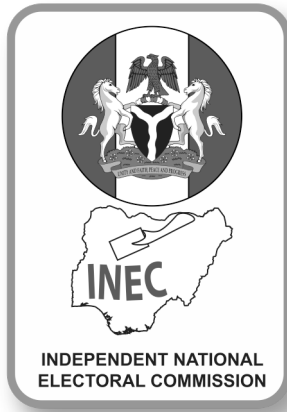




INDEPENDENT NATIONAL ELECTORAL COMMISSION (INEC)

**FRAMEWORK ON ACCESS AND PARTICIPATION
OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES (PWDs)
IN THE ELECTORAL PROCESS**



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FOREWORD

Article 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of December 1948 states that, all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. The right of citizens to take part in the government of their country, either directly or through freely chosen representatives is entrenched in Article 21(1). There is perhaps no better demonstration of equality than the right of a citizen to exercise his/her franchise through an equal and universal vote cast in secrecy.

Section 42 of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria confers on every citizen the right to freedom from discrimination, while Section 12 of the Electoral Act 2010 (as amended) spells out the criteria that qualifies a citizen to register and vote. Implicit in international instruments to which Nigeria is a signatory and the Nigerian electoral legal framework is the recognition of the right of persons with disability to participate, on the basis of equality in the political, public and social life of the country.

The Independent National Electoral Commission recognizes that the right of all eligible citizens to participate in the electoral process based on inclusive representation is one of the cornerstones of democracy. The Commission is therefore committed to providing full and equal access to all eligible citizens, regardless of their physical condition in the discharge of its mandate of conducting free, fair, credible and peaceful elections.

Consequently, the *INEC Framework on Access and Participation of Persons with Disabilities in the Electoral Process* is a policy document aimed at supporting Persons with Disabilities to take active roles in public life. The framework document and operational

plan were developed with input from various strata of the Commission's staff at Headquarters and at State and FCT Offices and in consultation with relevant stakeholders, including the Joint National Association of Persons with Disabilities (JONAPWD). This is with the aim of mitigating the challenges confronting Persons with Disabilities as voters, aspirants, candidates, political party officials or as staff of the Commission.

Undoubtedly, mainstreaming disability into the Nigerian electoral framework to promote the participation of PWDs in the political process and supporting them to aspire to decision making positions will enable the country benefit from the full potential and talents of all its citizens. It is the expectation of the Commission that the documents will become useful in combatting stereotypes, prejudices and exclusion and assist Person with Disabilities to protect and pursue their own interests in the effort to promote a more inclusive society and deepen democracy in Nigeria.

Professor Mahmood Yakubu

Chairman, INEC

September, 2018

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) Framework on Access for Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) is a product of collective effort. Several people and stakeholders contributed in many ways to its development up to this stage.

The Commission, as a reform minded institution undergirded by the overall objective of engendering an all-inclusive political process, took upon itself the task of institutionalizing the Framework for a more inclusive electoral process.

In order to achieve the desired goals, the principles of the policy relied on international best practices, domestic and international laws, protocols and conventions, which clearly identify PWDs inclusion as a human right issue.

Credit for this feat by the Commission, must therefore go to institutions and persons, who in one way or the other contributed to produce this document. The Commission is indebted to our development partner, International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES), for providing funding and expertise in the development of the document. We sincerely appreciate the support of the IFES Country Director, Mr Shalva Kipshidze, the Project Manager, Simon Iko Fanto and all the staff of IFES. Mrs Mufuliat Fijabi, former IFES Gender Advisor is acknowledged for her commitment and immense technical support all through the various stages of the development of this document.

Appreciation also goes to the Joint National Association of Persons with Disabilities (JONAPWD), disabilities experts and Civil Society Organizations who participated in the development and validation of this document particularly, Ekaete Judith Umoh, The President of

JONAPWD, Barrister Danlami Basharu, Dr. Adebukola Adebayo, Abdullahi Usman and many others.

It must be put on record, the commitment and support of the Commission's leadership, led by the Honourable Chairman, Prof. Mahmood Yakubu, without which the document would not have seen the light of day. Special mention must be made of the Chairman and Members of the Outreach and Partnership Committee (OPC) Dr. Adekunle Ladipo Ogunmola (Chairman), Mrs. Amina Bala Zakari, AVM Ahmad Tijjani Mu'azu (Rtd), Barr. Mrs. May Agbamuche-Mbu, Prof. Antonia Okoosi-Simbine and Prof. Okechukwu Ibeanu, for successfully steering and managing the partnerships and processes which culminated in the production of this document.

It is worthy to acknowledge the inputs and invaluable contributions sought and received from the Resident Electoral Commissioners of the thirty-six states and Federal Capital Territory, Secretary to the Commission, Directors, Administrative Secretaries, Heads of Departments, Directorates, Divisions, Units and PWDs Desk Officers nationwide for the sleepless nights and travel hours away from their loved ones in the course of producing this document.

Prof. Bolaji Eyinla, Chief Technical Adviser and Prof. Mohammed J. Kuna, Special Adviser to the Hon. Chairman of the Commission are also worthy to be mentioned here for their support through the development of this document.

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implementation processes, culminating in the production of this document. All the staff of the CSO Division are also appreciated for their hard work. Mrs. Rose Anthony-Oriaran, Director, then head of CSO Division is worthy of mention in the journey that kick started the development of this document.

Finally, we wish to appreciate everyone that contributed to the development of this document in one way or the other. The list is long and not all can be mentioned here. That nonetheless, we say thank you all.

Dr. Adekunle Ladipo Ogunmola

National Commissioner and Chairman,
Outreach and Partnership Committee, INEC
September, 2018

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS/ACRONYMS

CRPD:	The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
CSOs:	Civil Society Organizations
DPOs:	Disabled Persons' Organizations
EMB:	Electoral Management Body
EOPs:	Election Operations Department (INEC)
EPM:	Election and Party Monitoring Department (INEC)
FCT:	Federal Capital Territory
ICT:	Information and Communications Technology Department (INEC)
IFES:	International Foundation for Electoral Systems
INEC:	Independent National Electoral Commission
JONAPWD:	Joint National Association of Persons with Disabilities
MDAs:	Ministries, Departments and Agencies
M & E:	Monitoring and Evaluation
OPD:	Organization of Persons with Disabilities
PWDs:	Persons with Disabilities
TEI:	The Electoral Institute (INEC)
UN:	United Nations
VEP:	Voter Education, Publicity, Gender and Civil Society Organizations Liaison Department (INEC)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The mission of INEC is to serve as an Independent and effective Electoral Management Body (EMB) committed to the conduct of free, fair and credible elections for sustainable democracy in Nigeria. INEC is guided by the following values in the performance of its duties: autonomy, transparency, integrity, credibility, impartiality, dedication, equity, excellence and teamwork.

Participation in political and public life directly or through chosen representatives is a human right cognizable in several international instruments and in our Constitution and laws. INEC as the main Electoral Management Body (EMB) is committed to ensuring the participation of all eligible citizens in the process regardless of ability, gender or age.

Elections provide a unique opportunity to increase participation and change public perceptions about the abilities of persons with disabilities. Participation of Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) ensures that they have a stronger political voice and are recognized as equal citizens.

The INEC Framework on Access and Participation of Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) in the electoral process is a policy document aimed at the inclusion of PWDs in all aspects of the electoral process, as well as reducing the barriers they face as voters, aspirants, candidates, party officials and staff within the Commission. Accompanying the Framework is an Operational Plan which is an internal document to deliver the Framework

The Framework was developed following a Series of consultations held with internal and external stakeholders at different levels including persons with disabilities and the national umbrella body of persons with disabilities, Joint National Association of Persons

with Disabilities (JONAPWD) at zonal and national levels. A stakeholder validation conference was thereafter held before approval by the Commission.

The Framework is guided by the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999 (as amended), the Electoral Act, 2010 (as amended) and the various relevant International and Regional instruments to which Nigeria is a party or signatory to, particularly the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). These (international instruments and domestic laws) provide the legal basis and a set of standards for the full and equal participation of persons with disabilities in public life.

In line with the vision and mission of INEC, and its avowed commitment to an inclusive process, the objectives of the framework are:

Objective One:

Strengthen the Commission as an institution that is inclusive in its human and financial resources as well as in its practices and process.

Objective Two:

Work with relevant stakeholders to facilitate the development of accessible electoral facilities and infrastructure.

Objective Three:

Encourage the participation of PWDs in all aspects of the electoral process.

Objective Four:

Establish strong partnerships with relevant stakeholders to promote access and participation of PWDs in the electoral process.

Objective Five:

Encourage Political Parties on access and participation of Persons with Disabilities in the electoral process.

The objectives have Strategic Actions, and objectives 2 and 4 emphasize partnerships with a range of stakeholders, such as Electoral Officials, Media, Political Parties, Organizations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs) and other Civil Society Organizations. Regardless of the strategic action taken to increase political inclusion, the Commission is conscious of the importance of engaging Persons with Disabilities from the outset of programme design. This ensures the buy-in of Persons with Disabilities who we regard as equal partners who have a voice in decisions that affect their lives.

The Operational Plan of the Framework breaks down the objectives into actions that are measurable. It assigns roles and resources so that delivery can be measured.

The framework then ends with a Result Plan with the overall goal of contributing to the facilitation of access and participation of PWDs in all aspects of the electoral process.

INTRODUCTION

The INEC Framework on Access and Participation of Persons with Disabilities in the electoral process is a policy document aimed at the inclusion of PWDs in all aspects of the electoral process, as well as reducing the barriers they face as voters, aspirants, candidates, party officials and staff within the Commission. Accompanying the Framework is an Operational Plan which is an internal document to deliver the Framework.

Series of consultations were held with internal and external stakeholders at different levels, including Directors, Administrative Secretaries and other staff of the Commission, as well as PWDs Desk Officers from the 36 States and the FCT. Also, persons with disabilities and the national umbrella body of persons with disabilities, Joint National Association of Persons with Disabilities (JONAPWD) were extensively consulted at state and national levels. The outcomes from all these engagements enriched the content of the Framework and the Operational Plan.

CONTEXT TO THE FRAMEWORK

This Framework is guided by the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999 (as amended) and the Electoral Act, 2010 (as amended) and the various relevant International and Regional instruments to which Nigeria is a party. These include the following:

- a. United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948);
- b. International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966);
- c. International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966);
- d. Convention on Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (1979);
- e. The African Charter on Human and People's Rights (1981);
- f. UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, (1989);
- g. The UN Standard Rules on Equalization of Opportunities for PWDs (1993);
- h. UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006);
- i. African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance (2007);
- j. Continental Plan of Action for the African Decade of Persons with Disabilities (1999 - 2009).

RATIONALE FOR THE FRAMEWORK

The rationale is to ensure that disability issues are mainstreamed into electoral matters throughout the electoral phases. This is in line with the Commission's mission to conduct free, fair and credible elections towards strengthening and deepening of democracy in Nigeria. The Framework will guide the Commission on how to support PWDs throughout the electoral cycle.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The guiding principle is based on the Commission's mission to serve as an independent and effective Election Management Body (EMB) committed to the conduct of free, fair, inclusive and credible elections for sustainable democracy in Nigeria. The Commission therefore:

- a) Advances the aspirations contained in the Constitution, especially Chapter 2, its intent being to contribute to building a just society devoid of discrimination, while at the same time harnessing the full potentials of all social groups regardless of sex or circumstance;
- b) Develops framework for an inclusive electoral process in all operating procedures, practices, policies and encourages the strengthening of capacities of stakeholders to deliver components of this framework;
- c) Builds on the hopes and aspirations of Nigerians for a truly inclusive, equitable, free and fair electoral process and the commitment of the Commission to meet these aspirations;
- d) Acknowledges the roles of all stakeholders, including Organizations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs) as critical in supporting the Commission to attain success;
- e) Enjoins the Commission to encourage and establish collaborative frameworks to harness the support of all internal and external stakeholders in their adherence to this Framework; and
- f) Recognizes responsibility to all citizens, and without

discrimination, based on which the Commission will provide reasonable accommodation for Persons with Disabilities to participate in the electoral process on an equal basis with others.

OVERALL GOAL TO THE FRAMEWORK

The overall goal of this Framework is to contribute to the facilitation of access and participation of PWDs in all aspects of the Electoral Process.

The specific objectives and related strategic actions are as follows:

Objective One

Strengthen the Commission as an institution that is inclusive in its human and financial resources as well as in its practices and process.

Strategic Actions:

- i. Develop an electoral database on PWDs (including staff, service providers, aspirants, voters and candidates).
- ii. Establish a benchmark on percentage of PWDs to be recruited as personnel of the Commission.
- iii. Ensure deliberate provision of assistive devices and inclusion of specific budget heads for same in all electoral facilities including INEC offices.
- iv. Strengthen PWDs Desks at all INEC State offices with accessible, information, knowledge and resources.
- v. Train all INEC permanent and adhoc staff on inclusive and accessible electoral process.
- vi. Mainstream disability-inclusive practices in all aspects of INEC operations including human resources management, budget, planning, procurement, plans and processes.
- vii. Mainstream disability issues into existing training and operational documents as well as design and develop disability friendly electoral materials for training of Adhoc and permanent staff.
- viii. Support electoral reforms on PWDs access and

participation.

- ix. Promote a safe and conducive electoral environment devoid of fear, coercion and intimidation before, during and after voting.

Objective Two

Work with relevant stakeholders to facilitate the development of accessible electoral facilities and infrastructure.

Strategic Actions:

- I. Conduct and establish baseline statistics and data on accessible facilities and infrastructure currently available in the country.
- ii. Utilize findings and recommendations of baseline study by the Commission and other relevant stakeholders to facilitate access and participation of PWDs.
- iii. Collaborate with relevant stakeholders to ensure that centers used for electoral activities are disability friendly and accessible.

Objective Three

Encourage the participation of PWDs in all aspects of the Electoral Process.

Strategic Actions:

- I. Conduct targeted and customized sensitization and voter education activities on the role of PWDs in the Electoral Process.
- ii. Promote quarterly meetings of critical electoral stakeholders on disabilities and elections in Nigeria.
- iii. Develop electoral cycle-based interventions on electoral issues affecting PWDs.

- iv. Develop a disability inclusion checklist to monitor progress on implementation of the Framework.

Objective Four

Establish strong partnerships with relevant stakeholders to promote access and participation of PWDs in the Electoral Process.

Strategic Actions:

- i. **Development Partners:**
 - a. Collaborate effectively with development partners on mainstreaming disabilities issues into interventions in the Electoral Process.
 - b. Share relevant information on Nigeria's Electoral Process and disability issues.
- ii. **Ministries, Departments and Agencies:**
 - a. Partner with MDAs on security with special attention to PWDs.
 - b. Partner with MDAs on disability friendly materials and resources for the Electoral Process.
- iii. **Civil Society Organizations (CSOs):**
 - a. Partner with CSOs on disabilities and election matters.
 - b. Assist in strengthening the capacity of OPDs on different aspects of the Electoral Process.
 - c. Support OPDs to implement full electoral cycle activities including training, mobilization, involvement in registration process, disability responsive voter education, election observation, etc.

iv. Media:

- a. Revise current INEC communication Policy to mainstream disabilities and Elections Matters.
- b. Enhance INEC media programming on PWDs issues and elections.

Objective Five

Encourage Political Parties on access and participation of Persons with Disabilities in the Electoral Process.

Strategic Actions:

- i. Political parties should be encouraged to maintain a membership register and to include a column indicating PWDs in the said register.
- ii. Political parties are encouraged to integrate PWDs in their membership drive because it is in their interest and the larger society to show their inclusiveness.
- iii. INEC should regularly publish the number of political parties in compliance with PWDs Framework as a means of naming and shaming political parties not in compliance.
- iv. Encourage mainstreaming of disability issues into political parties' development and operations.
- v. Encourage political parties to have quotas or set affirmative action percentage for PWDs, for elective and appointive positions.
- vi. Work with Political Parties on inclusive campaigns.
- vii. Design a template to monitor political parties' compliance level of inclusivity and accessibility standards.

OPERATIONAL PLAN

This Framework is supported by an Operational Plan contained in a separate document which is more for internal usage.

The Operational Plan breaks down these objectives into actions that are measurable. It assigns roles and resources so that delivery can be measured. The mode of operation is detailed below.

Components of the Operational Plan

The Operational plan comprises of a set of tools for tracking and measuring progress. These include the following:

- A Result Outline
- The Action Plan
- Risk Mitigation Strategy
- Checklist for M and E

The key achievable results are presented as milestones in recognition of the fact that achieving results is a movement, which takes into consideration the process leading towards success as well as the final gain attained. The work plan looks at detailed activities, persons or offices responsible for specific actions and timelines. The sum total of the activities will deliver the objective and ultimately the result.



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