



KOGI GOVERNORSHIP ELECTION FINDINGS

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About the Access Nigeria: Disability Votes Matter campaign

The Access Nigeria: Disability Votes Matter campaign is a disability rights movement led by and for Nigeria's 28.5 million persons with disabilities (PWDs). The goal of the Campaign is to increase the participation of PWDs in Nigeria's political and electoral processes by reducing physical barriers and stigma that make it difficult or impossible for PWDs to participate in elections.

To better understand the challenges PWDs face, the Access Nigeria Campaign collected data through Nigeria's first ever-polling unit accessibility audits. These historical audits, conducted during the 2016 governorship elections in Edo and Ondo States, exposed the widespread barriers experienced by PWDs on Election Day. Topping the list of challenges included lack of available election materials in usable formats for PWDs and polling units without ramps or with physical barriers to entry, with reports showing that 65 percent of the polling units in Edo and 77 percent in Ondo were located in places that were inaccessible for PWDs. Findings from the 2016 Edo and Ondo audits provided crucial data for advocacy to the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), resulting in changes to the way elections are run that is already impacting the lives of PWDs across

Polling Unit Accessibility Audit Methodology

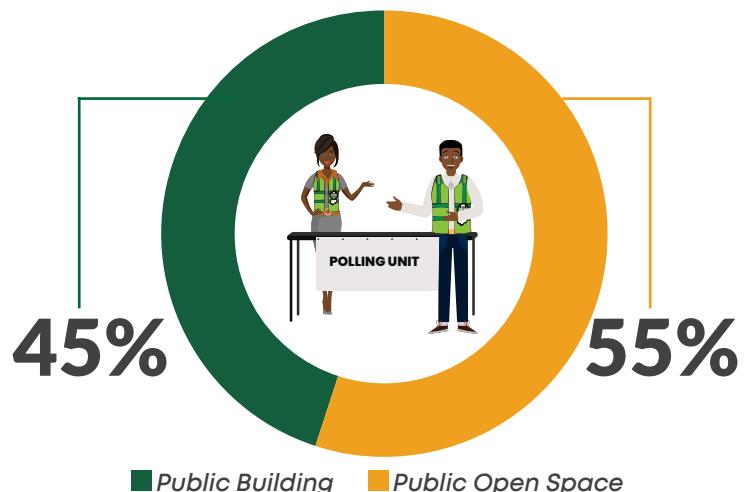
For the governorship election in Kogi State, the Access Nigeria Campaign deployed a sample based election observation to measure INEC's compliance to section 56 (1) and (2) of the Electoral Act 2010 (as Amended) and Articles 9 and 29 of the CRPD which legally guarantee the rights of PWDs to participate in political and public life.

This accessibility audit represents the largest polling unit audit conducted by PWD observers in Nigeria's history. On November 16, 200 carefully selected, trained and accredited PWD observers documented physical accessibility of polling units for PWD voters, access to Election Day materials, and the participation of PWDs in Election Day processes. Observers deployed to sampled 200 polling units covering Kogi East (95), Kogi Central (61), and Kogi West (44) and answered 31 questions on their Election Day checklist before sending a total of five (5) coded text messages to the Access Nigeria database system. Throughout the course of the observation, Access Nigeria observers sent approximately 1,000 text messages equating to 6,200 individual pieces of data. By utilizing PWDs as observers, the audit was conducted through a disability lens, which provides credibility for the data collected.

Accessibility Audit Findings

Access to Polling Units

Findings showed that 55 percent of sampled polling units in Kogi state were located in public open spaces, while 45 percent were located in public buildings. Of those polling units including schools, bus stops, markets, courts, town hall, health centres, etc., 54 percent were found to be inaccessible for voters with disabilities. Lack of accessible spaces and buildings have larger implications beyond elections. For example, if schools are not accessible for voters, then they are not accessible for students and pupils with disabilities.



Observers reported that 51 percent of routes leading to the sampled polling units were accessible.

Internal Polling Unit Layout

At

47%

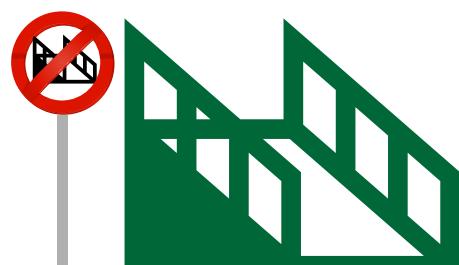
of the sampled polling units, reports show that it was difficult for voters with disabilities to enter the polling units and vote. Similarly, at 48% of sampled polling units, the layout was difficult for voters with disabilities to participate in accreditation and voting.



Observers reported that

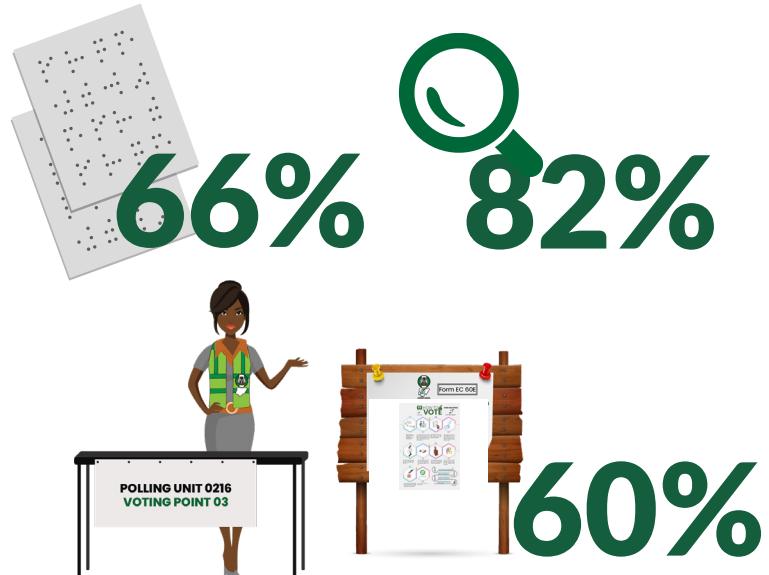
93%

sampled polling units did not include ramps and handrails for use by voters with disabilities.



Polling Unit Materials

Observers reported that Braille ballot guides were not deployed to 66 percent of sampled polling units and magnifying glasses were also not available at 82 percent of sample polling units.

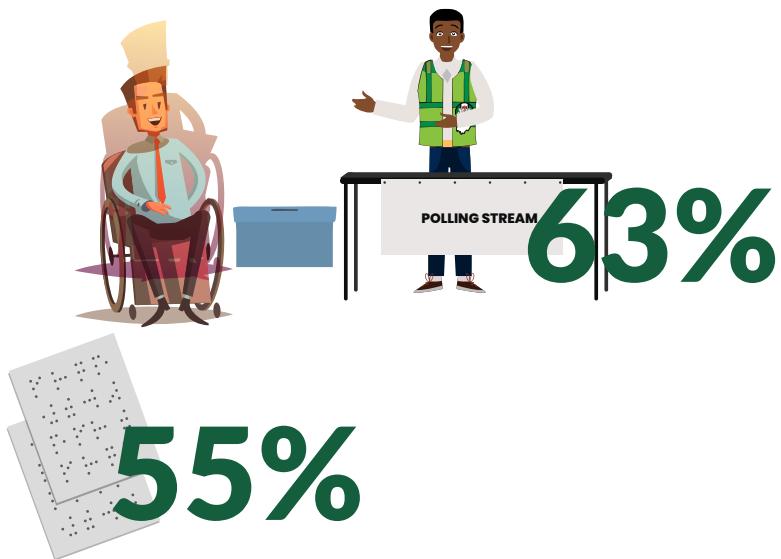


The INEC form EC 30E PWD Election Day written instructions were posted at 60 percent of sampled polling units.

60%

Election Day Procedures

At 63 percent of sampled polling units, voters with visible disabilities were given priority to vote upon immediate arrival at the polling unit.



Observers reported that Braille ballot guides were used at 55 percent of the sampled polling units where the guides were deployed.

55%

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the polling unit accessibility audit, the Access Nigeria: Disability Votes Matter Campaign makes the following recommendations:

Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC)

- IFA calls on INEC to relocate inaccessible polling units and create new ones that are accessible and safe to voters with disabilities.
- INEC should categorize the Braille ballot guide as a sensitive material to ensure timely and effective deployment for all national and state elections.
- INEC should immediately amend its Continuous Voters Registration (CVR) forms to include status and type of disability to enable the Commission to collect data of PWDs during CVR. To compliment this effort, INEC should audit the utilization of form EC 40H by presiding officers on Election Day to collect data of voters with disabilities.
- INEC should strengthen training of regular and ad hoc staff to effectively administer accessible Election Day materials and accommodations for voters with disabilities.

The Executive at the Federal and State Levels

- IFA calls on federal and state governments to work with various agencies to ensure that public buildings are built and renovated by the 2023 deadline to accommodate PWDs in their daily life in accordance with the Discrimination Against Persons with Disabilities (Prohibition) Act of 2018.
- The executive, at all levels, should strengthen existing building codes and enforce them to guarantee accessibility for PWDs during and beyond elections.

National and State Assemblies

- The National Assembly should consider the amendment of section 56 (2) of the 2010 Electoral Act to make the provision of accessible election materials for voters with disabilities mandatory in all elections.
- The National Assembly should ensure that the executive implements specific sections of the Discrimination Against Persons with Disabilities (Prohibition) Act 2018 through effective legislative oversight.

The Nigerian Media

- Media executives should consider disability inclusion in its broadcast and news production to promote inclusive practices in Nigeria including the consistent utilization of sign language interpretation.

Elections Focused Civil Society

- IFA commends the work of all organizations working toward safer, more inclusive free and fair elections in Nigeria. IFA calls on these organizations to continue to engage with the disability community to ensure their efforts are inclusive and provide opportunities for PWDs to contribute to their work either as advisors to ensure a disability lens on their work or including PWDs as participants in activities.

Conclusion

It is evident that Nigerians with disabilities want to participate in the electoral and political processes of Nigeria as indicated by their participation as both voters and observers during the Kogi State governorship election. However, accessibility challenges, stigmas, and stereotypes continue to persist and undermine PWDs abilities to participate in electoral and political activities. While INEC has taken great strides to improve its priority voting policy and implement voting accommodations, poll officials consistently fail to understand the significance of inclusion or take actions that promote the participation of all groups.

The violence exhibited in the Kogi state election affected voters with disabilities and PWD observers who had to flee to safety in the face of danger. PWDs are most vulnerable in these kinds of situations. IFA calls on all stakeholders to do better in ensuring peaceful and safe elections to the benefit of Nigerians with disabilities and all voters before, during, and after Election Day.



ABOUT

Inclusive Friends Association

IFA is a woman led, data driven and persons with disabilities focused non-governmental organization that works to promote the rights of persons with disabilities in their communities and dismantle the social injustices that diminish their human rights in Nigeria through evidence based advocacy, training and research. IFA's led Access Nigeria campaign made independent voting for voters with visual impairment / blind possible for the first time in Nigeria's election history with INEC's introduction of the braille ballot guides in the 2019 Presidential and Kogi state November Elections. We work across the following themes:

Democracy and good governance,

Wash

Gender and

Income and livelihood



Inclusivefriends

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