5. Key recommendations

1. **Promote Awareness and Education:**
   - Launch Comprehensive Campaigns: Initiate extensive awareness campaigns at state and federal levels to dispel misconceptions about individuals with disabilities. These campaigns

should emphasize the capabilities and potential of youth with disabilities, fostering a positive narrative.

- Incorporate Inclusive Education: Integrate inclusive education programs into school curricula to cultivate understanding and acceptance from an early age. Collaborate with educational institutions to ensure that diverse abilities are considered in teaching methodologies.

2. **Enhance Employment Opportunities:**
   - Advocate for Inclusive Hiring Practices: Advocate for inclusive hiring practices in both public and private sectors, ensuring equal employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities. Encourage the creation of accessible and dignified job opportunities.
   - Adaptive Skill Development: Implement adaptive skill development programs that align with the evolving skill sets of individuals with disabilities. Collaborate with industries to identify emerging opportunities and tailor training accordingly.

3. **Empower Youth with Disabilities:**
   - Digital Skills Empowerment Initiatives: Develop comprehensive empowerment programs focusing on digital skills. Equip youth with disabilities to participate in the digital economy, providing resources, training, and mentorship.
   - Establish Mentorship Networks: Create mentorship networks connecting young individuals with disabilities to successful mentors who share similar experiences. These networks can provide guidance and support throughout their personal and professional journeys.

4. **Financial Support:**
   - Tailored Scholarships and Grants: Establish targeted scholarships, grants, and financial assistance programs tailored to the specific needs of individuals with disabilities. Collaborate with educational institutions to ensure financial support for academic success.
   - Accessibility Fund for Materials: Create an accessibility fund dedicated to ensuring the availability of educational materials and assistive technologies. This fund can support the development and distribution of accessible materials.

5. **Accessible Materials and Technology:**
   - Technology Tailoring: Ensure that modern gadgets and materials are universally accessible. Collaborate with technology developers to tailor devices and tools to meet the specific needs of individuals with disabilities, fostering an inclusive learning environment.
   - Assistive Technology Integration: Implement initiatives that provide widespread access to assistive technologies, enhancing educational experiences and skill development for individuals with disabilities.

6. **Inclusive Initiatives:**

- Collaborative Partnerships: Foster collaborative partnerships with civil organizations, NGOs, and educational institutions to create comprehensive support systems. Pool resources, expertise, and support for holistic youth development.
- Universal Design in Programs: Design and implement programs with a universal approach, accommodating the diverse needs of youth with disabilities. Ensure that initiatives are accessible and inclusive from planning to execution.

7. **Government Policy Reforms:**
   - Inclusive Policies: Advocate for and actively participate in the development of inclusive policies that address the unique challenges faced by individuals with disabilities. Ensure that these policies promote equal opportunities and remove barriers to inclusion.
   - Government Incentives: Introduce incentives for organizations and businesses that actively contribute to the employment and empowerment of individuals with disabilities. Recognize and reward efforts that foster inclusivity.

6. Conclusion:

Nigeria, celebrated for its rich cultural diversity, accommodates a significant population of individuals facing diverse disabilities. The World Health Organization estimates that around 29 million Nigerians grapple with disabilities, though this likely underrepresents the true extent of the challenge. The obstacles encountered by young individuals with disabilities are formidable, with a substantial portion experiencing exclusion from education, employment, or training (NEET) and earning only 49% of their counterparts without disabilities.

Despite these daunting challenges, the determination of young persons with disabilities in Nigeria to secure dignified employment opportunities reflective of their capabilities is evident. However, they confront a myriad of challenges, ranging from societal attitudes to limitations in governmental implementation efforts. This research seeks to comprehensively analyze the contextual factors and barriers hindering their access to fulfilling job opportunities, contributing to the broader inclusion of young persons with disabilities in the Nigerian workforce.

Through addressing these challenges, this study aspires to foster an environment that is not only equitable but also empowering for all individuals, ensuring that every youth, regardless of their abilities, can thrive in Nigeria's complex socio-cultural and economic landscape. By shedding light on the nuanced experiences of young persons with disabilities and advocating for meaningful change, this research aims to contribute to a more inclusive and compassionate society that recognizes and harnesses the unique strengths of every individual, fostering a future where diversity is not only accepted but celebrated.