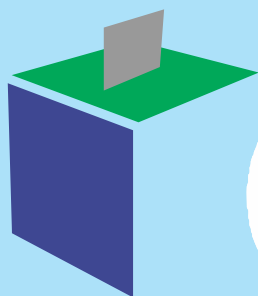


MEDIA GUIDELINES

FOR DISABILITY-INCLUSIVE
COVERAGE OF ELECTIONS IN

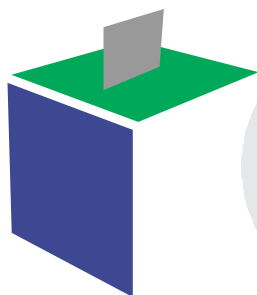
NIGERIA



MEDIA GUIDELINES

**FOR DISABILITY-INCLUSIVE
COVERAGE OF ELECTIONS IN**

NIGERIA



Published in 2023
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Acronyms and Abbreviations

AU African Union

CRPD Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

CSO Civil Society Organisation

EU-SDGN European Union Support to Democratic Governance in Nigeria

IMS Institute for Media and Society

INEC Independent National Electoral Commission

NGO Non- Governmental Organisation

PWD Persons with Disability

WHO World Health Organisation

EMB Electoral Management Body

NDHS Nigeria Demographic and Health Survey

INTRODUCTION

The media are key institutions in democratic governance in Nigeria. They have the important task of providing fair, accurate, ethical and inclusive coverage of the electoral and broader democratic processes.

However, the attention of the media to disability and the potential of persons with disability in the democratic governance process has been marginal. Specifically, through poor access, inappropriate language use and representation, the media have given scant coverage to PWDs, the issues that affect them and their contribution to the electoral process and democracy in Nigeria.

This set of guidelines is a response to this gap. It is designed as a resource material for journalists and other media professionals to better understand the reality of disability in Nigeria and to promote the active

participation of PWDs in the country's electoral process.

The guidelines have been put together by Nigerian media professionals and other stakeholders, drawing ideas from local and international experiences and documents.

This seminal and unique resource fills a huge gap and contributes to transforming media coverage of disability and improving the participation of PWDs in elections and democracy in Nigeria.

SECTION 1

UNDERSTANDING DISABILITY

Disability is a term that has consistently been misunderstood by many, which in many cases leads to discrimination against persons with disabilities by their family, and the society at large. This justifies, therefore, the need to understand disability and properly engage it in order to create an inclusive Nigerian society.

1.1 What is Disability?

Disability has been defined by various sources. The 2006 United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) states that persons with disabilities 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.

Another instrument, the World Report on Disability

defines disability as:

...the umbrella term for impairments, activity limitations and participation restrictions, referring to the negative aspects of environmental and personal factors. (WHO, 2011)

Therefore, disability is considered to be the outcome of interaction between the impaired individual, the society, and the entire environment. The definitions show that impairment does not make one disabled. Rather, the barriers that exist such as inaccessibility to media information, public buildings, health services, justice system, educational services, hinder persons with disabilities from living normal lives like others.

PWDs constitute a large demographic in Nigeria. If figures from various sources are considered, it appears that between 10% and 15% of the population of Nigeria are with one form of disability or another.

1.2 Approaches to Addressing Disability

All countries, societies and communities have developed social norms and attitudes to deal with or handle disability.

Charity Approach: This approach presupposes that

persons with disabilities are unable to fully participate in political life, governance or society as a whole. It assumes that they are people who are in a bad situation, who cannot take care of themselves, and thus need to be pitied and helped. An example of such approach is the use of the images of PWDs being given palliatives as fillers by the media. They, therefore, covertly reinforce the notion that PWDs are mainly beggars in need of charity.

Medical Approach: This approach involves the treatment of persons with disabilities as though their disability is the cause of all barriers. In this model, persons with disabilities are considered as abnormal, unable to live independently, and in need of rehabilitation to reach normalcy before they can participate in society. They are encouraged to adjust to their environments, rather than the other way round. This appears to be a common mindset which has influenced media disposition to covering elections but which should be discarded.

Social Approach: This approach sees disability as resulting from a wrong way of organising society, and that PWDs face barriers which prevent their equal participation. Disability is not regarded as an individual problem but that it mainly lies in the social environment which is limiting. This approach believes that PWDs can and should participate in society. It advocates the elimination of

barriers, (including attitudinal and environmental barriers) which hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.

Rights-based Approach: This is the best yet not very common, approach in many developing countries. The emphasis is shifted from dependence to empowerment. Persons with disabilities have the same basic human rights as all other citizens. It promotes the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights by PWDs as well as respect for their inherent dignity. It requires authority (government) to guarantee rights and be held accountable for the protection of such rights. This approach is dominant in contemporary development conversations and practices.

1.3 Disability Clusters

Globally, there are disability clusters with varying approaches from country to country. Below is a list of major disability clusters recognised in Nigeria:

- 1. Albinism,**
- 2. Autism**
- 3. Blindness,**
- 4. Cognitive or Learning Disabilities**
- 5. Deafness**

- 6. Physical Impediment**
- 7. Downs Syndrome**
- 8. Little Stature**
- 9. Spinal Cord injury**
- 10. Others**

These clusters are evolving as issues of disability are getting increased attention.

SECTION 2

DISABILITY RIGHTS FRAMEWORKS

Disability rights are enshrined in various instruments at global, continental and national levels.

2.1 Global – United Nations

2.1.1 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, UDHR (1948)

Article 19: of the UDHR provides that:

Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers (UN, 1948).

2.1.2 United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons With Disabilities (UNCRPD)

Article 21 of the CRPD provides that:

State parties shall take all appropriate measures to ensure that persons with disability can exercise the right to freedom of expression and opinion, including the freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas on an equal basis with others and through all forms of communication of their choice including by:

- a. Providing information intended for the general public to persons with disabilities in accessible formats and technologies appropriate to different kinds of disabilities in a timely manner and without additional cost.
- b. Accepting and facilitating the use of sign languages, braille, augmentative and alternative communication, and all other accessible means, modes and formats of communication of their choice by persons with disabilities in official interactions.
- c. Urging private entities that provide services to the general public, including through the internet, to provide information and services in accessible and usable formats for persons with disabilities
- d. Encouraging the mass media, including providers of information through the internet to make their services accessible to persons with disabilities.

e. Recognising and promoting the use of sign language

Article 29 of the CRPD says that: States, Parties shall guarantee to persons with disabilities political rights and the opportunity to enjoy them on an equal basis with others, and shall undertake:

(a) To ensure that persons with disabilities can effectively and fully participate in political and public life on an equal basis with others, directly or through freely chosen representatives, including the right and opportunity for persons with disabilities to vote and be elected, inter alia, by:

(i) Ensuring that voting procedures, facilities, and materials are appropriate, accessible, and easy to understand and use.

(ii) Protecting the right of persons with disabilities to vote by secret ballot in elections and public referendums without intimidation, and to stand for elections, to effectively hold office and perform all public functions at all levels of government, facilitating the use of assistive and new technologies where appropriate.

(iii) Guaranteeing the free expression of the will of persons with disabilities as electors and to this end, where

necessary, at their request, allowing assistance in voting by a person of their own choice.

(b) To promote actively an environment in which persons with disabilities can effectively and fully participate in the conduct of public affairs, without discrimination and on an equal basis with others, and encourage their participation in public affairs, including:

(i) Participation in non-governmental organizations, and associations concerned with the public and political life of the country, and in the activities and administration of political parties.

(ii) Forming and joining organisations of persons with disabilities to represent persons with disabilities at international, national, regional and local levels.

2.2 Continental – African Union

2.2.1. African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance

Article 8 provides that:

1. State Parties shall eliminate all forms of discrimination, especially those based on political opinion, gender, ethnic, religious and racial grounds as well as any other form of intolerance.

2. State Parties shall adopt legislative and administrative measures to guarantee the rights of women, ethnic minorities, migrants, people with disabilities, refugees and displaced persons and other marginalised and vulnerable social groups.

3. State Parties shall respect ethnic, cultural, and religious diversity, which contributes to strengthening democracy and citizen participation.

2.2.2 Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Persons With Disabilities in Africa (2018)

Article 21 (Right to Participate in Political and Public Life) provides that:

1. Every person with a disability has the right to participate in political and public life.

2. State parties shall take all appropriate policy, legislative and other measures to ensure this right, on the basis of equality, including through:

A. Undertaking or facilitating systematic and comprehensive civic education to encourage full participation of persons with disabilities in democracy and development processes, including by ensuring civic and

voter education materials are availed in accessible formats;

b. Encouraging the effective participation of persons with disabilities in political and public life including as members of political parties, electors and holders of political and public offices in accordance with national laws.

c. Putting in place reasonable accommodation and other support resources consistent with the secrecy of the ballot, including as appropriate , by ensuring accessibility to polling stations and facilitating assisted voting, for persons with disabilities, to enable their effective participation in political and public life in accordance with national laws.

d. Realising increased and effective representation and participation of persons with disabilities on an equitable basis as members of regional, sub-regional, national and local legislative bodies.

e. Repealing or amending laws that on the basis of disability restrict the right of persons with disabilities to vote, stand for or remain in public office.

Article 23 (Right to Freedom of Expression and Opinion)

1. Every person with a disability has the right to freedom of expression and opinion, including the freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through all forms of communication of their choice.
2. State parties shall take policy, legislative, administrative and other measures to ensure that persons with disabilities can exercise these rights on an equal basis with others.

Articles 24 (Access to Information) states that:

1. Every person with a disability has the right to access information.
2. State parties shall take policy, legislative, administrative and other measures to ensure that persons with disabilities can exercise these rights, on the basis of equality, including by:
 - a. Providing information intended for the general public as well as information required for official interactions to persons with disabilities in accessible formats and technologies appropriate to different kinds of disabilities in a timely manner, and without additional cost to persons with disabilities.

- b. Requiring private entities that provide services to the general public, including through print and electronic media, to provide information and services in accessible and usable formats for persons with disabilities.
- c. Recognizing and promoting the use of sign languages and deaf culture; and
- d. Ensuring that persons with visual impairments or with other print disabilities have effective access to published works including by using information and communication technologies.

2.3 National - Nigeria

2.3.1 Discrimination Against Persons With Disability (Prohibition) Act (2019)

Part XI, Section 30 provides as follows:

1. Persons with disabilities shall be encouraged to fully participate in politics and public life.
2. Government shall actively promote an environment in which persons with disabilities can effectively and fully participate in-
 - a. The conduct of public affairs without discrimination;
 - b. Non-governmental organizations and associations

concerned with the public and political life of the country.

c. Activities and administration of political parties

2.3.2 Electoral Act (2022)

Section 9 states that: The Commission shall compile, maintain, and update, on a continuous basis, a National Register of Voters (in this Act referred to as "the Register of Voters") which shall include the names of all persons

a. entitled to vote in any Federal, State, Local Government or Federal Capital Territory Area Council election; and

B. with disability status disaggregated by type of disability.

Section 54 states that:

(1) A Voter with visual impairment or other form of disability who is otherwise unable to distinguish symbol or who suffers from any other physical disability may be accompanied into the polling unit by a person chosen by him or her and that person shall, after informing the Presiding officer of the disability, be permitted to accompany the voter into the voting compartment and assist the voter to make his or her mark in accordance with the procedure prescribed by the Commission.

(2) The Commission shall take reasonable steps to ensure that persons with disabilities, special needs and vulnerable persons are assisted at the polling place by the provision of suitable means of communication, such as Braille, large, embossed print, electronic devices, sign language interpretation, or off-site voting in appropriate cases.

SECTION 3

MEDIA RESPONSIBILITIES IN DISABILITY-INCLUSIVE ELECTION COVERAGE

The backbone of any democracy is an independent, professional and responsible media. The roles of the media are to inform, educate and stimulate the citizens positively especially to perform their civic rights during elections.

The following represent major responsibilities, in the media towards persons with disabilities, in the electoral process.

3.1 Prior to elections, the media should:

1. Provide platforms through which PWDs can lend their voices to issues related to their political participation.
2. Design content that highlights the rights and privileges of PWDs during elections.
3. Include PWDs in the design of content that focuses on their issues.

4. Give PWD aspirants and candidates seeking elective office equal access to the media in airtime and space on all platforms as they give other popular candidates
5. Embrace corporate social responsibility directed at informing, enlightening stakeholders on the need for inclusion of PWDs before, during and after elections.
6. Engage security agencies on the need for PWDs to be protected during campaigns and elections.
7. Expose voting centres that can prevent a person with disability performing his/her civic rights

3.2 During elections, the media should:

1. Advocate for the provision of assistive devices for PWDs at polling units such as braille ballot guide, magnifying glasses, accessible platforms, sign languages interpretation and tactile among others.
2. Sensitize PWDs on the need to exercise their civic rights by going out to vote.
3. Create a Disability Desk for the reportage of PWDs' activities during (and after) elections.
4. Be intentional about providing space for PWDs to share their views and observations as much as is given to other political actors and commentators.

3.3 Post elections, the media should:

1. Endeavour to give a report of PWDs participation in elections to stakeholders.
2. Engage social media platforms in promoting the inclusion of PWDs in electoral processes.
3. Project issues emerging from elections as it affects PWDs.

3.4 In the coverage of the electoral cycle, the media should use Disability inclusive language such as the provisions in the following table:

Recommended language	Language to be avoided
Person with disability Person with [type of impairment] Persons with disabilities People with disabilities (only in Easy Read documents, informal text and oral speech)	Disabled person, handicapped, person with special needs, handicapable, atypical, person living with a disability, differently abled, people of all abilities, people of determination, person living with a disability
Person without disability: The rest of the population	Normal, healthy, able-bodied, typical, whole, of sound body/mind
Have [disability/impairment /condition]	Suffer from, afflicted by, stricken by, troubled with

<p>Person with an intellectual disability Person with an intellectual impairment</p>	<p>Retarded, simple, slow, afflicted, brain-damaged, intellectually challenged, subnormal, of unsound mind, feeble-minded, mentally handicapped</p>
<p>Person with a psychosocial disability</p>	<p>Insane, crazy, maniac, psycho, hypersensitive, lunatic, demented, panicked, agitated, mentally deranged, mentally ill</p>
<p>Person with a hearing disability Person with a hearing impairment Person with hearing loss</p>	<p>The deaf, hearing impaired, deaf and dumb, deaf and mute.</p>
<p>Person with a vision/visual disability Person with a vision impairment Person with low vision</p>	<p>The blind, partially sighted</p>
<p>Person with a physical disability Person with a physical impairment</p>	<p>Crippled, invalid, deformed, lame, handicapped, physically challenged, person with physical limitations, limp</p>
<p>Wheelchair user Person who uses a wheelchair Person with a mobility disability Person with a mobility impairment Person using a mobility device</p>	<p>Confined/restricted to a wheelchair wheelchair-bound</p>
<p>Person of short stature Little person Person with achondroplasia (only if the person has this condition)</p>	<p>Midget, dwarf, stunted</p>

Person with Down syndrome Person with trisomy-21	Mongoloid, special person, Down
Person with albinism	Albino
Person affected by leprosy	Leper, leprosy patient
Person who uses a communication device Person who uses an alternative method of communication	Non-verbal, can't talk
Accessible parking Parking reserved for persons with disabilities Accessible bathroom	Disabled/handicapped parking Handicapped bathroom

Source: United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy, 2019

SECTION 4

IMPLEMENTATION AND MONITORING

Media organisations will ensure the implementation of these guidelines by:

- i. Sensitising their staff on the provisions.
- ii. Providing facilities and enabling environment for their staff to implement.
- iii. Monitoring compliance with the standards set out in these guidelines.

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