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BASELINE SURVEY AND RAPID GENDER ASSESSMENT REPORT

NIGERIA

12 MARCH 2025

Submitted to

Light for the World

by

Participatory Development Associates



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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

ADF	African Disability Forum
BDS	Business Development Service
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CRPD	Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
CWW	Crosswise Works
DIA	Disability Inclusion Advisor
DIF	Disability Inclusion Facilitator
D&FW	Dignified and Fulfilling Work
ERC	Ethical Review Committee
FCT	Federal Capital Territory
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
FOREX	Foreign Exchange
JONAPWD	Joint National Association of Persons with Disabilities
KII	Key Informant Interview
LFTW	Light for the World
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MPI	Multidimensional Poverty Index
MPRA	Munich Personal RePEc Archive
NBS	National Bureau of Statistics
NGP	National Gender Policy
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
OPD	Organisation of Persons with Disabilities
PDA	Participatory Development Associates
PLAC	Policy and Legal Advocacy Centre
PWDs	Persons with Disabilities
RGA	Rapid Gender Assessment
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training



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UN Women in Nigeria	United Nations Women in Nigeria
WCW	We Can Work
WHO	World Health Organization



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Our gratitude also extends to the Young Africa Works partners, notably WOFAN and Jobberman, as well as the We Can Work Programme team in Nigeria, led by Mr. Adetunde Ademefun. We appreciate their significant contributions, especially through their fieldwork observations and unwavering support.



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report presents the findings from the baseline assessment of the We Can Work (WCW) programme in Nigeria. The WCW programme, implemented by Light for the World (LFTW) in partnership with the Mastercard Foundation, is a regional initiative aimed at improving the lives of at least 1,000,000 young women and men with disabilities across seven African countries by facilitating their access to dignified and fulfilling employment. The programme focuses on five key areas: fostering positive change, promoting entrepreneurship, empowering youth participation in decision-making, and advancing disability inclusion. In Nigeria, the baseline survey and Rapid Gender Assessment (RGA) serve as the foundation for tracking progress, setting benchmarks, and guiding the development of disability-inclusive strategies. This report provides a focused approach to measuring programme outcomes and ensuring targeted interventions in the country.

The study utilized a mixed-methods approach, combining both quantitative and qualitative techniques to collect data from a wide range of participants, including youth with disabilities, caregivers, and key stakeholders such as Organizations for Persons with Disabilities (OPDs), labour market actors and community leaders. The assessment was carried out in six Nigerian locations, each focusing on specific priority sectors of the WCW programme: Abia (Creatives), Borno (Digital Economy), Imo (Agriculture), Kano (Agriculture), Lagos (Creatives and Digital Economy), and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) (Creatives). The report includes a baseline evaluation, and a rapid gender analysis aimed at exploring gender dynamics within these targeted sectors. A total of 543 participants were selected through stratified random sampling, while 25 focus group discussions (FGDs) and 40 key informant interviews (KIIs) were conducted to provide qualitative insights into the experiences and challenges of youth with disabilities. Data collection was managed digitally using KoboToolbox, with secure data protocols in place for collection, storage, and analysis, including the use of NVivo for thematic analysis for the qualitative component.

Table: Impact level indicators

Indicator	Status
Percentage of young women and men with disabilities that (engaged in work through the WCW programme) define their work as dignified and fulfilling	<p>Overall:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 11.1% are in dignified and fulfilling work (DFW) • 33.2% are employed and progressing towards DFW • 8.7% are employed but not in DFW • 47.2% are unemployed <p>Young women:</p>



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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 9.7% are in dignified and fulfilling work (DFW) • 30.7% are employed and progressing towards DFW • 7.0% are employed but not in DFW • 52.6% are unemployed <p>Young men:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 13.1% are in dignified and fulfilling work (DFW) • 36.9% are employed and progressing towards DFW • 11.2% are employed but not in DFW • 38.8% are unemployed
<p>Percentage of young women and men with disabilities with a positive view on their abilities to access and participate in the growth of the sector and/ or their communities</p>	<p>Overall:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 25.1% expressed a positive view of their abilities to access employment • 51.2% expressed a positive view on their abilities as well as young people’s abilities to participate in the growth of the sectors they work in. <p>Young women:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 25.3% expressed a positive view of their abilities to access employment. • 46.6% expressed a positive view on their abilities as well as young people’s abilities to participate in the growth of the sectors they work in. <p>Young men:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 23.6% expressed a positive view of their abilities to access employment • 48% expressed a positive view of their abilities as well as young people’s abilities to participate in the growth of the sectors they work in.
<p>Percentage of young women and men with disabilities with a positive view on their abilities to access work opportunities that align with their aspirations and abilities</p>	<p>Overall:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 41.6% expressed a positive view on their abilities to access work opportunities that align with their aspirations. • 48.4% expressed a positive view on their abilities to access work opportunities that align with their abilities.



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	<p>Young women:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 47.6% expressed a positive view on their abilities to access work opportunities that align with their aspirations. • 59.9% expressed a positive view on their abilities to access work opportunities that align with their abilities. <p>Young men:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 57.3% expressed a positive view on their abilities to access work opportunities that align with their aspirations. • 66.3% expressed a positive view on their abilities to access work opportunities that align with their abilities. 																								
<p>Percentage of caregivers, community members and other stakeholders with a positive view on the ability of young women and men with disabilities to participate in the growth of the sector and/or their communities</p>	<p>29.7% of caregivers expressed a positive view on the ability of young women and men with disabilities to participate in the growth of the sectors they work in.</p>																								
<p>Percentage of young women and men with disabilities who report improved access to high-quality key services, life satisfaction, food security and safety</p>	<p>Overall: Quality of Life (QoL) index score is 19.4 out of 100 Young women: Quality of Life (QoL) index score is 18.9 out of 100 Young men: Quality of Life (QoL) index score is 20.3 out of 100</p>																								
<p>Percentage of young women and men with disabilities who report that barriers to participation in work, community life and decision making have been removed</p>	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th data-bbox="724 1440 1179 1499">Barrier</th> <th data-bbox="1183 1440 1312 1499">Young women</th> <th data-bbox="1317 1440 1421 1499">Young men</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td colspan="3" data-bbox="724 1505 1421 1535">Barriers to employment, career progression and growth</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="724 1541 1179 1570">Limited job opportunities</td> <td data-bbox="1183 1541 1312 1570">46.5%</td> <td data-bbox="1317 1541 1421 1570">47.7%</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="724 1577 1179 1606">Inaccessible job advertisements</td> <td data-bbox="1183 1577 1312 1606">40.1%</td> <td data-bbox="1317 1577 1421 1606">37.4%</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="724 1612 1179 1642">Lack of relevant qualifications</td> <td data-bbox="1183 1612 1312 1642">37.4%</td> <td data-bbox="1317 1612 1421 1642">32.2%</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="724 1648 1179 1719">Limited access to skills training opportunities</td> <td data-bbox="1183 1648 1312 1719">35.0%</td> <td data-bbox="1317 1648 1421 1719">31.3%</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="724 1726 1179 1797">Limited access to business development trainings and services</td> <td data-bbox="1183 1726 1312 1797">25.8%</td> <td data-bbox="1317 1726 1421 1797">24.8%</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="724 1803 1179 1824">Discrimination based on disability</td> <td data-bbox="1183 1803 1312 1824">61.1%</td> <td data-bbox="1317 1803 1421 1824">55.6%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Barrier	Young women	Young men	Barriers to employment, career progression and growth			Limited job opportunities	46.5%	47.7%	Inaccessible job advertisements	40.1%	37.4%	Lack of relevant qualifications	37.4%	32.2%	Limited access to skills training opportunities	35.0%	31.3%	Limited access to business development trainings and services	25.8%	24.8%	Discrimination based on disability	61.1%	55.6%
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	Limited access to funding or capital	22.5%	28.5%
	Barriers to accessing resources		
	Limited availability of funding options	47.4%	46.7%
	Complex requirements	33.7%	34.1%
	High cost of borrowing	32.2%	33.2%
	High cost of technology adoption	21.0%	20.1%
	Discrimination based on disability	55.0%	58.4%
	Negative attitude of financial institutions	38.0%	37.9%
	Discrimination based on gender	23.4%	15.4%
	Barriers to decision making		
	Lack of awareness about opportunities to participate	59.0%	48.6%
	Attitudinal barriers from society	74.5%	67.8%
	Lack of interest among youth	30.4%	28.0%
	Lack of trust from decision makers	19.8%	25.2%
	Structural barriers	33.4%	34.1%
	Lack of support from adults/mentors	21.6%	16.4%
	Limited opportunities for skills development	29.8%	29.4%
Percentage of young women and men with disabilities in the disability, youth and women's rights structures who feel that they have the agency and voice to influence change in their organisations	<p>Overall: 14.9% do not have the opportunity at all 30.5% slightly do 25.1% moderately do 16.8% largely do 12.7% have the opportunity to a great extent</p> <p>Young women: 17.7% do not have the opportunity at all 32.8% slightly do 26.9% moderately do 12.9% largely do 9.7% have the opportunity to a great extent</p> <p>Young men: 10.9% do not have the opportunity at all 27.1% slightly do 22.5% moderately do</p>		



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	<p>22.5% largely do 17.1% have the opportunity to a great extent</p>
<p>Percentage of youth with disabilities in the constituency of youth and women's organisations that report changes in engagement practices of youth with disabilities</p>	<p>49.2% of youth with disabilities in youth and women's organizations reported changes in engagement practices within their organizations.</p> <p>Extent of change</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 21.9% reported little change • 16.8% reported more than little change • 36.8% reported moderate change • 18.1% reported substantial change • 6.5% reported significant change <p>Young women: 45.7% reported changes in engagement practices within their organizations.</p> <p>Young men: 54.3% reported changes in engagement practices within their organizations.</p>

The survey and RGA revealed that many young women with disabilities face underrepresentation in decision-making and economic opportunities. A significant proportion of respondents (11.8%- no formal education and 14.7%- primary education) had limited formal education, and many (41%) resided in rural areas, where access to resources and services is more restricted. Notably, 47% of the youth with disabilities assessed were unemployed, reflecting a high rate of unemployment. Furthermore, 67% of those who were employed were self-employed, indicating that youth with disabilities largely engage in independent work due to barriers in traditional employment pathways. The findings also revealed a stark gender disparity, with 67.6% of unemployed youth being women, highlighting the compounded challenges faced by young women with disabilities in accessing work.

The study revealed that only 11.1% of participants are in dignified and fulfilling work (DFW) and 33.2% are progressing towards DFW, citing discriminatory practices, inadequate policies, and systemic barriers as major challenges. The average quality of life score for youth with disabilities in Nigeria was recorded at 19.41 out of 100, reflecting significant struggles related to access to employment, healthcare, clean water, sanitation, and transportation. The survey also uncovered mixed perceptions of disability and gender inclusion; only 41.3% of respondents felt that policy efforts to address exclusionary challenges were



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sufficient. This indicates a substantial gap in efforts to ensure that youth with disabilities feel integrated into the wider community and workforce.

Further analysis highlighted that 66.7% of youth with stable, dignified employment indicated being confident in their ability to shape and influence systems, underlining the strong link between employment and empowerment. Gender disparities also persist, with male youth generally having more opportunities to influence societal systems. Representation of youth with disabilities in decision-making remains low, with 23% of youth in leadership roles. Young women with disabilities face severe barriers to participation due to discrimination, negative stereotypes, and gender-based challenges. Most organizations engage youth with disabilities only during the implementation stage of inclusion advocacy, reducing long-term effects.

Resilience capacity was found to be 34.2 out of 100 (male – 36.3; female – 32.9) indicating low resilience among the respondents in coping, adapting and recovering from shocks and stresses.

The study identified significant employment opportunities for youth with disabilities in three key sectors: agriculture, the creative industry, and the digital economy. In agriculture, non-traditional roles such as logistics, retail, and input supply present promising options for youth with disabilities, particularly in Imo and Kano. These roles, which require less physical exertion, are accessible and adaptable, allowing youth with disabilities to engage in these aspects of the agricultural value chain. The creative sector also offers diverse opportunities, with many youths with disabilities already involved in activities such as mixology, handcrafts, and teaching. The flexibility of the sector accommodates individuals with different abilities, providing space for self-expression and agency. In the digital economy, roles such as digital marketing, coding, and content creation align with the skills and interests of many disabled youth. These roles, which can often be performed remotely, offer significant opportunities for youth with disabilities, particularly those with mobility challenges.

Despite these opportunities, youth with disabilities face persistent barriers across all sectors, with discrimination being the most significant. These challenges are further compounded by inaccessible financial, technological, and employment systems. Gender-specific barriers, particularly for women with disabilities, add another layer of complexity, limiting their access to resources and opportunities. Financial exclusion, societal biases, and the physical inaccessibility of workplaces and training centres limit their participation in the workforce.

To address these challenges and support the successful implementation of the WCW programme, the study put forward key recommendations. These include developing inclusive training and capacity-building programmes, enhancing access to assistive technologies and social services, support duty bearers to design



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inclusive employment policies, and promoting gender-specific interventions. Additionally, the study recommends the creation of accessible financing mechanisms, raising awareness to challenge stereotypes, and advocating for improved infrastructure. The study adds that, multi-stakeholder collaboration is crucial to ensuring that youth with disabilities are fully included in economic activities, decision-making processes, and community life.



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1.0 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1.1 About the WCW Programme

The WCW programme is a regional signature disability programme that uses a system and mindset change approach to impact the lives of at least 1,000,000 young women and men with disabilities and enables them to access dignified and fulfilling work. It is facilitated by a consortium led by Light for the World, with Africa Disability Forum (ADF) and Crosswise Works (CWW) as the main partners

The programme was launched in April 2023 in partnership with the Mastercard Foundation. Over an eight-year period, the programme will work with umbrella organizations of persons with disabilities and entrepreneurship hubs in seven Young Africa Works countries to champion disability inclusion in programme cycle management. Country-based teams of Disability Inclusion Advisors (DIAs) and Disability Inclusion Facilitators (DIFs) with lived experience will support the development of internal and partners' capacity to mainstream disability in country programmes. The programme will further deploy targeted skills building and entrepreneurship support interventions for young women and men with disabilities to successfully transition to work.

The programme will influence change at the level of individuals (including households and communities), organizations and institutions. Young, transformative leaders will drive this change with youth disabilities, acting as change agents. They will provide disability inclusion advisory services and confidently advocate for disability-inclusive policies and practices among key system actors, including the private sector, government, civil society, and financial and learning institutions.

The programme will also work with various global, national, local, state, and private sector actors to accomplish implementation in three main pillars. Pillar 1 will focus on supporting young women and men with disabilities in their transition to work and empowering them as agents of change towards a more inclusive society; Pillar 2 is targeted at embedding and institutionalizing disability inclusion in the Young Africa Works strategies and interventions and among partner organizations and other key system actors while Pillar 3 will focus on ensuring meaningful participation of young women and men with disabilities in advocating for inclusive policies and environment. The programme will deliver interventions in five core outcome areas to achieve its intended impact of building on and scaling up proven good practices in Disability Inclusion Advisory Services, youth engagement and inclusive employment. The outcomes are:

Outcome 1: Young women and men with disabilities drive positive change around disability inclusion.



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Outcome 2: Young women and men with disabilities have formed start-ups and agribusiness, are growing their micro enterprises or access waged jobs due to direct interventions.

Outcome 3: Young Africa Works programme and other system actions intentionally and meaningfully reach out to young women and men with disabilities and ensure that they equally benefit from programmes and services.

Outcome 4: The voices and needs of young women and men in their diversity are well represented in disability, youth and women's rights structures.

Outcome 5: A harmonized advocacy agenda on local, national and regional (African) level effectively addresses the needs of young women and men with disabilities and ensures their representation in policy and programme design, implementation and monitoring.

1.2 Linkage of WCW programme to Young Africa Works and LFTW strategy

The WCW programme is closely aligned with the Young Africa Works strategy, which focuses on creating dignified and fulfilling employment opportunities for African youth. While Young Africa Works targets the broader youth population, WCW specifically addresses the unique challenges faced by young women and men with disabilities. By ensuring that persons with disabilities are included in entrepreneurship and employment initiatives, WCW enhances the overall impact of Young Africa Works. The programme focuses on system and mindset changes, integrating disability inclusion as a core element in the development of policies, practices, and economic interventions across the seven Young Africa Works countries.

One of the key areas of alignment between the two strategies is the promotion of entrepreneurship. WCW equips young people with disabilities with skills, technical support, and mentorship to start businesses or grow existing ones. Through partnerships with Entrepreneurship Support Organizations (Hubs), the programme ensures that young persons with disabilities receive the resources and guidance needed to thrive in entrepreneurial ventures. This not only empowers them to become self-reliant but also contributes to the broader goal of economic transformation under Young Africa Works by enabling them to become job creators within their communities.

In addition, LFTW's strategy of disability inclusion and economic empowerment is an integral part of the WCW programme's design and implementation. For years, Light for the World has championed the rights of persons with disabilities, working to dismantle the structural barriers that exclude them from full participation in society. The WCW programme builds on this legacy by scaling up successful models of



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Disability Inclusion Advisory Services, which have proven effective in various sectors. By embedding these services into the WCW programme, Light for the World is expanding its impact, ensuring that the voices and needs of persons with disabilities are represented at every level of decision-making, from programme design to policy advocacy.

Hence, the alignment between the WCW programme, the Young Africa Works strategy, and LFTW's mission demonstrates the commitment to a long-term vision of social and economic inclusion. The programme's multi-stakeholder approach ensures that disability inclusion is not seen as a siloed issue but as a cross-cutting priority that benefits entire communities and economies. By fostering collaboration among young transformative leaders with disabilities, government institutions, and the private sector, WCW sets the stage for sustained progress in disability inclusion, while contributing to the broader Young Africa Works objective of creating dignified employment for all youth in Africa. This strategic synergy between WCW and Young Africa Works, combined with LFTW's expertise, positions the programme as a model for inclusive development across the continent.

1.3 Relevant country statistics and literature

Nigeria being Africa's largest economy and most populous nation, offers limited opportunities to many of its citizens as poverty continues to deepen. According to the 2022 Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI), 63% of the population is classified as multidimensionally poor. This situation is particularly severe in rural areas, where 72% of people face poverty, compared to 42% in urban regions¹. Multidimensional poverty goes beyond income levels, capturing deprivations across critical areas such as education, healthcare, access to water, and sanitation. While often linked to monetary poverty, this approach provides a broader perspective on the overall living conditions of the population by addressing key indicators of well-being. By assessing these factors, the Multidimensional Poverty Index offers a more comprehensive understanding of poverty in Nigeria, highlighting the complex challenges citizens face in both rural and urban settings.

Following the change of administration in 2023, the country has embarked on a series of ambitious economic reforms, including the removal of fuel subsidies and the unification of Foreign Exchange (FOREX) markets, with the goal of stabilizing the economy and fostering long-term growth. However, these reforms have had a profound impact on the already strained livelihoods of many Nigerians, intensifying existing

¹<https://www.nigerianstat.gov.ng/pdfuploads/NIGERIA%20MULTIDIMENSIONAL%20POVERTY%20INDEX%20SURVEY%20RESULTS%202022.pdf>



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economic challenges. The sudden removal of fuel subsidies, in particular, has led to widespread hardship, as fuel prices surged, and transportation and goods costs spiked. According to an analysis by the Munich Personal RePEc Archive (MPRA), the removal of fuel subsidies has resulted in several negative outcomes for the Nigerian economy. These include high inflation and a sharp decline in purchasing power, further pushing millions of Nigerians into poverty and vulnerability². The rising cost of petroleum products has not only increased household expenses but also contributed to job losses, particularly in the informal sector, where many livelihoods are tied to transportation and small-scale trade. This economic strain has fueled social unrest, as citizens grapple with rising costs of living and declining economic security.

Additionally, the Mastercard Foundation reported the existence of robust policies designed to promote the inclusion of persons with disabilities in the workforce, such as the Disability Act of 2018 and the National Employment Policy. These policies mandate that public and private organizations allocate at least 5% of their workforce to individuals with disabilities. Significant challenges have been identified in ensuring the effectiveness of these policies, particularly due to the lack of adequate mechanisms to monitor and enforce their implementation³. This gap undermines the potential impact of these progressive policies and highlights the need for stronger systems of accountability and oversight to ensure that the inclusion of persons with disabilities in employment becomes a practical reality.

1.4 Purpose of the baseline assessment

The purpose of the baseline survey and RGA was to establish a benchmark of the programme indicators across all five outcomes to inform implementation. This will enable systematic measurement of progress towards the intended results annually and at final evaluation.

The specific objectives of the baseline and RGA include:

- a) To measure all goal, outcome and output level indicators as a benchmark for purposes of setting performance targets and measurement of the programme progress as well as inform disability-inclusive intervention strategies.
- b) Conduct a rapid gender assessment in the implementation countries including Nigeria

² https://mpr.aub.uni-muenchen.de/120509/1/MPRA_paper_120509.pdf

³ [file:///C:/Users/USER/Desktop/We%20Can%20Work%20Folder/Phase-2-Nigeria-Experiences-Report%20\(1\).pdf](file:///C:/Users/USER/Desktop/We%20Can%20Work%20Folder/Phase-2-Nigeria-Experiences-Report%20(1).pdf)



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- c) To provide relevant recommendations and insights that will further inform the programme design and adaptation during the implementation period.

2.0 CONTEXT: GENDER AND DISABILITY INCLUSION IN NIGERIA

In the Nigeria context, existing literature suggests that the gender ratio in Nigeria is roughly balanced, with men and women comprising approximately equal proportions of the population. According to the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS)⁴ and data from the World Bank, Nigeria's male-to-female ratio has remained close to 50:50 in recent years, reflecting a relatively balanced distribution between the sexes. This demographic parity highlights the importance of ensuring gender-sensitive policies that consider both men and women equally in terms of access to resources, opportunities, and services. A failure to acknowledge this balance in the population can result in policies that overlook the specific needs of either gender, perpetuating inequality and limiting progress toward social and economic development.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO)'s 2011 *World Report on Disability*, around 15% of the global population lives with some form of disability, encompassing a wide range of challenges, including physical, sensory, cognitive, and mental health impairments⁵. When applying this global estimate to Nigeria, the magnitude becomes even more significant. In 2022, the NBS projected Nigeria's population to be 216,783,381⁶. Based on the WHO's disability prevalence rate, over 32 million Nigerians, or 15% of the population, are estimated to live with some form of disability. This number will likely rise with aging, and where there are conflicts, natural disasters, and forced displacement. People with disabilities often face greater socioeconomic disadvantages, experiencing higher rates of multidimensional poverty and exclusion from education, employment, and essential services. Their conditions range from physical impairments to intellectual and other forms of disabilities, creating significant barriers to inclusion in society.

The intersection of gender and disability offers a unique set of challenges that further marginalizes a significant portion of Nigeria's population, particularly women and persons with disabilities. Despite Nigeria's large population, millions of women and people with disabilities continue to face systemic barriers that limit their access to social, economic, and political opportunities. These obstacles are exacerbated by the country's current economic climate, which has been strained by government policies that, while aiming

⁴ https://www.nigerianstat.gov.ng/pdfuploads/DEMOGRAPHIC_BULLETIN_2022_FINAL.pdf

⁵ <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789241564182>

⁶ <https://nigerianstat.gov.ng/elibrary/read/1241422>



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to stabilize the economy, have disproportionately affected vulnerable groups, especially women with disabilities. Meanwhile, experiences have shown that in critical economic situations of this nature, women with disabilities are among the hardest hit, as they often face compounded layers of discrimination based on both gender and disability. To put this into perspective, a report by UN Women in Nigeria that documented the experiences of women with disabilities during the COVID-19 pandemic revealed stark inequalities⁷. These women faced significant barriers in meeting basic needs such as food security, maintaining economic activities, managing increased unpaid care burdens, and accessing essential services and support systems.

These notwithstanding, Nigeria has made some progress toward gender and disability inclusion through several legal and policy frameworks. According to the Policy and Legal Advocacy Centre (PLAC), the Discrimination Against Persons with Disabilities (Prohibition) Act of 2018 marks a milestone in protecting the rights of people with disabilities in Nigeria, prohibiting discrimination in employment, education, and public accessibility⁸. Similarly, the National Gender Policy (NGP) (2006, revised in 2021) is aimed at addressing gender inequality and promoting women's rights⁹. However, the intersection of gender and disability is often neglected in the application of these policies. While Nigeria is a signatory to international agreements such as the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)¹⁰ and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)¹¹, these frameworks demonstrate Nigeria's intent to promote inclusion, the reality on the ground often tells a different story. Women and people with disabilities still encounter systemic barriers, and the implementation of policies designed to protect their rights is often weak or poorly monitored.

Specifically, the provisions of the Discrimination Against Persons with Disabilities (Prohibition) Act of 2018 Section 28 – 34 cover non-discrimination in employment, prohibition of discrimination in employment, reasonable accommodation at the workplace, prohibition of discrimination in Public and Private Sectors, a quota system for employment, vocational and skills training, promotion of entrepreneurship for people with

⁷ <https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2022-01/Brief-Experiences-of-women-with-disabilities-in-Nigeria-during-COVID-19-en.pdf>

⁸ <https://placng.org/i/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/The-Discrimination-Against-Persons-with-Disabilities-Prohibition-Act.pdf>

⁹ <https://www.wrapanigeria.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/FINAL-NGP-COPY-AS-PRINTED.pdf>

¹⁰ <https://www.un.org/disabilities/documents/convention/convoptprot-e.pdf>

¹¹ <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-elimination-all-forms-discrimination-against-women>



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disabilities and accessibility to work environments¹², all geared towards removing barriers and improving employment for people with disabilities in Nigeria. Likewise, the NGP of 2021 made provisions for equal employment opportunities, removal of workplace barriers, promotion of Women’s Economic Empowerment, addressing gender stereotypes and cultural barriers, institutional support and monitoring etc.¹³ all aimed at removing barriers to employment for women and promoting their economic empowerment in Nigeria.

Despite these lofty provisions aimed at eliminating the barriers faced by persons with disabilities, youth and women with disabilities continue to express concerns about persistent barriers and exclusion in various areas of life. A recent report highlights that inconsistencies in the legal frameworks for disability and gender inclusion have worsened the challenges faced by persons with disabilities. Issues such as unemployment, underemployment, and the absence of adequate support systems have forced many people with disabilities to rely on families, friends, and charitable organizations for their survival.¹⁴ As a result, many people with disabilities continue to struggle with unemployment, underemployment, and a lack of adequate support systems, leaving them dependent on family members or charitable organizations for survival. The informal sector has become a refuge for many people with disabilities, who often develop entrepreneurial skills out of necessity. However, even within this sector, they face challenges such as limited access to capital, tools, and markets.

¹² https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/wp-content/uploads/sites/15/2019/11/Nigeria_Discrimination-Against-Persons-with-Disabilities-Prohibition-Act-2018.pdf

¹³ <https://www.wrapanigeria.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/NATIONAL-GENDER-POLICY.pdf>

¹⁴ <https://bonewssng.com/how-financial-challenges-lack-of-adequate-support-push-pwds-into-menial-jobs-begging/>



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3.0. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Study Design

The study adopted mixed-methods, non-experimental design, integrating both quantitative and participatory qualitative approaches to gather data from various respondent groups. Data collection involved a diverse range of participants, including youth with disabilities (aged 18-35), caregivers, labour market implementing partners of the YAW initiative, national and local OPDs, as well as key state and non-state actors. Sector-specific stakeholders and opinion leaders were also engaged to help contextualise the baseline assessment. The baseline serves as a reference for informing the WCW programme's implementation strategy and ongoing monitoring efforts in Nigeria.

By employing a mixed-methods approach, the study benefited from the triangulation of findings across different groups of respondents and data collection methods. This methodological diversity allowed for a richer and more nuanced understanding of the issues at hand, enhancing the comprehensiveness of the research. Furthermore, the combination of quantitative and qualitative data helped strengthen the credibility and validity of the findings, ensuring that multiple perspectives were considered and that the results were robust and reliable.

3.2 Assessment Scope

The study was conducted across six states in Nigeria: Abia, Borno, Imo, Kano, Lagos, and the FCT, encompassing both rural and urban communities within these regions. The assessment comprised two key components: a baseline assessment and barrier analysis, both conducted in Nigeria. The baseline assessment aimed to establish initial conditions and provide a reference point for evaluating future progress or interventions. In parallel, the barrier analysis focused on identifying and understanding the specific challenges, and opportunities within the context. This approach allowed for a comprehensive understanding of the situation on the ground, combining quantitative and qualitative insights to inform strategies that address gender disparities and ensure more inclusive outcomes. Together, these components provided a solid foundation for effective decision-making and programme development.

3.3 Target Population/Sample

The study primarily targets young men and women with disabilities, aged 18-35, for both the survey and FGDs. In addition, the KII component includes a broader range of stakeholders, such as opinion and



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community leaders, state and non-state actors, women-led and women-focused organizations, as well as OPDs.

Quantitative sampling: Survey participants were sampled using the stratified sampling technique. In Nigeria, stratification was done based on gender (male and female), and age (18-24 years and 25-35 years) are targeted to allow for a diverse representation in the data. It also gives room for both aggregation and more granular analysis to extensively measure programme outcomes. The determined sample size based on a 95% desired confidence level with a 5% margin of error was 357. However, to ensure adequate representation and power for subpopulation analysis, we adjusted the sample to 543. Survey participants are randomly selected for the interview. The random probabilistic sampling approach offers equal opportunity for all participants to be sampled for the survey.

Qualitative sampling: The non-probabilistic purposive sampling technique which allows for deliberate selection of study participants was employed to select respondents from the respective categories for the baseline study. The approach allows for selecting participants who have the characteristics and ability to provide deep and detailed insights for measuring and informing programme outcomes. Specifically, national, and local OPDs and representatives of persons with disability, representatives of relevant government departments at national and local levels by sector, and other market system actors like financial institutions, skills development institutes and Business Development Service (BDS) providers are engaged in Nigeria. In all, the qualitative component conducted a total of 25 FGDs and 40 KIIs.

3.4 Gender Approach in the Survey

A comprehensive gender approach was adopted reviewing the systemic challenges, opportunities, and barriers faced by participants, households, and communities. The guiding documents include the Light of the World Rapid Gender Assessment guidelines and several gender analysis frameworks such as the Harvard Analytical Framework, along with the 24-hour calendar tool and activity profiling tool.

Gender-focused questions were mainstreamed within all the guides described above i.e., KII and FGD guides. Specific questions on gender access and barriers were posed to study participants. More routinely, however, respondents were asked to indicate distinctions in their experiences based on gender. The data collection teams received targeted training to ensure the accuracy and validity of the data collected.



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3.5 Data management (Tools, Training of RAs, Data collection, Storage, Analysis)

Data for the survey in Nigeria was collected and managed digitally using KoboToolbox, a flexible data capture platform. The survey questionnaire was carefully designed with validation checks, skip patterns, and mandatory response flags. Experienced enumerators, familiar with the local dialects and locations, were recruited, with an emphasis on including at least one-third youth with disabilities and 50% women. All enumerators were trained on the KoboToolbox mobile application, which allowed for real-time data collection, and data was synced to a secure server once internet access was available. The server, managed by the research leads, used authentication protocols and encryption to ensure data security.

Qualitative data from KIIs and FGDs was captured through handwritten notes and audio recordings with participant consent. These recordings were securely transferred to the central data team and transcribed and translated by trained field teams in each state. The transcriptions were imported into NVivo for systematic coding and analysis, allowing researchers to identify emerging themes directly from participant responses. The data management process prioritized security with encryption, access control, and regular server backups.

3.6 Quality Control

To ensure high-quality data, the research team conducted systematic checks and supervision throughout the data collection process. Survey supervisors performed random backchecks on 10% of surveyed households, verifying selected responses. For qualitative data, 30% of focus group and in-depth interview audio recordings were reviewed against transcripts to ensure accuracy. Field debriefing sessions helped identify areas for improvement, guiding retraining. Data cleaning and analysis included thorough logic, consistency, and completeness checks to eliminate residual errors before drawing conclusions.

For the quantitative component, measures included immersive training for field researchers, comprehensive piloting of survey instruments, and multi-stage validation to ensure accuracy. Power analyses were conducted to confirm adequate sample sizes for statistical analyses. In the qualitative component, pilot testing of guides ensured cultural appropriateness, and double coding of transcripts enhanced reliability. The data was systematically transcribed and translated, with triangulation used to integrate quantitative and qualitative findings for a well-rounded understanding of the baseline conditions.



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3.7 Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations were central to this study, particularly given its focus on youth with disabilities, a group that faces various vulnerabilities in society. The study followed rigorous ethical protocols to protect participants from harm and maintain the integrity of the research process. For Nigeria, ethical approval was obtained through PDA’s Ethical Review Committee (ERC), comprising international ethics practitioners and academics, and relevant state authorizations were secured based on an application detailing the study’s background, methodology, and objectives. Together, these ensured that the approach met best practices for research and evaluation.

Throughout the study, several strategies were employed to uphold ethical standards. Participation was entirely voluntary, with participants informed of their rights to withdraw at any time. Informed consent procedures ensured that participants were fully aware of the study's purpose, risks, and how their data would be used. Confidentiality was strictly maintained by using participant IDs instead of names, and interviews were conducted privately to ensure anonymity. Cultural competence was ensured through localized materials and training for researchers, and fair compensation was provided to participants for any costs incurred.

3.8 Safeguarding

PDA have clear safeguarding policies aligned with relevant legal provisions, ensuring all team members are well-trained and committed to data protection and safeguarding standards. Recruitment requires academic certificates, police clearance or reference letters, and a local government or religious letter if clearance is challenging. A virtual screening ensures candidates understand safeguarding principles. During training, a 2–3-hour session covers safeguarding tools such as the code of conduct, consent forms, and a reporting tool, which team members carry during fieldwork.

3.9 Limitations

This section outlines the limitations faced during the baseline study:

Bureaucratic bottlenecks: The study faced significant limitation during the baseline study, particularly in securing appointments with key informants from government agencies for the qualitative component in Lagos and Borno. While alternative respondents were successfully identified in Lagos, the situation in Borno proved more challenging. Despite multiple attempts, securing appointments with the relevant state actors became nearly impossible. Consequently, non-state actors had to replace state actors in Borno to ensure



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the study's continuity. This substitution, though necessary, may have affected the depth and perspective of insights gathered from the region.

Respondent Fatigue: In some instances, particularly with lengthy surveys or interviews, respondents experienced fatigue, which may have affected the quality of their responses. This was especially evident during FGDs, where the depth of conversation sometimes diminished toward the end of the sessions due to time and attention limitations.

Instability: The start of data collection in Nigeria coincided with a period of nationwide protests, which created instability and disrupted fieldwork. The social unrest limited the research team's ability to access certain locations for interviews and surveys as planned. In some instances, participants were either unavailable or unwilling to participate, citing safety concerns. Safety risks and transportation disruptions required adjustments to the original schedule. These interruptions may have impacted on the depth and scope of the data gathered during this period.



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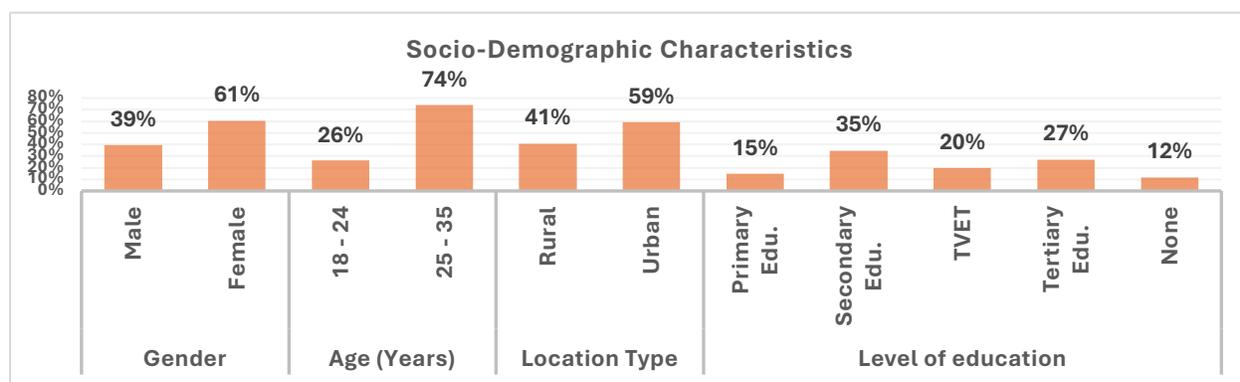


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4.0 RESULTS/FINDINGS

4.1 Socio-demographic characteristics of respondents

Figure 1: Socio-Demographic Characteristics

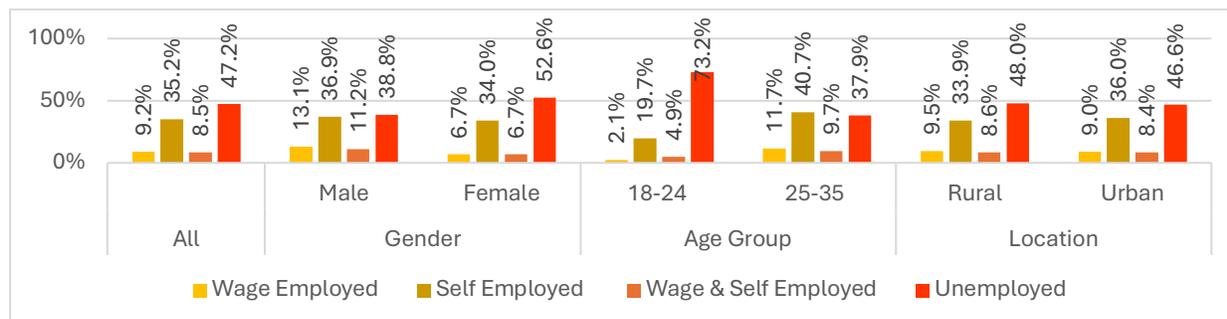


Data Source: Baseline, 2024

The survey covered 543 respondents across six Nigerian states and the FCT, with 61% female and 39% male. Most respondents (74%) were aged 25–35, and 59% lived in urban areas, while 41% were rural. A majority (65%) had physical impairments, followed by visual impairments (25.1%), and others had hearing, intellectual, or psychosocial impairments. Educational levels varied, with 26.9% having tertiary education, 34.8% secondary.

4.2 Employment status

Figure 2: Employment status



Data Source: Baseline, 2024



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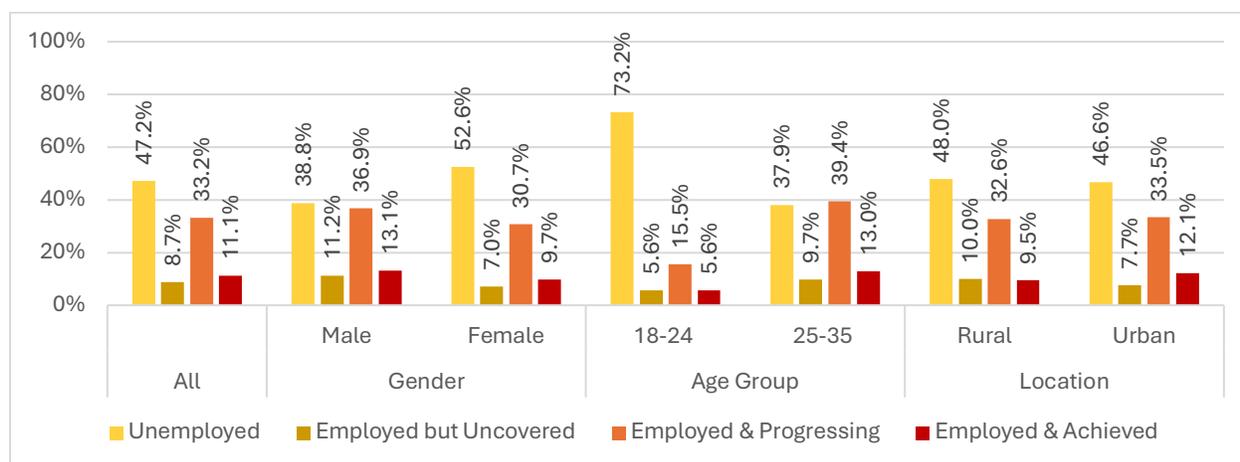


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Among the employed youth, 23.3% work in the creatives sector, 15% are in retailing, 11.5% work in the education sector, 11.2% in the agriculture sector, 4.2% in the manufacturing sector and 4.2% in the professional services sector. In addition, about 30.7% are in other sectors such as finance, transportation and information technology. For the unemployed youth, the main reasons for their unemployment are disability condition (37.1%), lack of available work (30.5%), lack of qualification/skill (20.3%), being in full-time education (20.3%) and being a homemaker (10.2%).

4.3 Access to Dignified and Fulfilling Work

Figure 3: Dignified and fulfilling work status



Data Source: Baseline, 2024

This highlights gender disparity in access, where women and younger youth with disabilities may face greater barriers to securing employment that provides reliable income, respect in the workplace, sense of purpose, and reputable work.

4.4 Quality of Life

The data reveals a concerningly low average quality of life score of 19.4 on a scale of 1 to 100. This overall low score suggests that the youth surveyed, are experiencing significant challenges in their well-being. When disaggregated by gender, men scored slightly higher at 20.3 compared to women at 18.9, indicating that women might be facing additional hardships. Variation in quality of life by age is minimal, with scores of 19.5 for youth aged 18-24 years and 19.4 for youth between 25 and 35 years. Notably, youth with



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disabilities progressing to D&F (24.6) and those in D&F work (22.5) have a higher quality of score compared to youth uncovered for D&F and those not in work.

4.5 Disability Inclusion and gender mainstreaming

The survey data reveals that 1.3% of respondents strongly disagreed, 12.2% disagreed, and 39.2% were neutral in their opinions regarding disability and gender inclusion. In contrast, 41.3% agreed, and 6.1% strongly agreed to statements on inclusion, suggesting that efforts are being made to promote disability and gender inclusion. The findings indicate mixed perceptions with a notable proportion in favour of inclusion. Across demographics, more females (15.2%) disagreed to inclusion statements than males (10.8%), suggesting their perception of less efforts being put into disability and gender inclusion. Youth aged 25-35 years showed higher agreement (50.1%) than those between 18 and 24 years (39.4%). On the other hand, more youth between 18 and 24 years (21.8%) expressed disagreement than youth aged 25-35 years (10.5%). This suggests that females and younger youth with disabilities may feel particularly excluded from inclusion efforts.

4.6 Caregiving responsibilities and needs

A total of 101 caregivers participated in the baseline survey. Of the caregivers interviewed, more than half (57.4%) reported spending approximately 6 hours per day assisting youth with disabilities in daily activities, while 25.7% dedicate about half a day to providing support. Additionally, 16.8% of caregivers spend the entire day caring for youth with disabilities. The caregivers identified several resources available to support their caregiving duties: 36.6% reported financial assistance programmes, 20.8% highlighted support groups, 16.8% reported community programmes such as social services and 8.9% mentioned assistive technology resources. To ensure effective care for youth with disabilities, caregivers identified the need for resources and services such as financial planning and assistance (74.3%), caregiver education and training (51.5%), caregiver support groups (31.7%), transportation (27.7%) and legal assistance (23.8%).

Regarding caregivers' perceptions on the participation of youth with disabilities in the growth of the sectors they work in, 29.7% believe that youth with disabilities can contribute to the growth of their respective sectors while 34.7% reported that youth are unable to participate in the growth of the sectors. In addition, 35.6% of caregivers neither agreed nor disagreed with the notion that youth with disabilities can contribute to sector growth.



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5.0 ACCESS, BARRIERS, OPPORTUNITIES AND ENABLERS

5.1 Barriers to employment, growth, and career progression

Among the key barriers to employment, growth, and career progression identified in the quantitative survey, discrimination based on disabilities was the most significant, with 58.9% of respondents highlighting it. Other major challenges included limited job opportunities (47%), jobs not advertised in accessible formats (39%), lack of relevant qualifications or education (35.4%), and limited access to business development trainings (25.4%). Additionally, 24.9% cited limited access to funding/capital, while 21.4% pointed to gender discrimination. Geographic limitations, age, ethnicity, lack of land, and high input costs were also noted as barriers, though to a lesser degree.

The qualitative insights emphasize the persistence of systemic and attitudinal challenges (such as lack of enforcement of inclusion laws, perceptions of inability, assumed dependency, mockery) which hinder progress despite efforts to improve inclusion. Together, these restrict opportunities for people with disabilities. The excerpts below illustrate some impediments that young persons with disabilities encounter on the pathway to employment and economic participation:

“They view a person with a disability as having no value, [believing] they lack the ability to contribute to the community or society” (FGD participant, Borno, Male with physical impairment) and *“... we have these ... infrastructural accessibility barriers; sometimes they employ PWDs and their office even if it is first floor, how can you ... enjoy going to work every day and progress at work?”* (KII participant, Kano, Female, Women-Led Organization).

5.2 Barriers to accessing resources

The data in Figure 5 highlight several key barriers to accessing financial and technological resources, with discrimination based on disability being the most significant (56.4%). This suggests a major challenge for individuals with disabilities in securing resources. Limited funding options (47.2%) and negative attitudes from financial institutions (37.9%) further restrict access, while complex requirements (33.9%) and high borrowing costs (32.6%) create additional hurdles. Discrimination based on gender (20.3%) and age (12.5%), along with high technology adoption costs (20.6%) and inaccessible physical structures of financial institutions (16.6%), also hinder access, particularly for marginalized groups.

The qualitative component echoes the finding that youth with disabilities encounter multiple barriers in accessing financial and technical services. FGD participants highlighted challenges such as stringent



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requirements for additional documentation, sureties, and collateral, as well as physical accessibility barriers to service providers' facilities. They also noted discriminatory attitudes and the lack of accessibility materials. These significant obstacles do not only hinder access to dignified and fulfilling employment but also impact the sense of purpose and respect that youth with disabilities receive from their families and communities.

5.3 Participation of Youth with disabilities in agriculture, creatives sector and digital economy

Of the young persons with disabilities in agriculture who participated in the FGDs in Imo and Kano, most sustained themselves mainly by engaging in farming using traditional methods. Nevertheless, participants highlighted potential agribusiness and agriculture-related employment possibilities. Many from the not-in-work FGDs too expressed a strong interest in engaging with the agricultural value chain, perceiving various opportunities available for young people of varying abilities and affirming agriculture as an attractive option.

The FGDs and KIIs in Abia, FCT, and Lagos reveal that individuals with disabilities are already engaging in the creatives sector, through activities such as mixology, handcrafts, and teaching creative skills. Key informants from Imo perceive further openings for people with different disabilities, contending that several of the activities can be carried out in a stationary environment.

In respect of the digital economy, youth with disabilities in Lagos and Borno States shared their encounters with various sub-sectors of the digital economy. In a focus group discussion in Lagos, a female of short stature said she was involved in “web designing with the aid of the screen reader and advertising on the social media like Facebook, X (formally Twitter) and YouTube as well.” Another, a male with visual impairment in Lagos, described his involvement as “marketing online ... with advertising from home on my phone, where I upload products on my WhatsApp status, and from there people reach out to me for patronage.” Yet another male with impaired hearing in Lagos said, “I am engaged in the digital economy by doing data entry using Excel, and we also provide video and audio editing services.”

5.4 Opportunities and enablers in agriculture, creatives sector and digital economy

The agriculture data suggests some value chain opportunities for youth with disabilities in Imo and Kano, particularly in areas beyond direct farming/ primary production. Informants highlighted potential roles that entail minimal physical demands such as logistics service provision, input supplying (e.g., fertilizers and animal feed) and retail of agricultural produce and products.



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For the creatives sector, significant opportunities were perceived in areas such as fashion design, cosmetology, hairdressing, bead making, leatherwork, entertainment, and handcrafts, in both employment and entrepreneurship. A female with albinism who participated in a focus group in the FCT noted thus: *“Aside from bead making, I am a mixologist. I make cocktails, mocktails, smoothies, and other drinks.”*

A labour market actor in Lagos also shared this inspiring observation on the digital economy: *“... I see persons with disabilities excelling, particularly in IT-related fields like coding. They possess remarkable talent, and many of those I have encountered are incredibly intelligent. I believe they tend to perform exceptionally well in these areas, as they are able to focus and face fewer challenges compared to other sectors.”* Other prospects identified by informants include painting, tailoring, jewelry making, coding, data entry and analysis, audio and video editing, and content creation, all of which can be carried out from a sedentary location. These insights suggest the creative industry could become a vital avenue for economic empowerment among youth with disabilities.

5.5 Barriers in agriculture, creatives, and digital economy

Across the sectors, challenges with accessing finance and sector-specific resources were common threads when participants enumerated the hurdles obstructing the pathways to dignified and fulfilling employment. Societal prejudice and deficits in relevant skills were other non-tangible obstacles cited by the young persons interviewed. Others further cited barriers in communication and in the built environment. Challenges with accessing financing were said to come in diverse forms – e.g., high collateral thresholds which they are unable to meet, stringent requirements for additional documentation, and difficulties in finding sureties.

Respondents in the FGDs in Imo and Kano states catalogued a string of barriers to their effective participation in agriculture. These include limited access to land for agricultural production, lack of business finance, inadequate knowledge and understanding of agribusiness, discrimination and social biases. Prominent among these barriers is the longstanding discrimination against persons with disabilities by excluding them from public interventions because of their disability. Respondents from the women-only FGDs identified gender specific challenges like cultural norms that affect them in owning or accessing land to effectively participate in the value chain.

At Imo, a male who was physically impaired noted, *“One major attitudinal barrier is the discrimination faced by persons with disabilities in agriculture; governments often exclude us from agricultural programmes and*



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resources like fertilizers and equipment. They question our capacity to work and assume we cannot handle agricultural tasks.”

Participants also identified several obstacles preventing youth with disabilities from fully engaging in the creatives sector. These barriers include a lack of technical skills, discrimination, and societal biases that often assume incapability. Additionally, barriers in physical accessibility, limited awareness, and resource constraints further hinder their participation. A young woman with albinism observed in a FGD in FCT: *“One of my main barriers is finance. Also, I feel that I have not fully equipped myself to keep up with the evolving bead-making business.”* Gender-specific challenges were also reported, mostly rooted in deep-seated religious and cultural beliefs, societal expectations, and safety concerns.

Respondents in the qualitative component highlighted several obstacles hindering youth with disabilities from fully participating in the digital economy as well. These include inadequate access to technological facilities, high cost of digital devices, lack of awareness of the potential of youth with disabilities, and inaccessible skill development opportunities (including capable instructors) for persons with disabilities. As one male with impaired vision lamented in a focus group in Lagos, *“While digital skills may sometimes be more affordable to acquire, the equipment and necessary devices to start up [an enterprise] are often expensive. Smartphones and laptops are not cheap, and purchasing original software can be costly, making access to opportunities in the digital economy difficult.”* In Borno too, a young man with physical impairment likewise bemoaned, *“In our state, there are approximately six skill acquisition centres; however, none of these have trained individuals with disabilities, and there are no specialized provisions for skills training tailored to persons with disabilities.”*



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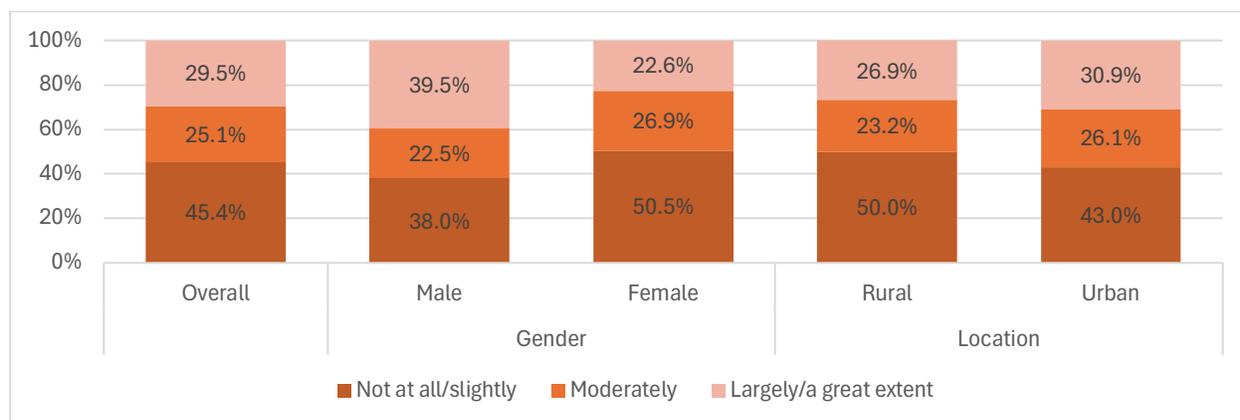
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6.0 COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

6.1 Agency and Voice

Agency and voice measure the extent to which youth with disability have the opportunity to voice their opinions and influence decision-making within their organizations and communities. Generally, more youth (45.4%) reported not having a voice, with more males and urban dwellers having the greater opportunity to voice their opinions than their counterparts (refer to figure 4).

Figure 4: Agency and Voice



Data source: Baseline, 2024

Another dimension of agency and voice measures the extent to which youth are confidently influencing their communities, the labor market ecosystem, and overall systems.¹⁵ Over half (51.2%) of respondents feel confident in their ability to participate in their sector of employment while many believe they can access work opportunities aligned with their aspirations (41.6%) and abilities (48.4%). A significant proportion of youth with disabilities remain neutral or uncertain about overall access to employment. Notably, more than half (52.3%) disagree that their current work aligns with their expectations (see figure 5).

¹⁵ Agency and voice are assessed through five key measures: access to employment, participation within the sector, access to work that aligns with aspirations, abilities, and expectations. These measures reflect the youth's belief in their ability to confidently influence their communities, the labour market ecosystem, and broader societal systems. Using a scale of 1 to 3 (1 = disagree, 2 = neutral, 3 = agree)



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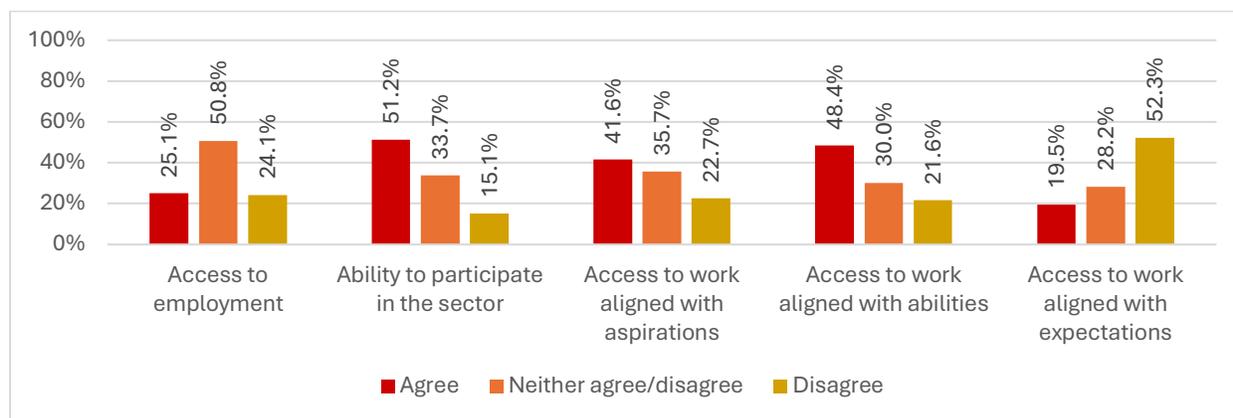


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Figure 5: Agency and Voice



Data source: Baseline, 2024

6.2 Inclusive representation of youth with disabilities in structures

Majority of the youth (93.2%) are Nigerian citizens, with more than half (58%) being members of civil society organizations, community groups or OPDs. Across all the six targeted states, the KII respondents were interrogated about inclusive representation of youth with disabilities in organizational and community structures. The qualitative study reveals a clear consensus that overall representation of youth with disabilities in organizational and community leadership remains low, with the exception of OPDs where all members are persons with disabilities. While some people with disabilities in certain organizations experience bias-free working conditions and normal relationships with colleagues, this does not translate into widespread representation across the workforce. This highlights a gap between individual success stories and systemic inclusion, as broader participation in governance and leadership roles is still significantly limited. Below are excerpts from the KIIs on inclusive representation of youth with disabilities in governance and leadership structures:

“Representation remains low. While I have mentioned that we have a respected deputy director with a disability who is treated without bias, and other staff with disabilities who experience normal working relations, overall representation of people with disabilities in the workforce is still significantly limited.” -
KII Participant, FCT, Male, State Actor



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“In most organizations, people with disabilities are often seen more as members rather than leaders, except for those with particularly outstanding personalities” - KII Participant, Imo, Female, Women-Led Organization

Box 1: Inclusive representation of youth with disabilities in structures

6.3 Barriers to community participation

Building on the findings regarding inclusive representation, the study further explored the barriers to community participation that could potentially improve inclusive representation. FGD participants identified several factors that have hindered youth with disabilities from fully engaging in community life. The data reveals that youth with disabilities encounter multiple barriers to community participation in the targeted states. These barriers include perceptions of inability, discrimination, segregation, misconceptions, and negative labelling, which collectively hinder their engagement in community life. Additionally, gender-focused barriers exacerbate these challenges, particularly for women with disabilities, who face socio-cultural biases that restrict their ability to participate fully in community activities. These biases often manifest in the form of stereotypes that question their capabilities, leading to exclusion from vital social and economic opportunities. Overall, the intersection of disability and gender creates a complex landscape of barriers that significantly limits the ability of youth with disabilities to engage meaningfully in their communities.

Below are excerpts from the FGDs:

“The primary barriers faced by people with disabilities are discrimination and segregation” - FGD Participant, Lagos, Male with visual impairment

“Mostly in the community, we live together, but if something regarding the community comes up, you won’t be included. Even if you insist on joining, you will be shown that you are not capable because of your condition” - FGD Participant, Kano, Female with physical impairment

Box 2: Barriers to community participation

6.4 Disability relevant advocacy

This section focuses on analysing key aspects of advocacy related to disabilities, particularly examining the involvement of youth with disabilities in developing advocacy agendas. It also explores the factors that



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contribute to the success of these advocacy efforts, as well as the challenges that hinder the meaningful participation of young men and women with disabilities across the targeted states.

6.4.1 Level of involvement of youth with disabilities in developing advocacy agendas

In the qualitative study, respondents from KIIs and FGDs conducted across various states highlighted the varying degrees of involvement of youth with disabilities in the development of advocacy agendas. These insights revealed a spectrum of engagement, from minimal to active participation, depending on the context and available opportunities for youth with disabilities to influence decision-making processes. The data reveals that while some organizations actively engage youth with disabilities in the development of disability inclusion agendas, the majority involve them only at the implementation stage. This late-stage involvement limits the ability of these young individuals to fully contribute to shaping strategies that directly affect their lives. By excluding them from the early stages of priority setting, planning and decision-making, their potential impact is significantly diminished, reducing their ownership and the effectiveness of initiatives aimed at fostering disability inclusion and advocacy.

Meanwhile, over the years, the disability community in Nigeria has achieved several significant advocacy milestones. These include the enactment of disability rights laws¹⁶, the creation of employment and empowerment opportunities for some youth with disabilities¹⁷, and a growing public awareness of disability rights. Additionally, there has been progress in the inclusion of persons with disabilities in electoral processes¹⁸, signalling a shift toward greater recognition of their rights and participation in key societal areas. These gains reflect the ongoing efforts to advance disability advocacy and inclusion across the country. Below are excerpts from the KIIs and FGDs:

“We engage them by getting them involved to participate in some of the workshops and training, especially in leadership aspects so that they will be capacitated to contribute and participate actively in developing advocacy agenda” - KII Participant, Imo, Male, OPDs

“It is through capacity building, adopting the train-the-trainer approach, where we guide and mentor individuals through workshops. Many people don't realize the power of information or that they have the potential to influence decisions. The ability is within them, but through nurturing and development,

¹⁶ <https://www.hrw.org/news/2019/01/25/nigeria-passes-disability-rights-law>

¹⁷ <https://guardian.ng/news/zulum-appoints-15-pwds-into-borno-education-sector-others/>

¹⁸ <https://www.thecable.ng/elections-inec-trains-visually-impaired-persons-on-use-of-braille-ballot-guide/>



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we help them grow in that area so they can become a voice and confidently advocate for change”- KII Participant, Abia, Male, OPDs

“We are involved in advocacy agendas, as our leaders ensure we are included. Our organisations are our drivers” – FGD, Female with Albinism

“Our voices are heard through NGOs, our organisations, and media platforms. However, some of our concerns are not implemented” – FGD, Female with Visual Impairment

Box 3: Level of involvement of youth with disabilities in developing advocacy agendas

6.4.2 Facilitating factors for Advocacy Gains

The data reveals a multitude of factors that have significantly contributed to the reasonable gains achieved in the disability inclusion struggle. Among the key factors identified are strong leadership capacity, which has provided direction and motivation for advocacy efforts, and strategic partnerships with advocacy groups and OPDs that enhance mobilization of support and collaboration among stakeholders. Community mobilization has also played a crucial role, engaging local populations in awareness-raising activities that highlight the importance of disability inclusion. Furthermore, increased public awareness about disability rights and issues has fostered a more supportive environment for persons with disabilities. These elements, when combined, create a robust framework for advancing the disability inclusion agenda, ensuring that the voices of people with disabilities are heard and that their rights are prioritized in policy and practice.

“The commitment of leadership of OPDs at both local and national levels has been a game changer for our advocacy efforts, pushing the inclusion agenda vigorously at different levels”- KII Participant, Imo, Male, OPDs

“The front drivers are women actually, and persons with disability are the frontrunners because the project itself is for persons with disability. So, women, youth, are the frontrunners of our implementation” - KII Participant, Borno, Female, Women-led Organizations

Box 4: Facilitating factors for Advocacy Gains

6.4.3 Constraints to effective engagement of youth with disabilities in Advocacy

The qualitative data gathered from the KIIs reveal several significant constraints that hinder effective youth participation in advocacy across the targeted locations. Notably, there is a prevalent lack of public awareness



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regarding disability rights and related issues, which limits the broader community's understanding and support for advocacy efforts. Additionally, some youth with disabilities lack adequate knowledge and comprehension of key advocacy elements such as the knowledge of disability rights, further impeding their ability to engage meaningfully. Financial constraints also play a critical role, as insufficient funding for disability inclusion programs restricts the resources available for advocacy initiatives. Moreover, the high levels of poverty faced by many individuals in these communities create further barriers, making it difficult for youth to prioritize advocacy work amidst their personal and more immediate economic struggles. Lastly, various community barriers, including social stigma and discrimination, compound these challenges, making it imperative to address these constraints to enhance youth participation in advocacy effectively.

“Sometimes it is the funding ... because when carrying out advocacy, you have to go and meet the person in his office, in his house, and sometimes you have challenges of funding” - KII Participant, Kano, Female, Women-led Organizations

“Some of the constraint to young men and women with disabilities engaging more effectively in advocacy are communication barriers, high level of poverty, inadequate funding for advocacy programme etc.” - KII Participant, Imo, Male, OPDs

Box 5: Constraints to effective engagement of youth with disabilities in Advocacy

7.0 RESILIENCE TO SHOCKS

The study assessed respondents' resilience and exposure to shocks by evaluating their capacity to cope with and adapt to various adversities. This comprehensive analysis focused on how individuals manage to absorb the impacts of shocks and sustain their well-being amid adversity. To capture this complexity, respondents' resilience was examined through five distinct stages: Exposure to Shocks, Shock Recovery, Absorptive Capacity, Adaptive Capacity, and Overall Resilience.

Each stage provides valuable insights into the respondents' experiences and their strategies for navigating difficulties. The **Exposure to Shocks** stage identifies the types of shocks encountered, while **Shock Recovery** examines how quickly individuals bounce back from these challenges. **Absorptive Capacity** reflects their ability to withstand impacts, and **Adaptive Capacity** measures their ability to adjust their strategies and behaviours in response to changing circumstances. Finally, the **Overall Resilience** stage integrates these



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factors to offer a holistic view of the respondents' ability to cope with shocks and stresses, highlighting areas for improvement and potential support mechanisms.

Exposure to Shock: Data on shocks among young persons with disabilities over the past year shows 67.2% experienced economic shocks, the most common type, followed by health (32.8%), social (15.5%), and environmental (12.5%) shocks. Notably, 17.9% faced no shocks. Women with disabilities were more vulnerable to economic shocks than men (69.6% vs. 63.6%), likewise health shocks (34.4% vs. 30.4%), likely due to gender disparities in economic opportunities and healthcare burdens. On the other hand, men faced more social shocks than women (18.7% vs. 13.4%). Additionally, 20.1% of men reported no shock, compared to 16.4% of women, underscoring women's overall vulnerability. On a scale of 0 to 16, the average shock exposure index is quite low, with an overall score of 3.7. Men had a slightly lower average of 3.6, while women averaged 3.7.

Recovery from Shocks: The average recovery index from shocks, on a scale of 0 to 16, indicates a very low level of recovery across the sample, with an overall average of 3.1. This low index suggests that young persons with disabilities face challenges in bouncing back from economic, social, and health shocks. The slight gender differences in recovery scores show that women, with a score of 3.1, demonstrate marginally better recovery compared to men, who have an index of 3.0.

Absorptive Capacity: The Absorptive Capacity Index of respondents, ranging from 0 to 100, reflects the capacity of persons with disabilities to cope with shocks and stresses.

The overall shock absorptive capacity index stands at 43.39, indicating a moderate ability to cope with shocks across the population. When disaggregated by gender, men have a higher average absorptive capacity index (46.41) compared to women (41.42). This suggests that men may be slightly better equipped to cope with shocks, possibly due to better access to resources, networks, or opportunities that enhance their resilience. On the other hand, the lower absorptive capacity index for women highlights a vulnerability gap, with females potentially facing more barriers to building resilience against shocks. This could be linked to factors such as reduced economic opportunities, limited access to support systems, or disparities in healthcare and social protection, making them less capable of effectively responding to adverse events.

Adaptive Capacity: The Adaptive Resilience Index ranging from 0 to 100, measures the capacity of youth with disabilities to survive and adapt to shocks and stresses.



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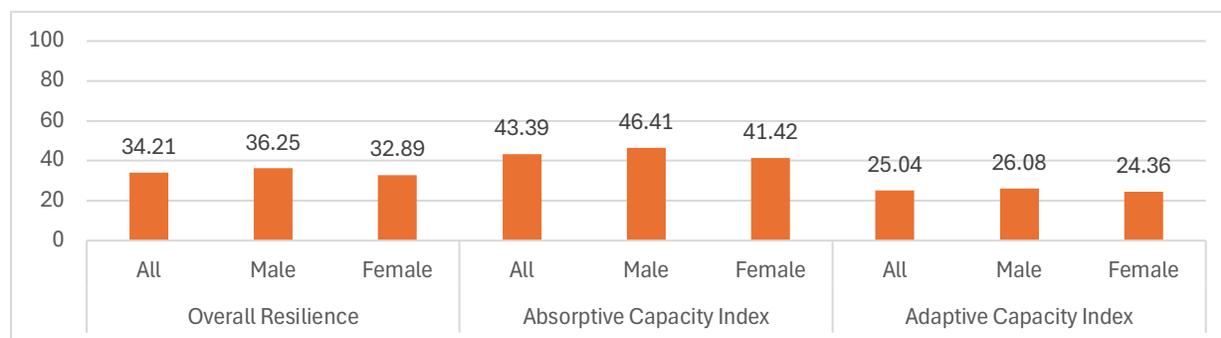


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The overall average shock adaptive capacity index is 25.03, indicating a relatively low capacity for adapting to shocks across the sample of youth with disabilities. When disaggregated by gender, males have a slightly higher adaptive capacity index (26.08) compared to females (24.36) suggesting that men may have developed a marginally better capacity to cope with shocks. The relatively low overall score for both genders, points to the need for targeted interventions to strengthen shock resilience among young persons with disabilities.

Overall Resilience: As shown in Figure 6, the combined absorptive and adaptive capacities of youth with disabilities to cope, survive, and adapt to shocks and stresses are represented by an overall resilience measure on a scale of 0 to 100. The average score is 34.21, with men scoring higher at 36.24 compared to women at 32.89. These figures indicate that, on average, both groups display relatively low resilience, but women face slightly lower resilience capacity compared to men. Youth in the older age category (25-35 years) also have a higher resilience score (35.32) compared to the younger youth, 18-24 years (31.09).

Figure 6: Resilience Scores



Data source: Baseline, 2024.

8.0 DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

The socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents have significant implications for designing and implementing interventions aimed at promoting disability inclusion. The baseline survey findings reveal significant deficits in a range of access conditions and inclusion outcomes among young women and men with disabilities alike. Even so, there are notable gender imbalances, highlighting the need for further interventions that address the unique challenges faced by young women with disabilities, who may be underrepresented in decision-making roles and economic opportunities. Additionally, the low level and



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precarity of economic participation among most youth with disabilities emphasises the importance of focusing intervention programmes on enhancing employment, skills acquisition, and access to opportunities for this age group. Younger respondents, who constitute just over a quarter of the sample, may require tailored support mechanisms aimed at improving educational attainment and facilitating early career development to help them achieve self-sufficiency. The data on rural-urban distribution also provide valuable insights, indicating that rural youth with disabilities represent a significant demographic. Consequently, programmes designed for this group must address the unique barriers they encounter, such as limited access to resources and social services. Moreover, the diversity in educational attainment necessitates that support is tailored to their differing levels of aptitude.

8.1 Employment Status, Quality of Life and Perception of Disability Inclusion

The data on employment status reveals a high unemployment rate among youth with disabilities, reflecting the significant challenges they encounter in accessing job opportunities. Notably, 67% of those employed are self-employed, indicating that economic engagement is primarily through independent work. This reliance on self-employment suggests barriers to traditional employment pathways. Additionally, the data highlights a persistent gender disparity, with 67.6% of unemployed youth with disabilities being women, illustrating the compounded challenges they face compared to their male counterparts. This disparity emphasizes the importance of addressing the intersectionality of gender and economic status in designing effective interventions.

The high unemployment rate (47.2%), particularly among women (52.6%) and the small proportion of youth with disabilities in D&F work (11.1%), with more males being in D&F work than females highlights the systemic barriers that women with disabilities encounter in obtaining jobs particularly those that provide respect, purpose, and recognition. These findings reinforce a substantial gap in employment access, highlights gender-specific challenges rooted in societal attitudes, discrimination, and the lack of effective policy implementation and underscores the need for inclusive employment initiatives. particularly for young women.

Also, the findings highlight a troubling average quality of life score of 19.4 on a scale of 1 to 100 for youth with disabilities in Nigeria. This score reflects significant challenges in well-being, indicating that both young men and women are grappling with issues that impede their overall quality of life. The findings are particularly alarming given the context of ongoing efforts to promote inclusivity and empower marginalized groups. When examining the data by gender, it becomes evident that men scored slightly higher at 20.3



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compared to women, who averaged 18.7. This gender disparity suggests that women with disabilities are likely facing additional hardships that negatively impact their quality of life. Furthermore, the findings link the low quality of life scores to the limited access of youth with disabilities to dignified and fulfilling employment opportunities. Limited employment options are not just a standalone issue; they are often accompanied by inadequate access to essential services, such as healthcare, clean water, safe sanitation, and reliable transportation. These services are crucial for enhancing the quality of life and well-being of individuals.

The findings on disability and gender inclusion indicates a mixed perception with only 41.3% of respondents agreeing and 6.1% strongly agreeing that disability and gender inclusion is addressed. Meanwhile, a significant proportion—12.2% disagreed and 1.3% strongly disagreed—along with 39% remaining neutral on the issue. These responses suggest that while there is some acknowledgment of inclusion efforts, a considerable number of respondents perceive a gap in the effective implementation of inclusive practices. A deeper analysis of the data revealed a higher proportion of women with disabilities disagreeing to statements about inclusion. This finding reflects the possibility that women with disabilities may experience heightened feelings of exclusion and disconnection from inclusion initiatives being proposed or implemented. This gender disparity suggests that intervention programmes may need to focus more explicitly on the unique challenges faced by women with disabilities to ensure that their needs and perspectives are adequately represented and addressed.

In sum, the findings from the survey highlight a complex interplay of challenges faced by youth with disabilities in Nigeria, particularly emphasizing the barriers to accessing dignified and fulfilling employment. It is evident that traditional employment pathways remain largely inaccessible to youth with disability and the mixed perceptions surrounding disability and gender inclusion highlight the inadequacies in implementing effective practices, thus the study suggests a pressing need for intervention programmes that specifically address the unique challenges faced by women, ensuring their voices and experiences are central to the design and implementation of inclusive initiatives aimed at improving employment access and overall quality of life for youth with disabilities.

8.2 Participation in Community Life and Disability Inclusion Advocacy

In measuring the participation of youth with disabilities in community life and disability inclusion advocacy in Nigeria, several factors were considered and discussed, including agency and voice, the inclusive



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representation of youth with disabilities in leadership structures, barriers to participation in community life, involvement in disability inclusion advocacy efforts, and resilience.

The findings on agency and voice reveal that only a minute proportion of unemployed respondents (0.8%) believe in their ability to confidently influence their communities and ecosystems at large. Without stable employment, these youth find it challenging to assert their agency, reflecting the crucial role that economic opportunities play in fostering empowerment and involvement in societal systems. As employment status improves, so does the agency and voice of youth with disabilities. Youth who are "Employed but Uncovered" for D&F work experience a moderate increase in influence, as 14.9% report their ability to shape systems and influence their communities. This trend continues for the "Employed & Progressing" group, with 23.3% believing in their ability to influence systems. This indicates that as they approach more stable employment, their sense of agency and capacity to contribute to community decision-making also grows. Ultimately, those in the "Employed & Achieved" category—having secured dignified work—demonstrate the highest levels of influence with 66.7% reporting confidence in their ability to shape and influence systems. This reflects the vital relationship between employment stability and the ability to exercise agency. However, significant gender disparities persist, with male youth with disabilities (20.6%) generally enjoying greater opportunities to influence community and labour market systems than their female counterparts (14.3%). Overall, the data reinforces the importance of stable employment in enhancing the agency and voice of youth with disabilities while highlighting the critical need to bridge the gender gap in these outcomes.

The data on Inclusive representation of youth with disabilities in structures indicates a consensus among participants that overall representation remains low, with the notable exception of Organizations of Persons with Disabilities, where all members are individuals with disabilities. This stark contrast justifies the need for more inclusive practices in various sectors, as OPDs serve as a model for representation but do not reflect the broader landscape of leadership opportunities available to youth with disabilities. While some individuals with disabilities in certain organizations report experiencing bias-free working conditions and positive relationships with their colleagues, these experiences are isolated and not indicative of systemic inclusion. The limited representation of youth with disabilities across the workforce suggests that individual success stories do not translate into wider organizational changes or an inclusive culture.

Furthermore, the findings on barriers to community participation shows that youth with disabilities encounter various obstacles, including perceptions of inability, discrimination, segregation, misconceptions, and negative labelling. Collectively, these barriers impede their active engagement in community life, limiting their ability to contribute to and benefit from community initiatives. Also, gender-focused barriers



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further compound these challenges, particularly for women with disabilities, who are disproportionately affected by socio-cultural biases. These biases manifest as stereotypes that undermine their capabilities and reinforce societal perceptions of their inferiority. As a result, women with disabilities often face exclusion from critical social and economic opportunities, significantly impacting their quality of life and overall well-being. This gendered lens is crucial for understanding the nuanced experiences of youth with disabilities, as it emphasizes that addressing barriers to participation must include a focus on gender dynamics.

In the same vein, the findings on the involvement in disability inclusion advocacy efforts shows that while a subset of organizations actively engage youth with disabilities in developing disability inclusion agendas, the predominant trend reveals that most organizations involve them only during the implementation stage. This late-stage involvement severely limits the ability of youth with disabilities to contribute meaningfully to the formulation of strategies and policies that directly impact their lives. Their exclusion from the early stages of priority setting, planning and decision-making processes diminishes their potential influence and ultimately affects the overall effectiveness of initiatives designed to promote disability inclusion. The implications of this late-stage involvement are profound. By not integrating youth with disabilities into the foundational aspects of advocacy efforts, organizations miss the opportunity to harness their unique insights and experiences and secure their joint ownership of the advocacy agendas. This lack of engagement can lead to a disconnect between the initiatives being implemented and the actual needs and preferences of the target population. Consequently, programmes may be less relevant or responsive, hindering the potential for impactful change.

Based on the findings on the resilience capacity of youth with disabilities, the overall resilience score of 34.21 indicates that both groups have relatively low resilience capacity. This suggests that youth with disabilities, irrespective of gender, face significant challenges in coping with and recovering from shocks, whether economic, social, or environmental. The slightly better resilience score for women may reflect a marginally stronger ability to withstand and recover from these challenges, but the overall low score points to widespread vulnerabilities across the board.

8.3 Opportunities and barriers to participation in employment

The study highlights a range of economic opportunities for youth with disabilities.

- Agriculture: Entrepreneurial pathways exist in agricultural value chains, with opportunities not merely in crop cultivation and retailing but also in non-traditional roles such as logistics and input



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supply (e.g., fertilizers, seed and animal feed). On the face of it, these activities would appear to be relatively readily adaptable to individual capabilities.

- **Creatives:** The flexibility of the creatives sector appears to be allowing for youth with disabilities to express their talents and interests in the labour marketplace. Some young persons with disabilities are already engaging the sector and expressing their talents in fashion, hairdressing, bead/jewellery making, mixology, handcrafts, and teaching creative skills. Cosmetology, leatherwork, entertainment and still art are further areas in which informants perceived relatively high demand for creative services. Overall, these activities appear suitable for persons with disabilities due to their largely sedentary nature. Further, the sheer diversity of activities shared by participants in the qualitative interviews also suggests that the creatives sector offers under-exploited opportunities for young people with diverse impairments.
- **Digital economy:** This study identifies promising roles in digital marketing, coding, web design, data entry, audio/video editing, and content creation. These too are particularly suitable for youth with disabilities because they do not involve physically demanding tasks. Remote work, similarly, eliminates the need for commuting, along with its financial and social costs. Support with accessing adaptive technologies would enhance accessibility and further empower participants.

Several barriers to participation were identified by the study. Below are key areas in which obstacles were experienced by the young women and men with disabilities in the baseline:

- **Employment:** Overall, there is very limited institutional support for, and acknowledgement of, the contributions that youth with disabilities can make to provisioning in their own families as well as to the wider economy. As a result, there remain enduring societal and workplace biases limiting their access to the labour market and undermining their job security and career advancement. Along with financial barriers, structural barriers like inaccessible advertisements further limit de facto opportunity for youth with disabilities.
- **Resources:** Prejudice appears to be the most significant barrier to accessing financial and technological resources. Negative attitudes from financial institutions leave youth with disabilities with limited funding options.

In the agricultural sector, youth with disabilities experience limited access to land, business finance, and agribusiness knowledge. For now, too few young persons with disabilities are exploiting opportunities beyond direct production and petty retailing.



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The obstacles in the creatives sector are not dissimilar. Young persons with impairments typically experience a lack of relevant technical skills, compounded by societal biases. Reinforcing these are challenges with the built environment/ physical inaccessibility of sector venues and training centres.

Youth with disabilities also face obstacles in participating effectively in the digital economy. In addition to accessibility challenges with the built environment, they also find it difficult accessing digital tools and skills training tailored to their unique needs.



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9.0 CONCLUSION

The Baseline Survey and RGA acknowledges that youth with disabilities in Nigeria face myriads of challenges which are often compounded by gender-specific issues that further marginalize women within this group. Many young people with disabilities encounter significant barriers, including limited access to education, inadequate support services, and pervasive societal stigma. Women, in particular, experience additional layers of discrimination, which can hinder their access to resources and opportunities necessary for their personal and professional development. These challenges necessitate urgent attention to create a more equitable landscape for all youth with disabilities, ensuring they can pursue dignified and fulfilling work.

Despite these challenges, the survey has identified promising opportunities within the agricultural value chain and the creatives sector and digital economy. In agriculture, there is potential for youth with disabilities to engage in various roles, from production to processing and marketing, particularly in accessible farming practices and technologies. Additionally, the digital economy offers a wealth of opportunities in areas such as digital marketing, coding, web design, and content creation, allowing these young individuals to leverage their skills in a rapidly evolving job market. These sectors not only align with their capabilities but also provide flexible working arrangements that can accommodate their specific needs, fostering a sense of dignity and fulfilment in their work.

However, the assessment also highlights existing barriers that impede access to dignified employment and entrepreneurship opportunities. Many youths with disabilities face difficulties in acquiring the necessary skills due to a lack of targeted training programmes and resources. Additionally, societal perceptions and discrimination can deter employers from considering them for positions, leading to further exclusion from the job market. The scarcity of mentorship and networking opportunities exacerbates these issues, leaving many young people without the guidance and support needed to navigate their career paths effectively.

Furthermore, structural barriers such as inadequate transportation, limited access to assistive technologies, and insufficient financial support further hinder the participation of youth with disabilities in the agricultural and digital sectors. Addressing these barriers is essential to create an inclusive environment that fosters the economic empowerment of disabled youth. Policymakers and stakeholders must prioritise initiatives that not only provide resources and training but also challenge societal attitudes that perpetuate discrimination.

In conclusion, while the challenges faced by youth with disabilities are significant, the opportunities identified within the agricultural value chain and the creatives sector and digital economy represent a pathway towards greater inclusion and empowerment. By addressing the existing barriers and investing in targeted support mechanisms, we can unlock the potential of these young individuals, enabling them to



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contribute meaningfully to society and achieve dignified and fulfilling work in a more equitable environment.

10.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the extensive observations and identified needs for disability and gender inclusion from the assessment, the following recommendations are proposed to support the implementation of the WCW programme in Nigeria. These recommendations aim to address the wide range of barriers faced by youth and women with disabilities:

1. Develop Inclusive Training and Capacity-Building Programmes

- Develop and deliver accessible digital skills training, including courses on coding, digital marketing, web design, content creation, and data analysis.
- Design customized entrepreneurship training programmes focusing on business development, financial literacy, and market access for youth and women with disabilities.
- Establish agricultural training that incorporates accessible farming techniques, modern agricultural practices, and processing technologies suited to youth and women with disabilities.
- Partner with industry experts to provide mentorship programmes, pairing disabled youth and women with experienced professionals to guide their career or business development.
- Develop flexible learning options, including online platforms, to allow participants with mobility challenges to access training remotely.

2. Enhance Access to Assistive Technologies, Social Services, and Support Networks

- Identify and partner with suppliers of assistive technologies such as screen readers, adaptive keyboards, and hearing aids to make these tools available at subsidised rates or through grants.
- Establish a Fund to provide assistive technologies and mobility aids to youth and women with disabilities, ensuring their inclusion in both physical and digital work environments.



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- Facilitate access to critical social services such as healthcare, housing support, and transport services, ensuring that youth and women with disabilities can participate fully in employment and entrepreneurial activities.
- Set up support services such as counselling, mental health programmes, and peer support groups to address emotional and psychological needs, particularly for those facing workplace or social exclusion.
- Provide job coaching and personal assistance services to support youth with disabilities in workplace integration and entrepreneurship ventures.

3. Foster Inclusive Employment Policies and Practices

- Partner with private companies and government institutions to promote inclusive recruitment practices, providing employers training on disability inclusion and equal opportunity policies.
- Establish a recognition and incentive scheme for businesses that create inclusive and accessible workplaces, or public recognition to employers who hire individuals with disabilities.
- Advocate for stronger enforcement of the Disability Rights Law in Nigeria, working with policymakers to ensure compliance and accountability.
- Create inclusive workplace toolkits for employers, offering practical guidance on adapting workspaces, providing accommodations, and fostering an inclusive work culture.
- Facilitate job placement programmes specifically targeting youth and women with disabilities in sectors such as agriculture, digital economy, and the creative industries.

4. Promote Gender-Specific Interventions

- Develop entrepreneurship training programmes that focus on the unique needs of women with disabilities, including tailored support for starting and scaling businesses in agriculture, digital economy, and the creative sectors.
- Establish gender-inclusive financial support schemes, such as micro-grants or low-interest loans, targeting women with disabilities to promote business ownership and self-employment.



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- Partner with women-led organisations and advocacy groups to design and deliver leadership and capacity-building workshops for women with disabilities, fostering their participation in decision-making processes.
- Conduct gender sensitivity training for public and private sector actors to raise awareness of the specific challenges women with disabilities face and promote gender equity in policy implementation.

5. Create Accessible Financing Mechanisms

- Collaborate with financial institutions and microfinance organisations to create tailored loan products and grants specifically for youth and women with disabilities, ensuring access to capital for entrepreneurship ventures.
- Establish a grant scheme that provides seed funding to disabled entrepreneurs in the agricultural value chain, creative industries, and digital economy.
- Offer financial literacy training to youth and women with disabilities, helping them manage finances, access loans, and develop sustainable businesses.
- Partner with development banks and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) to create a revolving fund for business development services, ensuring long-term financial support for start-ups led by persons with disabilities.

6. Raise Awareness and Challenge Social Stigma

- Launch a national awareness campaign to challenge negative stereotypes about disability, using media, social networks, and community engagement to promote positive images of disabled youth and women in the workforce.
- Collaborate with OPDs to host community dialogues and workshops aimed at educating the public on the capabilities and rights of people with disabilities.
- Organise disability awareness and inclusion workshops for schools, employers, and community leaders to break down societal barriers and foster a culture of inclusivity.



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- Develop educational materials (e.g., videos, brochures) that highlight success stories of youth and women with disabilities in employment and entrepreneurship, inspiring others and reducing stigma.

7. Advocacy for Improved and Inclusive Social Services and Infrastructure

- Advocate for accessible public transport systems, ensuring that youth and women with disabilities can travel to workplaces and participate in entrepreneurial activities with ease.
- Partner with government and local authorities to improve physical infrastructure such as ramps, accessible buildings, and facilities in schools, workplaces, and public spaces.
- Promote the expansion of inclusive healthcare services that cater specifically to the needs of disabled individuals, ensuring access to affordable and quality healthcare.
- Advocate for social protection schemes tailored for persons with disabilities, including subsidies for housing, healthcare, and utilities to enhance their quality of life.
- Work with government bodies to improve access to education for youth with disabilities by advocating for inclusive schools, scholarships, and specialised educational resources.

8. Ensure Multi-Stakeholder Collaboration

- Establish a multi-stakeholder working group comprising government agencies, private sector leaders, OPDs, and civil society organisations to oversee the implementation and monitoring of the WCW programme.
- Facilitate regular roundtable discussions with key stakeholders to assess the programme's progress, share lessons learned, and adapt interventions to meet the evolving needs of youth and women with disabilities.
- Partner with international development organisations to provide technical support, increase funding, and expertise to enhance the reach and impact of the WCW programme.
- Develop a comprehensive monitoring and evaluation (M&E) framework that involves youth and women with disabilities in tracking the programme's impact and ensuring accountability among stakeholders.



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- Engage in advocacy campaigns at the national level to promote the inclusion of youth and women with disabilities in all government policies and programmes, ensuring long-term sustainability of the WCW programme's goals.



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12.0 ANNEXES

12.1 Data Collection Tools

[Data Collection Tools_NIGERIA_Final](#)



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12. 2 Additional Information

To assess the severity of impairment, the Washington group set of questions was used. Inability to perform an activity at all with respect to a particular impairment indicates severe disability, experiencing a lot of difficulty implies moderate disability, some difficulty indicates mild disability, and no difficulty implies no disability. For respondents with physical impairment, 9.6% reported not being able to walk or climb at all, 29.8% have a lot of difficulty walking/climbing steps, 38.2% reported some difficulty and 22.4% indicated no difficulty in walking or climbing steps. Regarding visual impairment, 41.2% cannot see at all, 25.7% experience a lot of difficulty even when wearing glasses, 19.9% reported having some difficulty and 13.2% do not have any difficulty seeing. About 45.5% of respondents with hearing impairment cannot hear at all, 15.9% reported a lot of difficulty hearing even if using hearing aid, 27.3% reported some difficulty and 11.4% have no difficulty. For those with intellectual disabilities, 5.3% cannot remember or concentrate at all, 47.4% do so with a lot of difficulty, 31.6% with some difficulty and 15.8% do not have difficulty in remembering or concentrating. Self-care activities such as washing all over or dressing cannot be done at all by 1.3% or respondents, 14% do such activities with a lot of difficulty, 37.8% experience some difficulty and 47% are able to wash all over or dress up without difficulty. Communicating using their usual language cannot be done at all by 1.7% of respondents, 7% are able to communicate with a lot of difficulty, 12.2% with some difficulty and the majority (79.2%) are able to communicate with no difficulty at all.

The data reveals that 11.1% of respondents have fully accessed D&F work, 33.2% are employed and making progress towards achieving D&F work and 8.7% are employed but uncovered for D&F. Examining the demographic characteristics and their relation to accessing dignified and fulfilling work, the data shows a higher proportion of males (13.1%) with full access to D&F work than females (9.7%). Also, more youth between 25 and 35 years (13%) have fully accessed D&F work than those aged 18-24 years (5.6%). There is, however, little variation in access to D&F work across location (refer to figure 2). This highlights gender disparity in access, where women and younger youth with disabilities may face greater barriers to securing employment that provides reliable income, respect in the workplace, sense of purpose, and reputable work.

Linking these outcomes to low access to dignified and fulfilling work, it is likely that the poor quality of life can be attributed to limited employment opportunities and inadequate inclusion in the workforce. Low access to dignified work often correlates with low access to essential services such as healthcare, clean water, safe sanitation, electricity, internet, transport, food, and telephone services, all of which contribute



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to a lower quality of life. The slight gender disparity also suggests that women with disabilities may encounter even more barriers, including gender-based discrimination.

“Yes, there are definitely opportunities in the business of transporting agricultural produce” - FGD Participant, Imo, Male with physical impairment

“Yes, because right now, many people make money from selling fertilizers” - FGD Participant, Kano, Male with visual impairment

“Yes, for example, if they acquire farms, they could establish a substantial operation. If they have access to a car, they could enter the transportation sector. Similarly, owning a car could enable them to engage in buying and selling activities” - KII Participant, Imo, Male, Labour Market Actor

“One major attitudinal barrier is the discrimination faced by persons with disabilities in agriculture; governments often exclude us from agricultural programmes and resources like fertilizers and equipment. They question our capacity to work and assume we cannot handle agricultural tasks” - FGD Participant, Imo, Male with physical impairment

“The only barrier I can say is that youth with disabilities usually from poor background with little or no resources such as land or funding to start a business in the agricultural value chain” - FGD Participant, Kano, Male with physical impairment

“Aside from bead making, I am a mixologist. I make cocktails, mocktails, smoothies, and other drinks” - FGD Participant, FCT, Female with albinism

“For me, I focus on home and handcrafted products, and I also teach these skills. I visit secondary schools, primary schools, and churches to teach students, including those in boarding schools. Additionally, I sell the products I make.” - FGD Participant, Lagos, Female with visual impairment

“In the creative sector, they can explore artistic trades like painting, tailoring, or jewelry making, which can be carried out in a stationary environment” - KII Participant, Imo, Male, State Actor

“Creative industry, I think, is so, so untapped because there is a lot that persons with disability in the comfort of their home can do in that sector. For instance, if you are a person on wheelchair, you can be an artist, as in someone who paints, draw portraits etc.” - KII Participant, FCT, Female, Labour Market Actor



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“For persons with disabilities seeking employment in the creative sector, a significant barrier is the lack of relevant knowledge, as many individuals do not possess the necessary skills or knowledge” - FGD

Participant, Lagos, Female with visual impairment

“One of my main barriers is finance. Also, I feel that I have not fully equipped myself to keep up with the evolving bead-making business.” - FGD Participant, FCT, Female with albinism stigma, lack of awareness and support. For young women with disabilities, additional challenges include gender-specific barriers such as religion and cultural beliefs, societal expectations, and safety concerns.” -

KII Participant, Imo, Male, State Actor

“Web designing with the aid of the screen reader and advertising on the social media like Facebook, X (formerly Twitter) and YouTube as well” - FGD Participant, Lagos, Female of short stature

“Marketing online like I do with advertising from home on my phone, where I upload products on my WhatsApp status, and from there people reach out to me for patronage” - FGD Participant, Lagos, Male with visual impairment

“I am engaged in the digital economy by doing data entry using Excel, and we also provide video and audio editing services” - FGD Participant, Lagos, Male with hearing impairment

“The opportunities available for youth with disabilities are numerous These include digital marketing, audio editing, word formatting, data entry, and many more” - FGD Participant, Lagos, Male with visual impairment

“These are areas where I see persons with disabilities excelling, particularly in IT-related fields like coding. They possess remarkable talent, and many of those I have encountered are incredibly intelligent. I believe they tend to perform exceptionally well in these areas, as they are able to focus and face fewer challenges compared to other sectors” - KII Participant, Lagos, Male, Labour Market Actor

“In our state, there are approximately six skill acquisition centres; however, none of these centers have trained individuals with disabilities, and there are no specialized provisions for skills training tailored to persons with disabilities” - FGD Participant, Borno, Male with physical impairment

“There is also a lack of awareness within the community. Many members of society are still unaware that persons with disabilities are fully capable of engaging in activities like digital marketing, online advertising, and selling products digitally” - FGD Participant, Lagos, Male with visual impairment

“There was a time I wanted to get an ATM card from First Bank, but they told me that as a visually impaired customer, I had to complete several steps—fill out a form, go to court, and obtain an affidavit.



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When I asked why, they explained that if anything were to happen to my account, no one would be held responsible” - FGD Participant, Abia, Male with visual impairment

“Persons with disabilities are often overlooked in these programmes. For example, when the Ministry of Youth and Sports announces an empowerment programme for Nigerian youth, they simply state that people with disabilities are encouraged to apply. However, on the day of the event, accessibility issues arise—the invitation isn't accessible, the environment isn't accommodating, and communication barriers prevent full participation” - FGD Participant, FCT, Female with albinism

