

**TOWARDS AN INCLUSIVE FREE AND FAIR 2019
ELECTORAL PROCESS: NIGER DISABLE PERSONS
ON CALL**

BY

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AT

**GIDAN MATASA, OKADA ROAD, MINNA, NIGER
STATE**

TO MARK

**THE INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR PERSONS LIVING
WITH DISABILITY**

ON

13TH DECEMBER 2021

Introduction

The annual compliance of the International Day of Disabled Persons was declared in 1992, by the United Nations General Assembly resolution 47/3. It is to:

1. Promote the rights and well-being of persons with disabilities in all spheres of society and development.
2. Increase awareness of the situation of persons with disabilities in every aspect of political, social, economic and cultural life.

This year's theme focuses on empowering persons with disabilities to fully and equally participate in development process, so that the Sustainable Development Goals are realized not only for persons with disabilities, but also by and with persons with disabilities.”

In other words advancing the equal rights of persons with disabilities, as guaranteed by the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD). Some of the areas include but not limited to: Policy planning and implementation

Employment viz-a-viz Government, Academia, Civil society, Media, Private sectors

It may interest us to know that the Sustainable Development Goals are seventeen (17) in number. They are the blueprint to achieve a better and more sustainable future for all. They address the global challenges we face, including those related to poverty, inequality, climate, environmental degradation, prosperity, peace and justice. The Goals interconnect and in order to leave no one behind, it is important that we achieve each Goal and target.

Looking at the topic for today; towards an inclusive, free and Fair 2019 Electoral Process: Niger Disable Persons on Call Areas of Inclusion

Inclusive means- Complete, wide-ranging, comprehensive, broad and of course general.

Free – welcome, unrestricted

Fair – impartial, just, open-minded, Policy making, nondiscriminatory

Nigeria/Niger Election: how inclusive, free and fair is it?

Ahead of the 2019 general election, the Chairman of Independent National Electoral Commission, INEC, Prof Mahmoud Yakubu, assured Nigerians that the electoral body was committed to conducting a free, fair and inclusive election. Mrs Blessing Obidegwu, Deputy Director, Gender Division, INEC Headquarters who represented the Chairman of INEC said this in Benin City, Edo State, during a one-day national consultation of key stakeholders on Women in Politics. Since Mahmoud Yakubu took over as chair of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) in 2015, the body has conducted over 167 elections. INEC has also undertaken several institutional reforms. This includes:

- Launching a new strategic plan,
- Working on a youth engagement strategy,
- In addition, reviewing its gender policy.

The commission has also set up a committee to review the voting process and transmission of tallies.

Unfortunately, there is less or no momentum behind efforts seeking to enhance the participation of people with disabilities or awareness of the situation of persons with disabilities in or for election.

Different category of disabilities are, but not exhaustive

- Vision Impairment.
- Deaf or hard of hearing.
- Mental health conditions.
- Intellectual disability.
- Acquired brain injury.
- Autism spectrum disorder.
- Physical disability.

What are the arrangement made by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) for these people to participate in the elections? The questions are:

- Are they existing or not in Nigeria or Niger State?
- Are they carried along in the election planning process?
- Are they considered in the voting process?

If no, then INEC must put things in place to accommodate this special group of people. The commission should be opened to collaboration with stakeholders to ensure that barriers that prevent people with disabilities from active participation in

elections and politics are positively addressed. They should not be denied of their franchise

Conclusion

In concluding this presentation please allow me to use the words of the UN Secretary General, *António Guterres*, "there is need to reaffirm our commitment to work together for a better world that is inclusive (comprehensive), equitable (impartial) and sustainable (maintainable, workable, justifiable, supportable, bearable, defensible etc) for everyone, where the rights of people with disabilities are fully realized".

Thanks very much