**"Breaking Barriers: Inclusive Education through Audio and Digital Access,"**

**Proposal for Inclusive Education through Audio Conversion and Assistive Technology**

**Proposal Summary**

This project, "Breaking Barriers: Inclusive Education through Audio and Digital Access," aims to enhance educational access for blind students in northern Nigeria by converting school learning materials into audio formats and integrating assistive technologies in inclusive classrooms. It will promote digital literacy and inclusive education by enabling blind students to learn alongside sighted students in mainstream settings. The project will address the digital divide by equipping educators with capacity-building tools and training to integrate assistive technologies into their teaching practices. Through strategic partnerships and leveraging digital resources, the project will foster international collaboration and promote global competence in Nigeria's education sector. Over 12 months, we will impact 500 students and 50 educators in **Kaduna and Plateau States**, targeting two specialist schools for the blind and two inclusive schools with a significant population of visually impaired students.

**Problem Statement**

In Nigeria, blind students face significant barriers to accessing quality education. Traditional learning materials are often not available in accessible formats, and there is a lack of digital literacy among both students and educators. With Northern Nigeria facing multiple burdens, grappling with low literacy rates, higher incidence of children with impaired vision, out of school children and resource constraints, the absence of audio resources and assistive technologies perpetuates educational inequity, hindering the region and Nigeria’s progress toward global competence and collaboration. Many schools lack resources such as braille textbooks, screen readers, and trained staff to support inclusive education. This has led to poor learning outcomes and limited career prospects for blind students. Addressing this challenge requires a structured approach that incorporates digital literacy, assistive technology, and teacher training to ensure blind students receive equitable education opportunities. This digital divide exacerbates the exclusion of blind students from mainstream education, limiting their opportunities for academic and professional success. The proposed program addresses this critical gap by converting learning materials into accessible formats and promoting digital literacy among blind students and their educators.

**Project Goals and Objectives:**

**Goals:**

1. To promote inclusive education by enabling blind students to learn alongside their sighted peers.
2. To reduce the digital divide by enhancing digital literacy among blind students and educators.
3. To strengthen educational access and global competence through the use of assistive technologies.

**Objectives:**

1. Convert school lesson materials into audio and other assistive formats (e.g., DAISY, braille, and screen reader-compatible documents).
2. Train 50 educators in digital literacy, assistive technology use and inclusive teaching methods within 8 months to support inclusive classrooms.
3. Provide assistive devices and software to improve blind students’ learning experiences.
4. Foster collaboration between blind and sighted students, improving peer learning outcomes by 25% within 12 months, as measured by pre- and post-program assessments.
5. Establish partnerships with international organizations specializing in digital accessibility and inclusive education.
6. Develop a sustainability plan to integrate inclusive education practices beyond the project’s duration.

**Project Activities:**

1. **Learning Materials Conversion:**
   * Develop an accessible digital repository for lesson notes and school materials.
   * Convert content into formats compatible with screen readers, braille displays, and audio-based learning platforms.
   * Partner with U.S. assistive technology experts to convert lesson notes and textbooks into audio files compatible with affordable devices (e.g., MP3 players).
2. **Capacity Building for Educators:**
   * Conduct training workshops for 50 teachers on inclusive education and digital literacy using audio tools, screen readers, and inclusive teaching methods, led by U.S. and Nigerian specialists.
   * Develop guidelines on best practices for integrating assistive technologies into teaching.
3. **Technology Deployment:**
   * Distribute assistive tools such as screen readers, audio learning devices, and refreshable braille displays.
   * Provide technical support for educators and students to ensure effective use of assistive technologies.
4. **Student Training:** Provide digital literacy training sessions for blind students to enhance their ability to use technology for learning.
5. **Inclusive Classroom Pilots:** Implement pilot programs in five schools, integrating blind and sighted students in shared learning activities using audio and digital tools.
6. **Stakeholder Engagement and Policy Advocacy:**
   * Collaborate with the Kaduna State Ministry of Education to promote policy changes for inclusive education.
   * Organize community sensitization programs to create awareness about digital accessibility in education.
   * Host awareness events with parents and local leaders to promote inclusive education and reduce stigma.
7. **Partnership Development:** Establish partnerships with local and international organizations to support and sustain the program.

**Project Methods and Design:**

The project will follow multi step, phased approach. A logic model will be used to ensure that each activity aligns with the project's goals and objectives in the form of Logic Model: Inputs (training, devices, U.S. expertise) → Activities (conversion, workshops, pilots) → Outputs (audio materials, trained teachers, inclusive classes) → Outcomes (improved access, literacy, collaboration).

* **Phase 1: Needs Assessment** – Identify the specific needs of regarding assistive technology and accessible learning materials.
* **Phase 2: Content Conversion & Technology Integration** – Adapt learning materials into accessible formats and introduce assistive technologies.
* **Phase 3: Student and Educator Training & Capacity Building** – Train students, teachers and administrators on digital literacy and inclusive education practices.
* **Phase 4:** Inclusive Learning Model: Blind and sighted students will collaborate on group projects, supported by audio resources, fostering mutual understanding and skill-sharing.
* **Phase 5: Implementation & Monitoring** – Deploy technologies and conduct periodic evaluations to measure project impact.
* **Phase 6: Sustainability Planning** – Establish a roadmap for integrating inclusive education into mainstream school policies.

**Proposed Project Schedule and Timeline:**

* **Month 1-2:** Project launch, team recruitment, and partnership agreements; Stakeholder engagement, school selection, and needs assessment.
* **Month 3-6:** Conversion of school learning materials, device procurement and technology deployment.
* **Month 7-9:** Teacher, student, training and capacity building workshops, distribute audio devices. Inclusive classroom activities and partnership development.
* **Month 10-12:** Community events, Implementation, evaluation, and final reporting
* **End of Project:** Policy recommendations and sustainability strategy development.

**Key Personnel:**

1. **Project Manager** – Oversees project implementation and coordination.
2. **Curriculum & Accessibility Specialist/ Inclusive Education Consultant:**  – Leads content adaptation and ensures alignment with inclusive education standards.
3. **Technology & Audio Production Expert** – Manages digital accessibility tools and conversion processes.
4. **Training & Capacity Building Coordinator** – Develops and delivers educator training programs.
5. **Monitoring & Evaluation (M&E) Officer** – Tracks project impact and ensures reporting compliance.

**Project Monitoring and Evaluation Plan:**

* **Pre-Training Assessment:** Baseline survey to measure initial digital literacy levels among teachers and students.
* **Mid-Project Review:** Collect feedback through interviews and focus group discussions.
* **Post-Project Evaluation:** Measure the impact based on improved learning outcomes and teacher proficiency in inclusive education.
* **Sustainability Indicators:** Track policy adoption and institutional commitment to inclusive learning.
* Monitoring: Monthly progress reports will track material conversion (target: 100% completion by Month 10), workshop attendance (target: 50 teachers), and device distribution (target: 500 students). Site visits will ensure timely implementation.

**Future Funding or Sustainability:**

To ensure the sustainability of the program, we will seek additional funding from local and international donors. We will also work with educational institutions to integrate assistive technologies and inclusive teaching methods into their curricula. By establishing strategic partnerships with Nigeria’s Universal Basic Education Commission**, Kaduna State Government and corporate sponsors**, we aim to create a long-term impact on the educational landscape in Nigeria. Trained educators will continue using skills, and digital hubs will remain operational with community support. Partnerships with U.S. organizations will facilitate ongoing technical assistance.

* Advocate for policy changes to institutionalize assistive learning technology in Kaduna State’s education system.
* Establish **teacher mentorship programs** for ongoing skill development.

This proposal outlines a comprehensive plan to promote inclusive education and digital literacy for blind students in Nigeria. By leveraging digital resources and fostering strategic partnerships, we aim to create a more equitable and accessible educational environment for all students.

By implementing this project, IFFPAN aims to bridge the digital divide and empower blind students with the tools they need to succeed in inclusive educational settings, fostering a more equitable learning environment in Northern States.