



# DISABILITY VOTES MATTER

2016 EDO AND ONDO STATE POLLING UNIT ACCESSIBILITY AUDIT REPORT





*The National Assembly should immediately amend section 56 (2) of the Electoral Act to make the provision of Braille or Tactile ballots and off-site voting mandatory to help increase the participation of PWDs in the electoral process.*

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*The National Orientation Agency (NOA) should urgently develop and implement a comprehensive civic and voter education program that targets citizens with different forms of disabilities.*

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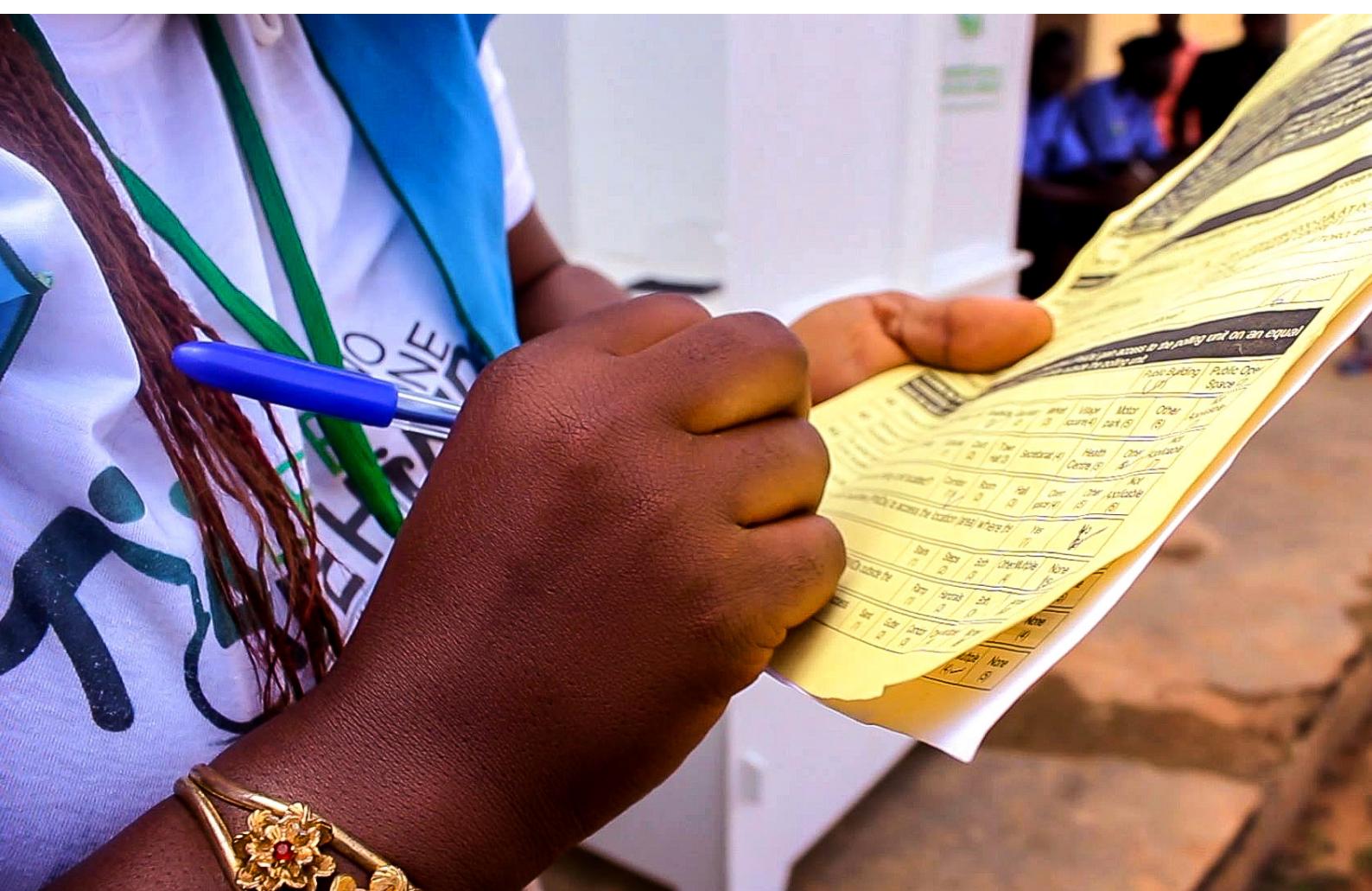
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*Observer 1 in Akure-South LGA of Ondo state, Adesanmi Temilade completes the Ondo accessibility audit checklist at one of her polling units.*



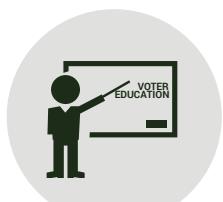
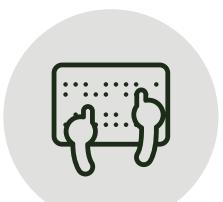
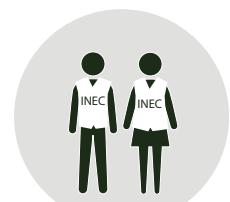
# About the Access Nigeria: Disability Votes Matter Campaign.

## Goal

The goal of the Access Nigeria: Disability Votes Matter campaign is to improve the participation of Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) in Nigeria's political and electoral processes. The campaign seeks to achieve this through evidence-based advocacy to the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), National Assembly, and other public institutions. The other strategies for achieving the goal of this campaign include PWD targeted voter education and Get Out the Vote (GOTV) campaigns to mobilize PWDs to vote during elections. The Access Nigeria: Disability Votes Matter campaign used to be known as the **Leave No One Behind: Disability Votes Count** campaign until it was rebranded in 2017.

The Access Nigeria: Disability Votes Matter campaign has the following short and medium term objectives:

### Short Term Objectives

|   |   |  |  |   |
|---|---|--|--|---|
|                             |                        |   |    |  |
| To make polling units and ballot boxes more accessible for Persons With Disabilities (PWDs) during elections. | To ensure the use of sign language interpreters in all civic and voter education messages and activities. | To facilitate improvements in the distribution and reach of civic and voter education messages to citizens with different forms of disabilities. | To ensure the use of Braille Information, Education and Communication (IEC) materials for civic and voter education at all levels. | To improve the capacity of election officials to assist PWDs to vote on Election Day. |

### Medium Term Objectives

|   |   |  |  |
|---|---|--|--|
|   |    |                          |   |
| Working with relevant stakeholders to change narratives and stereotypes about PWDs. | Contributing to the enactment of a meaningful national disability rights legislation. | Advocating for the introduction of Braille ballots and accessible voting cubicles (booths) for PWDs by 2019. | Working to create more cohesion within the civil society movement in Nigeria in the advocacy for the political rights of PWDs. |



## Partner Organizations

The **Access Nigeria: Disability Votes Matter** campaign is implemented by Inclusive Friends Association (IFA). IFA is a PWD-led non-profit and non-governmental organization which works to promote the rights of Nigerians with disabilities. IFA is implementing the Access Nigeria: Disability Votes Matter campaign with technical and financial support from the National Democratic Institute (NDI), the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the British Department for International Development (DFID).

# List of Acronyms and Terms.

- Africa Independent Television (AIT).
- British Department For International Development (DFID)
- Central Information Centre (CIC).
- Centre for Citizens with Disabilities (CCD).
- Continuous Voter Registration (CVR).
- Disabled Persons Organization (DPO).
- Edo Broadcasting Service (EBS).
- Get Out The Vote (GOTV).
- Inclusive Friends Association (IFA).
- Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC).
- Independent Television (ITV).
- Information and Communication Technology (ICT).
- Joint National Association of Persons with Disabilities (JONAPWD).
- Local Government Area (LGA).
- National Democratic Institute (NDI).
- National Orientation Agency (NOA).
- National Population Commission (NPC).
- Nigerian Television Authority (NTA).
- Nigerian Union of Journalists (NUJ).
- Ondo state Radiovision Corporation (OSRC).
- Parallel Vote Tabulation (PVT).
- Persons with Disabilities (PWDs).
- Resident Electoral Commissioner (REC).
- United States Agency for International Development (USAID).
- United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD).
- World Health Organization (WHO).

## What they said about us

*"The right to vote, one of the most precious and fundamental human rights in any democratic society, is frustrated the world over, not only by purposeful discrimination but also by failure to ensure accessibility for all citizens. The Access Nigeria Campaign and its allies are voices for the most fundamental aspect of Nigeria's democracy."*

**Aubrey McCutcheon**

*Senior Resident Director  
National Democratic Institute*

*"IFA and the Access Nigeria campaign are doing a great job. INEC will work with them to improve accessibility for Persons with Disabilities in our Elections. Disability is not electoral inability or incapacity ... PWDs also have a right"*

**Anthonia Simbine**

*INEC National Commissioner*

*"Going out to document the experiences of PWDs personally during the Ondo state elections across 13 polling units is a fulfilling task because I am also a PWD. I have gained greater courage that PWDs can do any task given to them when granted access. So all election stakeholders should use this audit report to guarantee us access in elections"*

**Folashade Arise**

*Observer 2, Odigbo LGA Ondo state*



# Acknowledgements.

Inclusive Friends Association (IFA) wishes to acknowledge the efforts of the Centre for Citizens with Disabilities (CCD), the organization IFA partnered with to conduct two political unit accessibility audits during the 2016 governorship elections in Edo and Ondo states. CCD played key roles in the election observation and outreach engagements embarked on during the Edo and Ondo elections. We are most grateful for their contributions to the project.

We also wish to acknowledge the Joint National Association of Persons with Disabilities (JONAPWD), especially its chapters in Edo and Ondo states, for providing the observers that conducted the polling unit accessibility audits in the two states. We are indebted to all the PWDs that volunteered as observers during the Edo and Ondo elections. Their commitment and perseverance can only be rewarded with the implementation of the recommendations we have made in this report. We must also thank Dr Samuel Ankeli for his support to this campaign.

IFA is most grateful to INEC for its open door policy and commitment to improving the accessibility of elections for PWDs. We are particularly grateful to INEC Chairman, Prof Mahmood Yakubu, for facilitating our accreditation to observe both elections and the PWD targeted reforms in the INEC strategic plan 2017 – 2021. We also wish to extend our profound gratitude to National Commissioners Amina Zakari, Anthonia Simbine, Mohammed Lecky and Solomon Soyebi for attending our press conferences in Edo and Ondo states and assuring us of INEC's readiness to implement our recommendations. We will follow-up on those promises.

IFA also wishes to thank Olusegun Agbaje, the former Resident Electoral Commissioner for Ondo state for keeping the promise he made to utilize sign language interpreters during the INEC Chairman's meeting with stakeholders in Akure and during the result collation/announcement process of the 2016 governorship election in Ondo state.

We thank the National Democratic Institute (NDI) for their technical support during the election observation efforts in Edo and Ondo states. Without NDI's technical support it would have been impossible to understand and deploy the statistical principles and Information and Communications Technology (ICT) tools used to conduct the Edo and Ondo polling unit accessibility audits. We must also thank the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the British Department for International Development (DFID) who provided the funds to make all of these possible.



**Grace Jerry**  
**Executive Director**  
**Inclusive Friends Association (IFA)**

## OUR Data Clerks

The data clerks contacted observers on the field to retrieve incomplete and missing observation data.



# Executive Summary

Nigeria has made a lot of gains in the development of its political and electoral processes since its return to democratic rule in 1999. Key achievements in this area include increasing public confidence in the electoral process, the country's first ever transfer of power from one political party to another and 18 years of unbroken democracy. Things have however not been flawless as major challenges remain. The beauty of democracy is the ability of eligible citizens to participate in the election of their leaders and shape the policies that determine the quality of lives they live. The inability of marginalized and underrepresented groups like PWDs, women and youth to participate in political and electoral processes on an equal basis, due to attitudinal and environmental barriers remains a major concern.

According to the 2006 national census, Nigeria has 3,253,169 Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) . This figure is more than the combined population of certain nations of the world . PWDs face enormous barriers that make it difficult or impossible for us to participate in elections. Polling units and voting cubicles are not always physically accessible to those that are unable to walk or have impaired walking. Election materials such as ballots are not produced in Braille or Tactile for visually impaired voters. Similarly, polling units do not have officials that are able to communicate in sign language to voters with hearing impairments. Written instructions on Elections Day procedures are also not always available for this category of voters. These and other challenges continue to disenfranchise PWDs.

Reliable data on PWDs and the challenges we face in the electoral process has been almost non-existent, making it difficult to address the barriers we encounter. To collect data and conduct evidence-based advocacy to the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) and other stakeholders, Inclusive Friends Association (IFA) and its partners conducted Nigeria's first and second ever polling unit accessibility audits during the 2016 governorship elections in Edo and Ondo states. Using a sample-based methodology, similar to what is deployed for Parallel Vote Tabulations (PVTs), IFA collected data on the accessibility of polling units and election materials for PWDs from a representative random sample of all of the polling units in both states.

The findings from the Edo and Ondo polling unit audits revealed widespread barriers to PWD participation in elections. Observers' reports showed that 65 percent of the polling units observed in Edo and 77 percent of those in Ondo were located in places that were inaccessible for PWDs. These reports also showed that it was difficult for PWDs to enter 64 percent of the polling units observed in Edo and 79 percent of those in Ondo. Observer reports also showed that ballot boxes were not placed in such a way that PWDs could independently cast their ballots in 48 percent of the polling units observed in Edo and 77 percent of those in Ondo. IFA has made specific recommendations in this report to assist election stakeholders address the barriers observed. One of these recommendations is for INEC to locate polling units on flat surfaces as opposed to corridors, to enable PWDs enter these polling units without difficulty on Election Day.





According to the 2006 national census, Nigeria has 3,253,169 Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) . This figure is more than the combined population of certain nations of the world . PWDs face enormous barriers that make it difficult or impossible for us to participate in elections.

# Chapter One

## Background/Political Context.

The preamble of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and Optional Protocol (UNCRPD) states that “disability results from the interaction between persons with impairments and attitudinal and environmental barriers that hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others” . Article 1 of the UNCRPD describes PWDs to include “those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others”.

There are four major approaches under which society deals with disability issues. These include the charity, medical, social and rights approaches. While the charity approach sees PWDs from a lens of pity and undervalues them, the medical approach assumes that the barriers faced by PWDs are a result of their disability. The social approach sees disability more from the perspective of the barriers PWDs face in their environment, i.e. inaccessible polling units. The rights approach sees disability purely from a human rights perspective, with PWDs as equal members of society. In Nigeria, society understands and deals with disability issues more from a charity approach. The charity approach is the main influence behind the culture of giving out alms to PWDs, even when the enforcement of their political and socio-economic rights is paramount. The Access Nigeria: Disability Votes Matter campaign promotes

the social and rights approaches.

Nigeria’s 2006 national census puts the figure of PWDs in the country at 3,253,169. This figure is widely disputed by PWDs, we question the data collection process of the National Population Commission (NPC). PWDs and DPOs in Nigeria insist that the population of PWDs in the country is 27, 300, 000, and 15 percent of the country’s estimated population of 182 million . This figure was arrived at by Disabled Persons Organizations (DPOs) in Nigeria based on the World Health Organization’s (WHO) estimate that 15 percent of the population of the world has one form of disability or the other . Whichever figure is used, Nigeria’s PWD population is more than the combined population of certain nations of the world .

The right to vote provides a unique opportunity for citizens to influence the policies that affect their lives. Sadly, this right continues to elude PWD voters in Nigeria because of the accessibility barriers we face in the electoral process. While Nigeria has made modest gains in the development of legal and administrative frameworks to ensure the participation of PWDs in elections, most of these are either weak or are not being implemented. For instance, Section 56 (2) of the 2010 Electoral Act provides an option for INEC to provide Braille, sign language interpretation or off-site voting to enable PWDs vote without challenges . This is yet to be implemented.

Article 29 (a) (1) of the UNCRPD puts an obligation on state parties like Nigeria to guarantee the participation of PWDs in political and public life by “ensuring that voting procedures, facilities and materials are appropriate, accessible and easy to understand and use”. Not much gains have been made here either.

PWDs in Nigeria encounter major barriers in the pursuit of our political and socio-economic rights. Overtime, this has left us marginalized, underrepresented and excluded from political and electoral processes. PWDs are greatly marginalized from participating in the electoral process, because polling units and voting cubicles are not always physically accessible to those that are unable to walk or have reduced mobility. Additionally, election materials such as ballots are not produced in Braille or Tactile. Polling units do not have officials that are able to communicate in sign language to those with hearing impairments. Written instructions on

Elections Day procedures are also not always available for this category of voters. INEC has been unable to comprehensively plan for PWDs because the Commission did not collect data on the disability status of voters, disaggregated by type of disability, during Continuous

Voter Registration (CVR) processes. These and other challenges continue to disenfranchise PWDs.

While PWDs have always known that the barriers highlighted above exist, we could not establish the magnitude of the

**“While PWDs have always known that the barriers highlighted above exist, we could not establish the magnitude of the problem. To establish the magnitude of these accessibility barriers and conduct evidence-based advocacy to influence reforms, IFA and its partners conducted Nigeria’s first and second ever polling unit accessibility audits for PWDs during the September 28, and November 26, 2016 governorship elections in Edo and Ondo states, respectively. Through sample-based election observation, IFA and its partners collected hitherto non-existent data on the challenges that PWDs face on Election Day. The Disability**

**Votes Matter Report presents the data collected from these elections and makes far reaching recommendations on how critical election stakeholders like INEC and the National Assembly can address the barriers observed. Removing these barriers is a critical step in the effort to increase the participation of PWDs.”**





## Chapter Two

Edo and Ondo Polling Unit Accessibility Audit Methodology.



IFA and its partners deployed an advanced election observation methodology that employs well-established statistical principles and utilizes sophisticated Information and Communication Technology (ICT) to observe the 2016 governorship elections in Edo and Ondo states. The sample-based methodology deployed to assess the accessibility of polling units and election materials for PWDs during these elections is similar to the methodology used for PVTs. A major difference between the audit and PVT methodologies is that while the former is restricted to assessing the accessibility of election infrastructure, materials and processes for PWDs, the latter assesses all Election Day processes and provides result estimates for elections observed. Similarly, while PVTs rely on stationary observers who observe at one polling unit throughout Election Day, the sample-based methodology used for the Edo and Ondo elections used roving observers because accessibility does not change overtime on Election Day.

### **Sampling of Polling Units**

The process of determining where observers are sent to observe on Election Day is a key consideration in election observation. Since it is almost always impossible to deploy observers to every polling unit, the role of statistics has become increasingly important. Observing an election at a representative random sample of an electoral constituency produces estimates that speak to what transpires across that constituency. To determine where to observe the

2016 governorship elections in Edo and Ondo states, IFA and its partners drew representative random samples of all the polling units in both states. 252 polling units were sampled out of the 2, 627 polling units in Edo state, while 222 were sampled out of the 3009 in Ondo state. These are the places where observers were deployed to observe the governorship elections in both states.

**"The choice of PWDs observers was a deliberate step to ensure that polling units' accessibility was strictly observed through the lenses of PWDs. Similar audits conducted in other parts of the world were not conducted by PWDs."**

and other DPOs. These committees' recruited observers based on an established criteria and managed the election observation efforts in their respective states. 31 teams of observers, each consisting of a PWD observer, an observer assistant and a driver were recruited in Edo, while 27 teams were recruited in Ondo state. All of the observers recruited were PWDs, with the exception of observer assistants and drivers, in line with the observer recruitment criteria. The choice of PWDs observers was a deliberate step to ensure that polling units' accessibility was strictly observed through the lenses of PWDs. Similar audits conducted in other parts of the world were not conducted by PWDs.

Observers were recruited using the following criteria:

- Prospective observer's interest and experience in election-related activities.
- Prospective observer's status as a registered voter.
- Prospective observers' availability for all observation activities i.e. training, simulation exercises, Election Day deployment.
- Prospective observers' ability to withstand the pressure of election observation.
- Prospective observers' ability to read and write.
- Prospective observers' ability to compose and send coded text messages.
- Prospective observers' residence in pre-assigned Local Government Areas (LGAs) in Edo and Ondo states.
- Non-partisanship.
- Gender parity.

### Polling Unit Accessibility Audit Checklist and Database

The objective of election observation is to collect data on all or particular components of the electoral process. Without an effective tool, observers have difficulty determining what to observe, how to observe and how to report. To ensure effective polling units audits in Edo and Ondo, IFA and its partners developed a 25 question Election Day checklist. Using this checklist, PWD observers collected data on the accessibility of routes leading to sampled polling units for PWDs, accessibility of polling units for PWDs, participation of PWDs in the elections and the accessibility of election materials for PWDs. Observers used one checklist per polling unit and collected 6,300 and 5,550 pieces of data during the 2016 governorship elections in Edo and Ondo states, respectively. Information on how observers will observe and how to send electronic reports (coded text messages) to the audit database was included on every checklist for easy reporting.

Reporting during the Edo and Ondo polling unit accessibility audits was both electronic and paper-based. The paper-based reporting for these elections included the use of the Election Day checklist described above. Observers were required to indicate their answers by ticking multiple choice questions after observation at sampled polling units. The electronic reporting took place after this process. After completing their paper checklists, observers were required to compose coded text messages based on their observations and send this to a central database system set up to receive observation reports. The database also known as Apollo, is a strong system for collecting and managing multiple reports from citizens election observers developed by NDI . Its functions include receiving and analyzing the electronic reports sent in by observers and informing data analysts when messages are complete, incomplete or missing.

### Election Day Training

Ahead of the 2016 governorship elections in Edo and Ondo states, IFA observers were trained on how to observe, document and report their findings at separate trainings in the two states. Using a comprehensive training manual, observers were trained on the goal and objectives of the project, accessibility, and citizen election observation. These trainings however focused more on the methodology for the polling unit accessibility audits, Election Day deployment plans, using the audit checklist and reporting findings via coded text messages (electronic reports). To ensure effective observation and reporting, sufficient attention was given to the context of the questions on the checklist. As part of the hands-on training of observers, every observer sent practice coded text messages to the audit database system during these trainings.

Observers also sent practice text messages to the audit database during two simulation exercises in the week of both elections. This was done to refresh the memories of observers on how to report on Election Day.

### The Central Information Centre (CIC)

A Central Information Centre (CIC) was setup in Edo and Ondo states in the week of the 2016 governorship elections there. Equipped with computers, internet access and toll-free lines, the CIC was setup to monitor observer deployment, observation and reporting. The CICs in Edo and Ondo each had three trained data clerks, with each of them monitoring observer deployments in a senatorial zone via the audit database. The data clerks contacted observers on the field to retrieve incomplete and missing observation data. They were also on standby throughout Election Day to provide clarifications to observers whenever this was needed. The leadership and staff of IFA and its partner organizations monitored deployment on the field and at the CIC, where they provided answers to observer's questions that could not be addressed by the data clerks.

### Election Day Deployment

IFA and its partners deployed 31 teams of PWD observers to 252 sampled polling units during the Edo election. For the Ondo election, the campaign deployed 27 teams of PWD observers to 222 sampled polling units. Observers for these elections were strictly guided by the Election Day deployment plan developed by IFA and its partners. In line with this plan, our observers arrived at their first assigned polling units by 7:30am and began observing at 8:00am. In

cases where accreditation had not started at observers first polling units by 8:10am, they immediately moved to their next assigned polling units to observe there. In observing at the polling unit, our PWD observers responded to all of the questions on their Election Day checklist. They provided information on the quality of access for PWDs in the routes leading to polling units, internal polling unit layout, Election Day procedures and electoral materials. They then composed and sent coded text messages on their findings to the accessibility audit database.

In line with the Election Day deployment plan, observers tried as much as possible not to spend more than 25 minutes at any polling unit and limit travel time from one polling units to another to 25 minutes. This rule was put in place to assist them complete their observation within six hours (8:00am to 2:00pm), based on INEC's new policy of simultaneous accreditation and voting. During the Edo and Ondo governorship elections, trained data clerks monitored reporting on the database and contacted observers consistently to retrieve incomplete or missing reports. The quality of observer reporting in Edo and Ondo was at a 99.2 percent response rate. The staff and leadership of IFA and its partners also roved on Election Day, made a short video of the accessibility barriers observed and addressed the logistics challenges reported by observers on the field. After the elections, IFA analyzed the reports sent in by observers, drafted statements and presented same to elections stakeholders and the public at post-election press conferences.



## Chapter Three

Advocacy and Outreach to Election Stakeholders

IFA and its partners used the opportunity of the election observation efforts in Edo and Ondo states to create awareness on the goal and objectives of the project. These outreach and advocacy engagements were important because, to this time, the barriers faced by PWDs in the electoral process were largely unknown and underreported. Though close to both elections, these engagements provided IFA the platform to raise awareness and advocate for the implementation of short-term policies that could easily improve the accessibility of the elections for PWDs.

Below is a summary of our engagements:

#### **Advocacy Visits to the Resident Electoral Commissioners (RECs) for Edo and Ondo**

In line with the project plan, IFA and its partners conducted advocacy visits to the Resident Electoral Commissioners (RECs) of Edo and Ondo states. The goal and objectives of the campaign were explained to the two RECs, with special emphasis on the significance and methodology for the polling unit accessibility audits scheduled in their states. The barriers faced by PWDs in the electoral process were explained to both RECs by Grace Jerry, the Executive Director of IFA and other PWD leaders. While an advocacy letter with recommendations on how to address the barriers faced by PWDs was given to Sam Olumekun, the Edo REC; the findings and recommendations of the Edo polling unit audit, conducted earlier in 2016, was shared with Olusegun Agbaje, the REC for Ondo state.

During a follow-up advocacy visit to the Edo REC, he assured IFA and its partners that the advocacy letter submitted to him had been escalated to INEC headquarters. He added that, while it was not possible to implement the recommendations during the 2016 Edo governorship

election, INEC Chairman, Prof Mahmood Yakubu, was taking them seriously and planning for their implementation. During the meeting with the Ondo REC, he immediately approved the use of sign language interpreters for the stakeholders meeting with the INEC chairman in Akure and during the collation and announcement of final results. While INEC used sign language interpreters during the collation process for the 2015 presidential election, we saw this happen in a state election for the first time in Ondo. We expect INEC to build on this.

#### **Pre and Post-Election Press Conferences**

On September 26 and November 23, 2016 IFA and its partners hosted pre-election press conference in Edo and Ondo states, respectively. During these events, IFA explained the significance of the polling unit accessibility audits in these states, the sample-based methodology to be used and state of preparedness to deploy on Election Day. INEC National Commissioner, Amina Zakari, attended the Edo pre-election press conference. She assured IFA and its partners that once INEC received the audit findings and recommendations, the Commission will take steps to make election processes more accessible for PWDs. She explained that INEC planned to introduce Tactile ballots during the 2015 elections but could not deliver on this because of contractual problems. Three INEC National Commissioners, Anthonia Simbine, Solomon Soyebi and Mohammed Lecky participated at the post-election press conference for the Ondo election. Commissioner Simbine reiterated INEC's commitment to work with IFA to make upcoming elections more accessible for PWDs. Both press conferences were widely reported by the media.

On September 30 and November 28, 2016 IFA and its partners presented the findings and recommendations of the Edo and Ondo polling unit accessibility audits and press conferences in Benin City and Akure, respectively. The findings from both states revealed widespread accessibility challenges for PWDs in all areas observed. Specific recommendations were made at both events to address the accessibility barriers observed. IFA and its partners called on INEC, the National Assembly and other stakeholders to implement the audit recommendations. In Ondo, the partners commended the Resident Electoral Commissioner, Olusegun Agbaje, for keeping the promise he made to them to engage sign language interpreters during the INEC Chairman's meeting with stakeholders and the result collation process. Both press conferences were widely reported by the media.

### Traditional Media Outreach

During the Edo and Ondo governorship elections, IFA and its partners conducted outreach activities to national and state-level traditional media organizations. They visited these organizations and appeared on their programs



programs to explain the objectives of their campaign and the rationale and methodology for the polling unit accessibility audits in the two states. The outcome of these engagements were increased media reporting and awareness about the barriers that PWDs face in

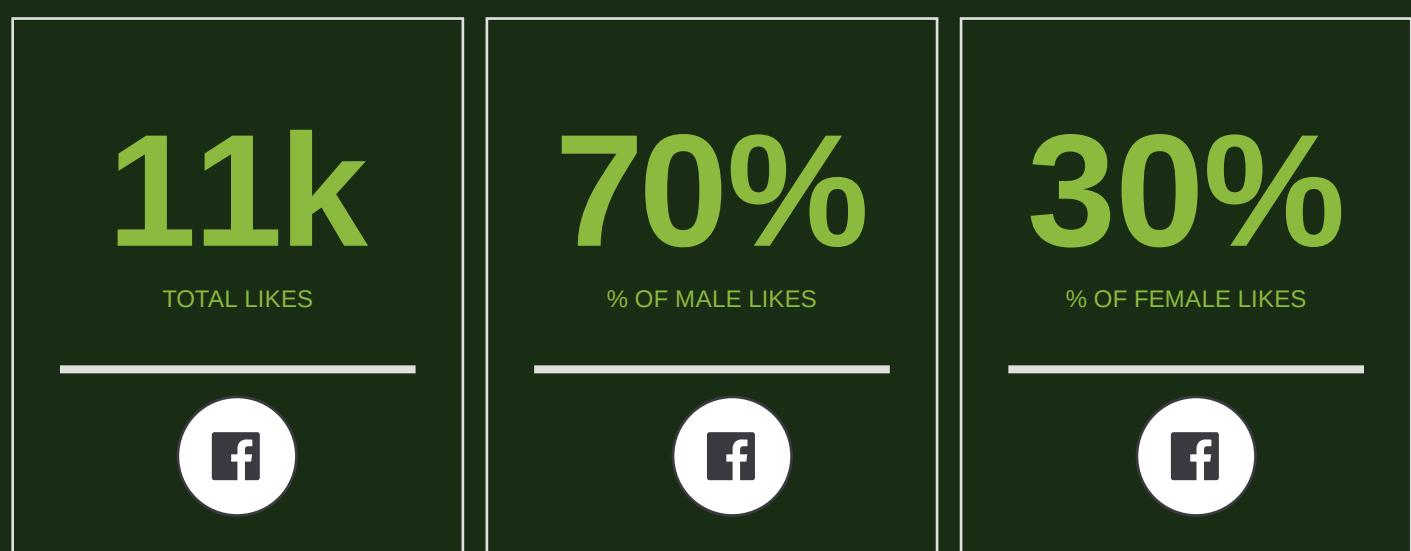
the electoral process and what needs to be done to address them. The media organizations engaged admitted that they knew very little about the challenges faced by PWDs and ignorantly used discriminatory language to describe PWDs in the few reports that they had done before

before these engagements. The media organizations engaged included the Nigerian Television Authority (NTA), Africa Independent Television (AIT), Channels Television, Independent Television (ITV) and Edo Broadcasting Service (EBS). Radio stations engaged included Ondo state Radiovision Corporation (OSRC). IFA and its partners also conducted outreach to the Nigerian Union of Journalists (NUJ).

### Social Media Outreach

IFA and its partners created awareness on the Edo and

Ondo polling unit accessibility audits on social media. The medium used were Facebook and Twitter. Facebook was however the most successful of the two. Before the campaign was rebranded, the Leave No One Behind: Disability Votes Facebook page received 11, 062 Likes. While 70 percent of these Likes were from men, 30 percent were from women. Traffic on the page was driven by regular content on both accessibility audits using info graphics, videos, news articles and pictures. The findings from both audits were widely shared on the page.





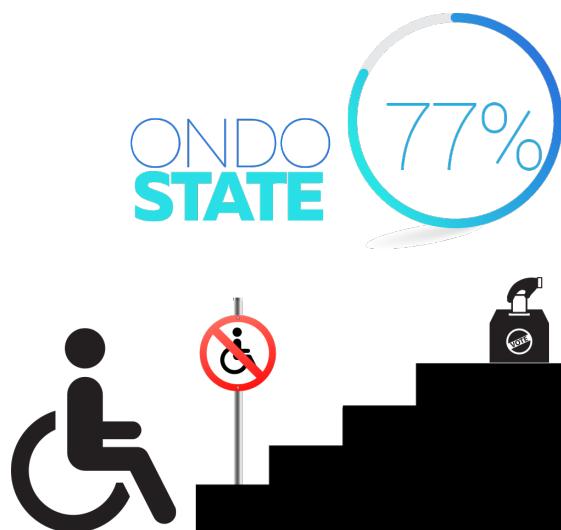
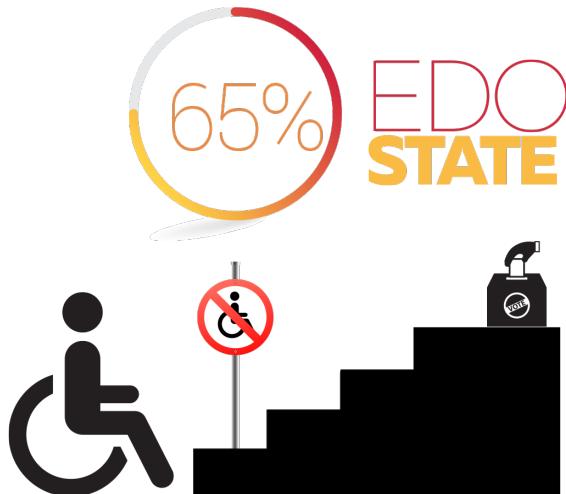
## Chapter Four

Observation Findings from Edo and Ondo governorship elections.

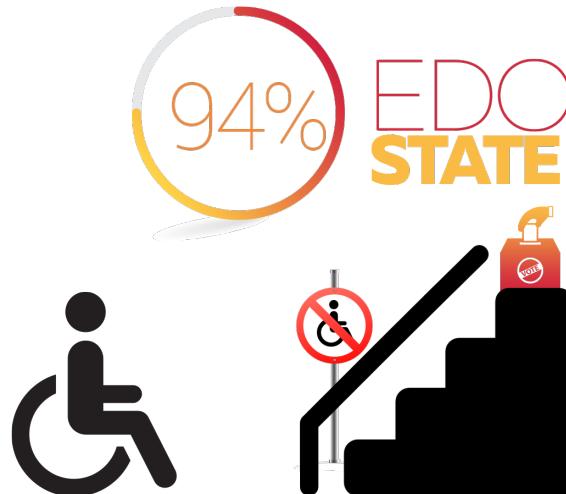


### Access to Polling Units

- Observers reports showed that 65 percent of the polling units observed in Edo and 77 percent of those observed in Ondo were located in places that were inaccessible for PWDs.



- Observers' reports showed that ramps and handrails were not available for use by PWDs at 94 percent of the polling units observed in Edo and 96 percent of those observed in Ondo.





- Observers also cited particular barriers that made polling units inaccessible for PWDs. In Edo state, elevated corridors posed a barrier in 22 percent of polling units observed, gutters in 10 percent and multiple barriers in 43 percent of polling units. In Ondo, multiple barriers posed a barrier in 50 percent of polling units, while gutters and corridors accounted for 19 and 15 percent of barriers, respectively.



### Internal Polling Unit Layout

- Observers' reports showed that Election Day instructions/procedures were not explained in sign language to PWDs at all of the polling units observed in Edo and Ondo states.
- While reports showed that Election Day instructions and guidelines were not posted for the benefit of hearing impaired voters in 90 percent of the polling units observed in Edo, this barrier was observed in 87 percent of the polling units observed in Ondo.



**64% | 79%**

EDO STATE

ONDO STATE

- During these elections, observers' reports from Edo showed that it was difficult to enter inside 64 percent of the polling units observed in Edo and 79 percent of those observed in Ondo.

**75% | 78%**

EDO STATE

ONDO STATE

- The polling unit was not laid out in such a way that PWDs could easily participate in accreditation and voting at 75 percent of the polling units observed in Edo and 78 percent of those observed in Ondo.

**96% | 99%**

EDO STATE

ONDO STATE

- Observer reports showed an absence of ramps and handrails for use by PWDs inside the polling unit at 96 percent of the polling units observed in Edo and 99 percent of those observed in Ondo.

## Election Day Procedures



- Observers' reports showed that the ballot box was not placed in such a way that PWD voters could independently cast their ballots in 48 percent of the polling units observed in Edo and 77 percent of those observed in Ondo.
- In Edo state, PWDs received assistance from their nominees to enable them cast their votes at 19 percent of the polling units visited. Support was provided by INEC personnel at 4 percent of polling units, and by security officials and polling agents at 2 percent of polling units.
- In Ondo state, PWDs received assistance in order to cast their votes, with reports showing that in 27 percent of polling units the assistance came from PWD nominees, in 25 percent of polling units from INEC, in 16 percent from polling agents, and in 14 percent of polling units from security agents.

## Polling Unit Materials



- Observers' reports showed that the space (width) of the voting cubicle was not suitable for PWDs, especially those on wheelchairs, at 62 percent of the polling units observed in both Edo and Ondo states.
- The height of the ballot box was not suitable for PWDs at 63 percent of the polling units observed in Edo and 68 percent of those observed in Ondo state.
- Observers' reports showed that Braille or Tactile ballots were not provided for visually impaired voters at all of the polling units in Edo and Ondo states.
- Observers' reports showed that Form EC 40H, the form used by INEC to record the participation of PWDs on Election Day, was not used at 45 percent of the polling units observed in Edo and 70 percent of those observed in Ondo.





## Chapter Five

Recommendations.

To remove the barriers that make it difficult for PWDs to participate in Nigeria's political and electoral processes, we make the following specific recommendations for action by the under listed stakeholders in the short and long term:

### Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC)

*In 2017*



**INEC should strengthen its utilization of form EC 40H to collect PWD data, disaggregated by type of disability on Election Day and publicly share this data. This will enable DPOs and other stakeholders plan initiatives like voter education to improve the participation of PWDs during elections.**



**INEC should budget for and provide written instructions to explain Election Day procedures to voters with hearing impairments.**



**INEC should ensure that ballot boxes are not placed on high tables or platforms to enable PWDs independently cast their ballots during elections.**



**INEC should consult widely with Disabled Persons Organizations (DPOs) and accelerate the development of a Disability Policy that will address the barriers that make it difficult for PWDs to participate in political and electoral processes.**

In 2018



**INEC should locate polling units on flat surfaces as opposed to corridors, to enable PWDs enter these polling units without difficulty on Election Day.**



**INEC should include PWD status and type of disability as part of the data capture for all CVR processes to ensure that they have accurate and sufficient data to effectively plan for the participation of PWDs in all categories of elections.**



**INEC should immediately commence the process of collecting data on the disability status of the approximately 70 million registered voters whose disability status was not captured during previous voter registration processes.**



**INEC should include specific provisions on polling unit accessibility for PWDs in their policy/criteria for the location, relocation and setup of polling units to ensure that PWDs are able to independently participate in all Election Day processes and procedures without difficulty.**



**INEC should introduce Braille or Tactile ballots as a pilot during the 2018 governorship elections in Ekiti and Osun states and fully deploy it during the 2019 general elections.**



**INEC should establish disability desks in its offices across Nigeria's 774 LGAs with trained personnel who will interact with PWDs and document the barriers they face, as well as, their suggestions on how to improve PWD participation in the elections.**

**2019 and beyond**

INEC needs to develop a standard dimension for the internal layout of polling units and enforce this to ensure that polling units are spacious enough for PWDs, especially those on wheelchairs, to freely participate in accreditation and voting.



INEC should ensure that voting cubicles are wide enough and not too high to enable PWDs cast their ballots in secret, in line with Nigeria's secret ballot system.



INEC should provide sign language interpreters at polling units for interpretation to voters with hearing impairments.



INEC should implement all PWD friendly provisions in its 2017 – 2021 strategic plan to facilitate increased PWD participation in elections.





### ***The Executive at the Federal, State and Local Government Level***

***In 2017 -2018***



**The National Orientation Agency (NOA) should urgently develop and implement a comprehensive civic and voter education program that targets citizens with different forms of disabilities.**

***2018 and beyond***



**The executive arm of government at the federal, state and LGA levels should work with school administrators, INEC and DPOs to provide PWD friendly walkways, ramps and handrails in public structures where polling units are located.**



**The executive at all levels must strengthen existing building codes and enforce them to guarantee accessibility for PWDs during and after elections.**



The National and State Assemblies

In 2017 and beyond

- **The National Assembly should immediately amend section 56 (2) of the Electoral Act to make the provision of Braille or Tactile ballots and off-site voting mandatory to help increase the participation of PWDs in the electoral process.**
- **Beginning with the 2018 Appropriation Act, the National Assembly should regularly provide funds in the national budget for Braille or Tactile ballots, accessible voting cubicles, written instructions and sign language interpreters to enable PWDs participate effectively in pre-election and Election Day processes.**
- **The National Assembly should expedite action on the passage and harmonization of the National Disability Bill for onward transmission to the President for assent.**

## Conclusion.

The Access Nigeria: Disability Votes Matter campaign acknowledges the efforts that have been made so far to ensure the participation of PWDs in the electoral process. For instance, INEC has commenced the process of developing a disability framework and has included a good number of provisions to make it easier for PWDs to participate in elections in its 2017 – 2021 strategic plan. The Commission also established disability desks at its headquarters and state offices. INEC has also just restructured form EC 40H to capture the data of PWDs, disaggregated by type of disability. On their part, the National Assembly introduced section 56 in the 2010 Electoral Act (as amended). There was nothing about PWDs in the 2006 Act.

As noble as these are, the interventions above have not addressed the barriers to PWDs participation in elections. The findings and recommendations in this report provides a unique opportunity for Nigeria to make its elections more accessible for all of its citizens. When implemented, the recommendations in this report will help increase turnout for PWD voters. IFA is confident that INEC will keep to the commitments they have made to address the challenges we face. We are eager to work with the Commission, the National Assembly and other stakeholders to address the barriers identified during the Edo and Ondo governorship elections.



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