

POTTERS GALLERY INITIATIVE

REPORT ON A CONSULTATIVE MEETING WITH STAKEHOLDERS IN THE CREATIVE INDUSTRY

ON

DISABILITY INCLUSION IN THE CREATIVE INDUSTRY IN NIGERIA.



DATE: 27TH SEPTEMBER 2021

VENUE: UN HOUSE, WING 1A, PLOT 617/6 DIPLOMATIC DRIVE, ABUJA,
NIGERIA.

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ACRONYMS

UNESCO.....United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization

PWDs..... People With Disabilities

UNUnited Nations

CSOs.....Civil Society Organization

NGOs.....Non-Governmental Organizations

CIFI.....Creative Industry Financing Initiative

CBN.....Central Bank of Nigeria

I.T..... Information Technology

CAC..... Corporate Affairs Commission.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A disability is commonly defined as a physical or mental condition that makes it difficult for a person to walk, see, hear, speak, or learn. While some are born with disabilities, others acquire it as a result of an illness or accident.

Nigeria is estimated at having a population of over 200 million of which PWDs constitute about 30 million. However, social protection for disabled people in Nigeria is still relatively weak. Despite a recently approved Discrimination Against Person with Disability Prohibition Act that was only accented after years of relentless advocacy by disability rights' groups and activists, there has been no significant improvement in the protection and inclusion of PWDs in terms of social, political, and economic sectors. Quite a high percentage of PWDs are asserted to be living in abject poverty and left to languish in the rural areas with untapped potentials due to these stringent socio-economic barriers.

According to statistics, the Creative Industry in Nigeria is the largest employer of labour in the country. Unfortunately, very few PWDs actively participate in this lucrative sector. This is as a result of long existing perceptions and hinderances associated with disabilities. In order to break down these barriers and change the narratives, Potters Gallery Initiative in partnership with UNESCO organized a one-day consultative meeting with stakeholders in the Creative Industry to proffer solutions aimed at making the creative industry inclusive and accessible to PWDs.

The one-day strategic meeting was held at the UN House on the 27th of September 2021, it had major stakeholders in the creative industry in attendance. Discussions revolved around strategic societal reorientation, inclusion, education, advocacy, and training of relevant stakeholders and PWDs to propel positive attitudinal changes.

After intensive deliberations, recommendations were made and duly noted to address existing negative stereotypes, profiling, and perceptions towards PWDs. This meeting came to an end with the stakeholders promising to continually promote the inclusion of PWDs.

MEETING OBJECTIVES

The primary objectives of the meeting were to bring together key players in the Creative Industry to seek expert opinion and input from the leaders of the industry on ways of addressing marginalization and exclusion of PWDs in the creative Industry.

MEETING DELIVERY FORMAT

For effective delivery of this one-day stake holder meeting, tools such as note pads, & pens were made available. The plenary sessions involved interactions, brainstorm and discussions which boosted inter-relations within participants. Presentations were made using PowerPoint & Infographics whilst facilitators anchored the plenary sessions in an interactive format which allowed for feedbacks, questions and recommendations

KEY ELEMENTS

- ✚ The Creative Industry contributes over 3.4% to economic growth globally, at a growth rate of 8.7%.
- ✚ UNESCO rates Nigeria's Nollywood as the second largest film industry in the world with an audience of over 200 million across Africa.
- ✚ The 3 main sectors within the Nigerian Creative Industry are Fashion, Film & Music.
- ✚ The World Bank estimates that 30 million Nigerians are PWDs which makes up over 15% of the total population.
- ✚ Social exclusion of PWDs in Nigeria is one of the highest globally.
- ✚ 70% of Artists with disabilities hide their disabilities in order not to "jeopardize" their chances at a gig.

*The Creative Industry in Nigeria is the largest Industry in contributing to the GDP, but the question is; **How inclusive is it?***

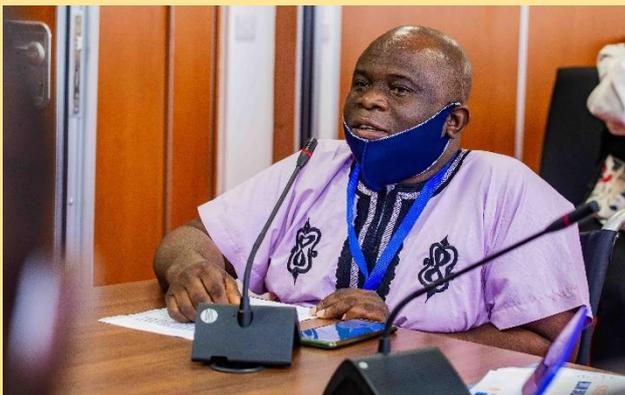
.....Brian Micheal Mulungi



SETTING THE STAGE

Following an opening prayer and introduction by all participants, the Moderator welcomed everyone to the meeting stating that there is no better time for the consultative meeting than now.

Donald Unanka, Creative Director, Potters Gallery Initiative, in his welcome remarks, set the stage by welcoming everyone to the meeting, thanked and acknowledged the support and partnership of UNESCO Abuja Multisectoral Office



Donald Unanka, Creative Director, Potters Gallery Initiative giving opening remarks. Photo; Potters Gallery Initiative

He stated that the meeting was designed and planned to interface and engage the disability community in Nigeria with the Stakeholders in the creative industry.

He said the meeting is timely and strategic; timely because it is coming at an exact time of the enactment of a Disability Act and Implementing Commission to drive

the inclusion of PWDs in all areas. Also strategic in the sense that the film industry for example has a great power to rewrite the stories of PWDs, change public negative perception, and narratives for the better.

He acknowledged the presence of the leaders of the creative industry at the meeting as a huge investment and a clear demonstration of commitment towards becoming partners in progress.

He commented in response to a recent study which showed that the Nigeria creative industry is the second largest in the world in terms of contribution to GDP. He said he had no doubt that the meeting would be productive and that PWDs stand to benefit more from the Creative Industry Value Chain.

WELCOME ADDRESS

Nneka Okafor, Head of Sector, Social, and Human Sciences, UNESCO Regional Office, Abuja, in her Welcome Address acknowledged the presence of the Creative Industry leaders and all participants on behalf of the Director and staff of UNESCO Regional Office, Abuja.



Nneka Okafor, Head of Sector, Social and Human Sciences, UNESCO regional office, Abuja giving a welcome address. Photo; Potters Gallery Initiative

She congratulated Potters Gallery Initiative who was found worthy by UNESCO to organize this workshop.

Furthermore, she pointed out that the discussions around the round table meeting was one amongst many recommendations raised during a Policy Dialogue on Disability Art Access in Nigeria which held i June 22, 2021.

She further stated that UNESCO is one of the UN agencies that promote and support the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities adopted in 2006, and also envisions a knowledgeable society that is inclusive, pluralistic, equitable, open and participatory for all its citizens especially people with disabilities. To achieve this, “UNESCO acknowledges that nobody can advocate for issues surrounding people with disabilities and their social inclusion, better than persons with disabilities themselves, as they are living the experiences and understand their

needs better than anyone. She reiterated that UNESCO is the lead agency in the UN Country Team promoting the issues around persons with disability and in this regard, has always keyed into many activities to assist the communities of PWD.

Furthermore, she mentioned that since it is believed that one of the many challenges facing PWDs in Nigeria is mostly socio-cultural and its representation in Nollywood, the essence of meeting with stakeholders in the Nigerian Film Industry, Comedians and other image markers cannot be overemphasized.

In conclusion, she supposed research in Mass Communication has long asserted that media frames are instilled with cultural myths. Hence a call for the consideration of this knowledge, bearing in mind a social group like PWDs as they still experience many architectural, occupational, educational, and communication barriers that keep them from being able to participate within society. She hoped that the meeting will help in creating awareness and also be an instrument to change attitude towards PWDs in Nigeria.

GOODWILL MESSAGE

Musa Muazu Musa, Special Assistant to the Executive Secretary, National Disability Commission, on behalf of the commission thanked Potters Gallery and UNESCO for organizing the meeting. He expressed his pleasure, considering the anticipated impact it will make in social lives of PWDs. He said



Musa Muazu Musa, Special to the Executive Secretary, National Disability Commission giving a goodwill message. Photo;Potters Gallery Initiative

the Commission was established by the Law in furtherance to Section 31 of the Discrimination Against PWDs Act to protect, prioritize and promote the rights of PWDs.

He said one of the veritable tools in changing social norms and behaviors is to portray positivity of disability to the local and international communities through entertainment channels. In this regard, he urged all PWDs to see themselves as partners towards changing the narratives. He conveyed the willingness of the Commission to leave open doors and readiness to partner with everyone in achieving positive changes.

DID YOU KNOW?

The National Disability Commission was established by the Federal Government, charged specifically with the responsibility of ensuring the inclusion and welfare of persons with disabilities as enshrined in the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Law in Nigeria.



EXPLORING OPPORTUNITIES IN THE CREATIVE INDUSTRY FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES IN NIGERIA

After the goodwill message, Brian Michael, gave a presentation on the various opportunities PWDs can explore, citing how high social exclusion still is in Nigeria and PWDs not adequately represented in the creative industry. He buttressed that the creative spaces are inaccessible for PWDs as getting to limelight requires sustainable funding mechanisms e.g., studio access, costumes, equipment, and materials. These might be unattainable due to the realistic socio-economic living conditions of PWDs. In this vein, he urged PWDs to move beyond the negative social perceptions and harness opportunities within Government Financing Schemes, Local & International CSOs and NGOs and the social media.

Furthermore in his presentation, he gave insights on how to access the aforementioned financing schemes citing the Creative Industry Financing Initiative (CIFI) which is a joint initiative of CBN and the Bankers Committee established in May 2019. This initiative is aimed at increasing access to long-term low cost financing which allows for a

flexible repayment period of 3-10 years, for entrepreneurs in the Creative Industry, and this can be accessed via any local bank of one's preferred choice. He also highlighted the opportunities within the social media space as Nigeria currently has 43+ Million social media users with the possibility of a single sponsored post reaching thousands in few minutes.



Brian Micheal making a presentation. Photo; Potters Gallery Initiative.

He emphasized the need for more accessible financing solutions for PWDs in the creative industry, hence synergies between stakeholders and the disability community to be strengthened

ADDRESSING MARGINALIZATION IN THE CREATIVE INDUSTRY THROUGH THE DISABILITY ACT.

To plunge deeper into the agenda of the day, Paul Ihekwoaba started his presentation on the Disability Act by



Paul Ihekwoaba giving a presentation. Photo; Potters Gallery Initiative

defining key terms such as marginalization.

He highlighted the economic reality of marginalization, indicating that majority of creative PWDs are languishing in the rural areas. This is due to persistent exclusion and barriers to accessing basic social services and economic opportunities. He highlighted a number of the salient barriers and structural limitations experienced by PWDs such as name calling, negative beliefs and misconceptions surrounding the causes of disabilities. To further buttress on this, he gave a briefing on the emergence of the Discrimination Against PWDs Prohibition Act which was signed into Law on January 23, 2018. He said implementation of this Act is very key to achieving milestones. In this vein, he urged Government officials, policy & decision makers to be aware of Disability as a development issue. Also, there should be enhanced

mechanism for data collection on disability with concerted efforts to raise awareness on disability which would serve to change negative perceptions.

As a follow-up on this presentation, Emeka Rollas, National President, Actors Guild of Nigeria, cited that marginalization of PWDs in the creative Industry is not intentional but as a result to societal stereotypes. He suggested that to forge ahead, it is imperative to identify PWDs who can be actively involved in the creative industry since all PWDs have various strains



Emeka Rollas, National President, Actors Guild of Nigeria giving a contribution. Photo; Potters Gallery Initiative

of talent that might not be tied to the Creative Industry. He explained that if there are proper partnership with a network such as Potters Gallery to train PWDs, those capable of being creative would be identified. He said the creative Industry can be a useful tool in creating awareness through synergy

and funding agencies. He assured everyone that AGN is open to registering PWDs to become members without a fee.

Victor Okhai, President, Directors Guild of Nigeria, added to this trail of discourse by stating that due to the inability to predict future circumstances, there is need for sensitivity to issues related to disabilities. He encouraged PWDs to take on a tactful spirit and use competitive advantage as a point of entry, since brain power has nothing to do with physical disability.



Victor Okhai, President, Directors Guild of Nigeria giving a contribution.



Frederick Atigogo, National Finance Director, Screen Writers Guild of Nigeria giving remarks. Photo; Potters Gallery Initiative

Frederick Atigogo, National Finance Director, Screen Writers Guild of Nigeria said the conveyed his Guild's willingness to work with PWDs to ensure inclusion. He said the Screen Writers Guild is open to training PWDs for free through mentorship programmes.

Baba Agba, National Secretary, Association of Movie producers, reiterated that people should not be defined by disabilities. He said that as an association, they are open to working and partnering with PWDs. He urged PWDs to identify the 'low-hanging foot', then function strategically.



Baba Agba, National Secretary, Association of Movie Producers giving remarks. Photo; Potters Gallery Initiative

PHOTO CORNER



PHOTO CORNER



RECOMMENDATIONS

Mr. Musa Muazu facilitated the agenda setting session in a participatory and engaging manner whilst participants contributed and made recommendations.

Enlisted below are contributions by participants from which recommendations were drawn.

- ✚ It is imperative that UNESCO and Potters Gallery Initiative develop a Disability Inclusion Manual which would be adopted nationally.
- ✚ UNESCO and Potters Gallery Initiative should organize workshops and trainings for the larger body of stakeholders so as to educate them on the issues of PWDs and how to include them in the sector.
- ✚ The Stakeholders in the Creative Industry are willing to partner with Potters Gallery Initiative to train and educate PWDs for free; on how the industry works, and how to access the market, they are willing to build the capacity of PWDs and mentor them. Hence encourages UNESCO and other donor agencies to support and sponsor these workshops and trainings.
- ✚ To achieve inclusion, structural and information access should be created.
- ✚ The National Commission for Disability to implement institutional advocacy and also prosecute behaviors that promote negative stereotypes.
- ✚ The entire value chain should be put into consideration during planning.
- ✚ There should be awareness on the avoidance of derogatory terms and correct usage of terminologies used in describing the various forms of disabilities, through mainstreaming and the inculcation of awareness sessions in daily information dissemination through media channels.
- ✚ Negative portrayal of disabilities in movies should be stopped e.g., depicting disability as a spiritual problem that requires healing instead of realistic and factual representations in films

- ✚ PWDs shouldn't carry on an entitlement spirit due to the passing of the Disability Act but should be relentless and tactful.
- ✚ To continually harness advocacy as a medium towards changing perspectives.
- ✚ PWDs should be trained to write and act roles that would reflect real life stories that capture the entire picture.
- ✚ A proper documentation structure should be put in place.
- ✚ Movie Producers should stop faking films and use real PWDs to deliver script roles.
- ✚ PWDs should explore Niche-marketing.

CONCLUSION

Achieving an inclusive and accessible society requires the collective efforts of all. With bodies like UNESCO and Potters Gallery Initiative continually advocating for the inclusion and rights of PWDs while also partnering with stakeholders and the public in general, it's only a matter of time

before all PWDs in Nigeria enjoy all privileges and opportunities availed to all citizens.

At the end of the deliberations between the stakeholders, a consensus was reached to continually synergize with one another in achieving the common goal of PWDs inclusion in the Creative Industry.

Patience Eze, P.R.O, Northern Film Makers, in her closing remarks appreciated UNESCO and Potters Gallery Initiative for organizing the meeting. She thanked and urged all participants and stakeholders to implement all recommendations as discussed in order to change the status quo.

Nneka Okafor, Head of Sector, Social, and Human Sciences, UNESCO Regional Office, Abuja concluded the meeting by expressing her gratitude on behalf of UNESCO. She encouraged participants to use the workshop as a further step-down awareness medium, to enlighten the wider audience. She also encouraged the PWDs in attendance to seize the opportunity of free registrations offered by the stakeholders.

She assured Stakeholders and participants that subsequent meetings will be held in regards to

issues raise and recommendations drawn.

ANNEXES

PROGRAMME OUTLINE

S/N	Activity	Facilitator	Time Allott
1.	Opening Prayer (Second Verse of National Anthem)	MC/All Participants	3 Mins
2.	Opening Remarks	Mr. Donald Unanka (Creative Dir)	10 Mins
3.	Self-Introduction of Participants	MC/Distinguished Participants	40 Mins (2 Min
4.	Welcome Address- Ms. Nneka Okafor Head of Sector, Social and Human Sciences, UNESCO Regional Office, Abuja. Goodwill Message from National Disability comm CBM Global Disability Inclusion	UNESCO	15 Mins
5.	Agenda Setting	Potters Gallery	15 Mins
6.	Group Photograph	MC/MEDIA	10 Mins
7.	Tea Break	MC/Welfare	20 Mins
8.	Inclusion of PWDs in the Creative Industry, identifying entry points	Mr. Brian (Program Manager, Network of D Women)	45 Mins
9.	A Short Presentation About Creatives with Disabilities	MC/Potters Gallery	15 Mins
10.	Address Marginalization in the Creative Industry through the Disability Act	Mr. Paul Ihekweba (JONAPWD)	45 Mins
11.	Interactive Session and Action Plan	Jerry Adesewo (Arojah Theatre C and Musa Muazu Musa (National Commission)	1 Hour
12.	Questions and Answers	MC	1 Hour
13.	Communique	Danjuma Amina Elias	10 mins
14.	Closing and Vote of thanks	Patience Eze (PRO Northern Film)	10 Mins
15.	Lunch Break	MC/Welfare	10 Mins

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

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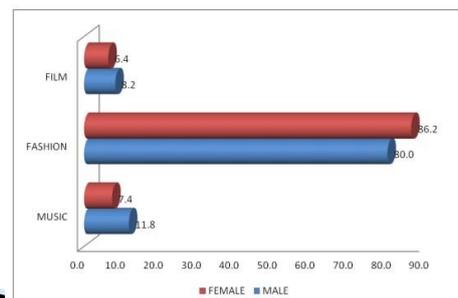
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DONALD UNANKA	POTTERS GALLERY INITIATIVE
BRIAN MICHEAL	POTTERS GALLERY INITIATIVE

EXPLORING OPPORTUNITIES IN THE CREATIVE INDUSTRY FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES IN NIGERIA

BY
Michael Brian Mulungi

NIGERIA'S CREATIVE INDUSTRY AT A GLANCE Contd

Gender Distribution



DISABILITY IN NIGERIA

- ▶ The World bank estimates that 30 Million Nigerians are persons with disabilities
- ▶ Over 15% of the total population
- ▶ Social exclusion of PWDs in Nigeria is one of the highest in the world
- ▶ Negative perception and accessibility are the largest hindrances to social inclusion in Nigeria

NIGERIA'S CREATIVE INDUSTRY AT A GLANCE

- ▶ In Nigeria, this industry provides sustenance to millions of People.
- ▶ UNESCO rates Nigeria's Nollywood as the second largest film industry in the world with over 2000 Movies produced per -anum and an audience of over 200 million across Africa.
- ▶ The 3 Main sectors within the Nigerian industry are fashion, film and music. These sectors employ the largest labour force within the whole creative industry.
- ▶ Patronage of the creative industry mainly comes from individual users followed by private organisations

THE CREATIVE INDUSTRY AND PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES IN NIGERIA

- ▶ Just like in many other sectors, persons with disabilities are not adequately represented in the creative industry. The few available aren't so visible
- ▶ Many creative spaces like Audition venues and materials still remain inaccessible for Persons with disabilities.
- ▶ Usually getting to limelight in the creative sector in Nigeria requires a lot of money in terms of getting the best studios, the best equipment, the best costumes and materials and even endorsement deals. Usually artists with disabilities lack this financial fire power.
- ▶ 70% of artists with disabilities hide their disabilities in order not to "jeopardize" their chances at a gig.
- ▶ Negative social perceptions about disability hinders the patronage of artists with disabilities.

QUICK FACTS ABOUT THE CREATIVE INDUSTRY

- ▶ The term "creative Industry" refers to a range of economic activities that are concerned with the generation and commercialization of creativity, ideas, knowledge and information .
- ▶ Creative industries are those industries that have creativity at their heart for example design, music, publishing, architecture, film and video, crafts, visual arts, fashion, TV and radio, advertising, literature, computer games and the performing arts.
- ▶ The Creative Industry is one of the largest contributors to economic growth with a global contribution of over 3.4% and a growth rate of 8.7%

Government Financing Schemes

- ▶ Periodical government based initiatives for the creative industry.
- ▶ For example the CBN Creative Industry Financing Initiative (CIFI) offers up to N500 Million for businesses within the Creative industry.
- ▶ CIFI is a joint initiative of CBN and the banker's Committee established in May 2019.
- ▶ Aimed at increasing access to long term low cost financing for entrepreneurs in the creative industry.
- ▶ CIFI can be accessed via any local bank of your choice.

The CIFI

- ▶ Available to registered businesses within Fashion, IT, movie production, Movie distribution and Music Distribution.
- ▶ Interest rate of 9% pa
- ▶ Flexible repayment periods of 3 to 10 Years
- ▶ Accessible via your local bank

How to access the CIFI

- ▶ Develop a good business plan
- ▶ Ensure you are duly registered by CAC
- ▶ Walk into any Participating Financial Institution (PFI)– Most local banks are PFIs
- ▶ Carry out all the necessary documentations (Each PFI has its own guidelines)

Donor Financing Schemes

- ▶ UNESCO
- ▶ OSIWA
- ▶ British Council
- ▶ Embassies
- ▶ Goethe Institute

The Social Media

- ▶ Nigeria currently has 43 Million social media users.
- ▶ Figure projected to grow to 103 million users
- ▶ Key social media channels widely used include, instagram, whatsapp and facebook.
- ▶ A single sponsored post on facebook or instagram can reach hundreds of thousands in a matter of minutes.
- ▶ A single sponsored post can cost as low as N1000
- ▶ The case of Salle, Olajumoke and many other online comedians

What more

- ▶ There is need for more accessible financing solutions for PWDs in the creative industry
- ▶ Synergies between stakeholders (the government, private sector actors, CSOs and the disability community have to be strengthened
- ▶ Creative artists within the disability community should invest more in self development

A PAPER TITLED: ADDRESSING MARGINALIZATION IN THE CREATIVE INDUSTRY THROUGH THE DISABILITY ACT PRESENTED BY IHEKWOABA PAUL E. ESQ. AT THE UN HOUSE WING 1A DIPLOMATIC DRIVE DURING A CONSULTATIVE MEETING WITHSTAKEHOLDERSIN THE CREATIVE INDUSTRY ON THE 27TH OF SEPTEMBER, 2021.

PROTOCOLS.

In understanding the above topic we will try to get the definition of some key words such as Marginalization, Creative Industry and then have a better understanding of the 2018 Anti-Discrimination against persons with Disability (Prohibition) Act.

MARGINALIZATION: According to a dictionary, which defines marginalization as ‘the act of placing a person or thing in a position of lesser importance, influence, or power; the state of being placed in such a position’ another fascinating definition put it this way, treatment of a person, group, or concept as insignificant or peripheral. In summary we should look at marginalization in this context as ***An Act Which Lowers Standards, Dehumanizes and reduces ones Worth on the bases Of Social-Cultural cum Religious Prejudices.*** Putting marginalization in juxtaposition with the phrase, creative industry leads to the need to have a better understanding of the phrase ‘Creative Industry’

CREATIVE INDUSTRY: Broadly speaking, the term ‘creative industries’ refers to a range of economic activities that are concerned with the generation and commercialization of creativity, ideas, knowledge and information. The ‘creative industries’ in a nutshell describes businesses with creativity at their heart – for example design, music, publishing, architecture, film and video,

crafts, visual arts, fashion, TV and radio, advertising, literature, computer games and the performing arts.

The creative economy is an emerging concept dealing with the interface between creativity, culture, economics and technology in a contemporary world dominated by images, sounds, texts and symbols. Today, the creative industries in the contemporary Nigeria is about the most dynamic sector providing new opportunities for our teaming energetic youths. In furtherance, the creative economy has become an evolving development dimension. Albeit, the creative industries are at the crossroads of the arts, culture, business and technology. All these activities are intensive in creative skills and can generate income through trade and intellectual property rights.

According to Wikipedia, a Creative Economy is based on people's use of their creative imagination to increase an idea's value. John Howkins developed the concept in 2001 to describe economic systems where value is based on novel imaginative qualities rather than the traditional resources of land, labour and capital. It's obvious to note that creativity has become the defining characteristic of this 21st century economy, just as manufacturing typified the 19th and early 20th centuries.

UNDERSTANDING MARGINALIZATION WITHIN THE DISABILITY CONTEXTIN NIGERIA

In accordance with the World Health Organization's statistics which has it that 15% of the world population lives with one disability or the other and that puts Nigeria disability population at about 35-37million persons.

Persons with disabilities in Nigeria persistently face stigma, discrimination, and barriers to accessing basic social services and economic opportunities. Today, they face greater barriers brought about by the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Nigeria Rapid Assessment on Disability Inclusion identified a number of these salient barriers.

For one, persons with disabilities may experience negative attitudes at family and community levels, including name-calling, negative beliefs, and misconceptions surrounding the causes of disabilities (usually associated with religious or cultural norms, and beliefs). These negative attitudes manifest in rejection, neglect, loss of respect, denial of identity or self-worth, and often result in low self-esteem, depression and isolation. This, along with structural limitations and challenges, also reinforces barriers for persons with disabilities in accessing basic services such as education, health, public transport, and social safety nets. Even when they through very strenuous and most times dehumanizing circumstances acquire the same education and or skills they are denied patronage on the bases of the above prejudices. Again, many Pwds have experienced frequent denial of job opportunities, employers' negatives attitudes, inappropriate job placement, lower expectations at work, and a lack of reasonable accommodation.

It is also evidential that, unemployment rates among persons with disabilities have almost double that of the general population, consequent upon attitudinal, mobility-related, technological, and physical barriers (lack of accessible workplaces). Assistive devices are expensive and not easily available, which limits the mobility and access to technology for persons with disabilities.

Persons with disabilities face difficulties accessing adequate health services, often being limited by the availability of accessible hospitals and personnel who are aware of and specialized in disability inclusion and providing services for persons with disabilities.

These challenges among others compound the vulnerability of persons with disabilities, and especially during COVID-19. A distinct absence of data pertaining to disability prevalence and the different forms of disabilities persists in Nigeria, which in turn challenges effective policy responses and data driven programming.

BRINGING INTO PERSPECTIVE THE DISCRIMINATION AGAINST PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES (PROHIBITION) ACT OF 2018

Nigeria ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities (CRPD) in 2007 and its Optional Protocol in 2010. Since then, civil society groups and people with disabilities have called on the government to domesticate it and put into practice. In 2011 and 2015, the National Assembly passed the Discrimination against Persons with Disabilities (Prohibition) Bill 2009, but former President Goodluck Jonathan declined to sign it into law.

The bill for the new law was passed by the House of Representatives and the Senate joint committee in November 2016, but was not sent to Buhari for his signature until December 2018. On January 17, Buhari denied on national television that he had received the bill. Hundreds of people protested, and barely five days later, precisely January 23, 2018 President Muhammadu Buhari signed into law the

Discrimination Against Persons with Disabilities (Prohibition) Act, 2018.

The law prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability and imposes sanctions including fines and prison sentences on those who contravene it. It also stipulates a five – year transitional period for modifying public buildings, structures, and automobiles to make them accessible and usable for people with disabilities. The law will also establish a National Commission for Persons with Disabilities, responsible for ensuring that people with disabilities have access to housing, education and healthcare.

The Commission will be empowered to receive complaints of rights violations and support victims to seek legal redress amongst other duties. The enactment of the Act is only a first step in the fulfillment of Nigeria’ s obligations under the CRPD.

Authorities should now put effective measures in place for its full implementation to ensure equal treatment and participation of persons with disabilities across Nigeria. But even after the signing of the law, the journey towards legal recognition and respect to the rights and privileges of PWDs by Nigeria is still far from reality. The government that approved a new law has literally helped violate it. For example, while the law says at least five per cent of all public appointments must go to people with disabilities, governments at various levels have so far not complied with that provision.

For want of time let’s look at few of the sections of the said Act of the parliament on disability.

(1) A person shall not –

- (a) employ, use or involve a person with disability in begging;
- (b) parade persons with disabilities in public with intention of soliciting for alms; or
- (c) use condition of disability as a guise for the purpose of begging in public.

(02) A person who contravenes subsection (1) commits an offence and is liable on conviction to a fine of N100,000 or a term of six months imprisonment or both.

17. (1) A person with disability shall have an unfettered right to education without discrimination or segregation in any form.

(2) A person with disability is entitled to free education to secondary school level.

(3) the Commission shall provide education assistive devices.

18. (1) All public schools, whether primary, secondary or tertiary shall be run to be inclusive of and accessible to persons with disabilities, accordingly every school shall have –

(a) at least a trained personnel to cater for the educational development of persons with disabilities; and

(b) special facilities for the effective education of persons with disabilities

(2) Brail, sign language and other skills for communication with persons with disabilities shall form part of the curricula of primary, secondary and tertiary institutions.

19. the education of special education personnel shall be highly subsidized.

20. Government shall ensure that the education of persons with disabilities, particularly children, who are blind, deaf or with multiple disabilities is delivered in the most appropriate language, mode and means of communication for the individual, and in environments which maximize academic and social development.

21. (1) Government shall guarantee that persons with disabilities have unfettered access to adequate health care without discrimination on the bases of disability.

(2) A person with mental disability shall be entitled to free medical and health services in all public institutions

22. (1) A person with mental disability shall obtain a Permanent Certificate of Disability from the Commission.

(2) If a doctor suspects disability in the course of treatment of a person who before was not a person with disability, the doctor may with the approval of the Commission, issue a Temporary Certificate of Disability which shall last for not longer that 180 days.

(3) If the state of disability persists beyond 180 days, the Commission on the recommendation of a doctor, shall issue the person a Permanent Certificate of Disability which will last for as long as the disability persist.

(4) A person issued with a Permanent Certificate of Disability is entitled to all rights and privileges under this Act.

23. A person who unlawfully issues or obtain a Certificate of Disability, commits an offence and liable to a fine of N200,00 or imprisonment for a term of one year or both.

24. A public hospital where a person with communication disabilities is medically attended to shall make provision for special communication.

25. In all situations of risk, violence, emergencies and the occurrences of natural disasters, the Government shall take necessary steps to ensure the safety and protection of persons with disabilities taking cognizance of their peculiar vulnerability.

26. (1) In queues, persons with disabilities shall be given first consideration, and as much as possible, be attended to outside the queue.

(2) A person who contravenes this section commits an offence and is liable on conviction to a fine of N50,000:00 or a term of six months imprisonment or both.

27. If accommodation is being provided by schools for their students, employers for their employees, service providers for their customers, organisations for their members, government for the people and in any other circumstance whatsoever, persons with disabilities shall be given first consideration.

It is important that government officials, policymakers, and decision makers are aware of the importance of disability as a development issue and enhance data collection on disability. A concerted effort to raise awareness surrounding disability issues would serve to shift

negative perceptions and stigma against persons with disabilities among families and communities.

In order to forge a disability-inclusive recovery from COVID-19, support for existing disability inclusion legislation in Nigeria is imperative. This means promoting the implementation of the Discrimination Against Persons with Disabilities (Prohibition) Act 2018 and strengthening the institutional landscape for disability inclusion through the Disability Commission.

Furthermore, investments in inclusive employment and livelihood interventions are critical to addressing unemployment challenges among persons with disabilities. These could include entrepreneurship training and business advisory services, as well as the promotion of locally produced assistive devices and accessible workplaces. Disability-focused organizations in Nigeria should be empowered to support this process and provide services to persons with disabilities and caregivers.

Persons with disabilities are more likely to experience adverse socioeconomic outcomes and face higher rates of multidimensional poverty than the general population. President Muhammadu Buhari's goal of lifting 100 million Nigerians out of poverty by 2029, in addition to achieving inclusive economic growth, will be challenging without the inclusion of persons with disabilities. To this end therefore, all hands especially our friends from the Nollywood must at this time form a synergy with other disability stakeholders in promoting disability course in Nigeria. Permit me to end this paper with this age long quote:

“I DO NOT KNOW HOW LONG I WILL LIVE BUT WHILE I LIVE; LET ME GIVE SOME COMFORT TO SOMEBODY IN NEED, BY MY SMILE, A NOD, DEED OR KIND WORD. AND LET ME DO

WHATSOEVER I CAN TO EASE THINGS FOR MY NEIGHBOUR, I WANT NOTHING BUT TO DO MY PART TO LIFT A TIRED OR WEARY HEART TO CHANGE PEOPLES FROWN TO SMILE. THEN I WOULD NOT HAVE LIVED IN VAIN AND I WILL NOT CARE HOW LONG I WILL LIVE IF ONLY I CAN GIVE AND GIVE AND GIVE.”

Thank you for listening and God bless you.