

Disability Inclusive Language: Choosing Appropriate Terms for Disability



Language choice significantly influences how individuals with disabilities are perceived in society. To foster respectful and inclusive communication, it is important to use language that respects the dignity and diversity of people with disabilities.

People-first language is widely acceptable for referring to individuals with disabilities, emphasizing the person rather than the disability.

Below are recommended terms¹ for referring to people with disabilities:

Terms to Avoid	Recommended Terms
The disabled, differently abled, people of all abilities, people of disability, people/person of determination, special needs/assistance people, a people that is stricken/troubled/afflicted with or that suffers disability, person with birth defect.	A person with disability/impairment; persons with disabilities/impairments
Normal/healthy/able-bodied person; a typical/whole person; a person of sound body/mind	A person with disability/impairment; persons with disabilities/impairments
Retarded, simple, slow, afflicted, brain-damaged, intellectually challenged, subnormal, mentally handicapped, feeble-minded	A person with an intellectual disability/impairment
Insane, crazy, maniac, psycho, hypersensitive, lunatic, demented, panicked, mentally deranged, mentally ill	A person with a psychosocial disability
Crippled, invalid, lame, deformed, handicapped, physically challenged	A person with a physical impairment/disability; a person who needs mobility support
Midget, dwarf, stunted	A person of short stature, little person
The blind; partially sighted	A blind person; a person who is/persons who are blind; a person with visual/vision impairment/disability

¹ Culled from the United Nations(2019). Disability-inclusive Communications Guidelines. Retrieved From <https://www.ungeneva.org/sites/default/files/2021-01/Disability-Inclusive-Language-Guidelines.pdf>

Terms to Avoid	Recommended Terms
The deaf, hearing impaired	A person who is deaf; a deaf person; a person with hearing disability/impairment/hearing loss; a hard-of-hearing person
Deaf and dumb, deaf mute	A person who is deaf and does not speak
Deaf-blind	Deafblind (i.e a person who is deaf and does not see)
Albino	A person with albinism
Hunchbacked	A person with a spinal curvature
Mongoloid, special person, Down	A person who has Down Syndrome; a person with Down syndrome, a person with trisomy-21
Dyslexic	A person with dyslexia/that has dyslexia
Leper, leprosy patient	A person affected by leprosy
Wheelchair-bound/confined/restricted; confined/restricted to a wheelchair	A person who uses a wheelchair; a wheelchair user; a person with a mobility disability/impairment; a person using a mobility device
International sign language	International Sign
Integration of persons with disabilities	Inclusion of persons with disabilities

Terms to Avoid	Recommended Terms
Disabled/handicapped parking	Accessible parking, parking reserved for persons with disabilities
Handicapped bathroom	Accessible bathroom
Non-verbal, can't talk	A person who uses a communication device



A COMPILATION OF LOCALLY RELATED TERMINOLOGY RELEVANT TO SOUTHWEST NIGERIA²

Below is a compilation of appropriate language to use when referring to persons with disabilities in Yoruba.

English	Yorùbá
Persons with disabilities	Awon Àkàndà
Person who is blind/blind person	Àkàndá tí ojú
Person who is deaf/deaf person	Àkàndá nípa tí etí
Person who does not speak	Àkàndá nípa tí ẹnu
Person with a psychosocial disability	Àkàndá nípa tí ọkàn
Person with albinism	Àkàndá nípa tí ẹyá ara
Person with physical disability	Àkàndá nípa ẹyí tí a fo jú rí
Person with intellectual disability	Àkàndá nípa tí làákáyè
Person with leprosy	Àkàndá tó ní ipènjà ètè

² Culled during CEWHINs development of Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) For Gender-Based Violence (GBV) and Harmful Practices (HP) Integrated Service Provision and Strengthened Referral Pathways For Persons With Disabilities In Osun State.



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