LEADERSHIP AND NIGERIA'S SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

Essays in Honour of
PROFESSOR SULEIMAN ELIAS BOGORO



Edited by Isaac Olawale Albert
Umaru Pate
Freedom Chukwudi Onuoha

Leadership and Nigeria's Sustainable Development Goals

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CHAPTER 40

Interrogating the Implementation of Nigeria's Disability Act in the Context of SDGs

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Introduction

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its seventeen Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) adopted by world leaders in 2015, some of which include no poverty, zero-hunger, good health and well-being, quality education, gender equality, decent work and economic growth, reduced inequality, sustainable cities and communities, peace, justice and strong institutions, largely underscore a mandate for equality and embody a roadmap for a sustainable progress without leaving anyone behind. Achieving reduced inequality is integral to each of the 17 goals because only by reducing inequality can there be access to justice and inclusion, economies that work for all, and sustaining shared environment now and for future generations.

The SDGs demonstrate the scale and ambition of a new Universal Agenda. They seek to build on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and complete what these did not achieve.[1] The goals are broad and interdependent, yet each has a separate list of

[1] In September 2000, at the Millennium Summit, the world leaders adopted the UN Millennium Declaration, which committed the nations of the world to a new global partnership, aimed at reducing extreme poverty and other time-bound targets, with a stated deadline of 2015. This eight goals initiative was planned to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger, while aiming to achieve universal primary education, promote gender equality, reduce child mortality, improve maternal health, combat HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other diseases, ensure environmental sustainability and develop a global partnership for development.

169 targets to achieve. They seek to realise human rights for all and to achieve reduced inequality in income, gender, age, ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation, class and religion. They are integrated and indivisible and balance the three dimensions of sustainable development: the economic, social and environmental (UN.DESA, 2015).

Despite some national laws, international instruments and global discourse about discrimination, inequalities still manifest in income, gender, age, ethnicity, sexual orientation, class, religion and against persons with disabilities (PWDs). Thus, SDG Goal 10 is to ensure reduced inequality in all spheres of life against all persons (including PWDs), hence the importance of the domestication and implementation of the provisions of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its Optional Protocol (A/RES/61/106) which was adopted on 13 December, 2006 and was opened for signature on 30 March, 2007. There were 82 signatories to the Convention, 44 signatories to the Optional Protocol, and 1 ratification of the Convention. So far, this is the highest number of signatories to a UN Convention on its opening day (UN.org, 2016). It is the first comprehensive human rights treaty of the 21st century and the first human rights convention to be open for signature by regional integration organisations. The Convention entered into force on 3 May, 2008 (UN.org, 2016). On 23 January, 2019 Nigeria's President Muhammadu Buhari signed into law, the Discrimination Against Persons with Disabilities (Prohibition) Act 2018, following nine years of relentless advocacy by disability rights groups and activists (Ewang, 2018).

Statement of the Problem

From time immemorial, persons with disabilities had suffered discrimination from both loved ones and the society. Consequent upon the stigma attached to the birth of disabled babies, some people end up dumping their babies either in the bush, near a stream, in an orphanage or a motherless baby's home (Bathnna, 2014). Surveys conducted in Cameroun, Ethiopia, Senegal, Uganda and Zambia revealed that 38 percent of respondent caregivers of children with disabilities reported hiding them or forbidding them to participate in social activities in order to protect them from perceptions and stigmas. UNICEF (2020) estimates suggest that there are at least 93 million children with disabilities in the world. Children with disabilities constitute one of the most marginalised and excluded groups in the society - daily confronting discrimination in the form of negative attitudes, lack of adequate policies and legislation, they are effectively barred from realising their rights to healthcare, education, and even survival (UNICEF, 2020).

Andrew Ajijah reported in *Premium Times* of 3 December, 2013 that 19 million Nigerians are afflicted with various disabilities. Haruna (2017) notes that children with special needs require special education and rehabilitation services which should be provided to them as a right like their counterpart, the able children. However, majority of the children with disabilities especially those with moderate, severe and profound impairments, are still far from enjoying full access to any kind of school, let alone to regular education in Nigeria.

Unfortunately, Nigeria's government has no definite policy for PWDs in Nigeria. People that do not have the care of their family members are left on the streets to beg for alms or are kept away from the public view. However, there is hope, because on 23 January, 2019, President Muhammadu Buhari signed into law the Discrimination Against Persons with Disabilities (Prohibition) Act 2018, after about 9 years of relentless advocacy by disability rights groups, but then the law is not yet popular. The provisions of the Act

appear unknown. Even the physically challenged who are the beneficiaries are unaware of the protection of their rights under the law. Also, one of the basic provisions of the law is the establishment of Disability Commission, to ensure the implementation of the rights of persons with disabilities in Nigeria. This is yet to be put in place. This needs a major advocacy and sensitisation for implementation if PWDs must enjoy their rights of inclusion, accessibility and opportunity under the Act.

Objectives of the Study

The general objective of the study was to interrogate the SDGs Goal 10 in relation to reduced inequality on income, gender, age, ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation, and religion, while specific objectives were to: analyse different types of inequalities under Goal 10 of the SDG; examine disability inequality; interrogate the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disability vis-a-vis Nigeria Disabilities Act; and Identify the roles of government and the other critical stakeholders in the Act towards implementation.

Methodology

The study adopted both primary and secondary data sources. The primary data source was derived from references to the statutory provisions of UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2006 and Nigeria's Discrimination against Persons with Disabilities (Prohibition) Act 2018, in-depth interviews and focus group discussion with some PWDs. Online resources from UN websites, findings from previous similar studies and reports from civil society organisations were reviewed for secondary data collection.

Theoretical Framework

Social Model of Disability Theory

The study hinges on the Social Model of Disability theory to illustrate that disability is caused by socially constructed barriers, including societal attitudes, physical and policy structures. It proposes that what makes someone disabled is not his/her medical condition, but the attitudes and structures of society. The distinction is made between "impairments," which are the individual problems that prevent people from doing something, and "disability," which is the additional disadvantage bestowed by a society which treats "impairments" as abnormal, thus unnecessarily excluding these people from full participation in society through prejudice, labelling, ignorance, lack of financial independence, over-protectiveness by families and not having information in formats which are accessible to them (Mental Health Foundation 2020). If we designed our environment/buildings for wheelchair users for example, they would be as independent as everyone else. It is the society that puts these barriers on them by not making the environments/buildings accessible to everyone. The theory was developed in the United Kingdom by Union of the Physically Impaired Against Segregation in 1975 and was coined by Mike Oliver as *social model of disability* in 1983.

Literature Review

Inequality

The Merriam Webster Dictionary defines inequality as the quality of being unequal or

uneven, such as in social disparity, disparity of distribution of opportunity, and lack of evenness. According to the UN.DESA (2015), inequality is the state of not being equal, especially in status, rights and opportunities. The SDG global goals not only call for an end to poverty, but also for a reduction in inequalities within and amongst nations. The United Nations Development Program (UNDP) describes it as a "radical shift" intended to address the "last mile of exclusion" that prevents many people from improving their lives (Aliogo, 2018).

There are various types of inequality. They include income inequality, gender inequality, age inequality, inequality in ethnicity, class and religion, and inequality arising from disability or sexual orientation. Usually, discrimination is associated with inequality, in other words there is unjust or prejudicial treatment of different categories of people based on the highlighted variables. Causes of rising inequality in Nigeria for example, include few job prospects in a few cities like Lagos and Port Harcourt which have compelled residents of other cities to lag behind in wages and living standards. Education, health, and social welfare are three vital areas that address inequality, yet their shares of government's budget remain the lowest in sub-Saharan Africa. In 2017 for example, 7 percent of Nigeria's annual budget was each allocated to education and health respectively, whereas in Ghana, these shares were 18.5 percent and 13.8 percent respectively (IMF 2020). Also, Nigeria's "tax system" exerts more onerous tax burden on the poor through multiple taxation of smaller businesses, while tax waivers are granted to multinational companies; the country's high cost of governance; and the endemic cum systemic bribery and corruption, exacerbates inequality (Stears, 2017).

Income Inequality

Income inequality is an extreme disparity of income distributions with a high concentration of income, usually in the hands of a small percentage of the population (Kopp, 2019). When income inequality occurs, there is a large gap between the wealth of one segment of the population compared to the other. The different types of income segmentations in the analysis of income inequality may include distributions for: male vs. female, ethnicity, geographical location, occupation and historical income.

There are several prominent case studies and analysis reports providing insight into income inequality, income disparity, and income distributions in the U.S. and across the world. Between 1963 and 2016 for example, while the poorest 10 percent of Americans went from having zero-assets to being $1,000 in debt, the families in the top 10 percent had more than five times their prior wealth (Stears, 2017).

Aliogo (2018) cites Africa Renewal, a UN publication, that many countries in Africa like Cote d'Ivoire, Mauritius and Rwanda have registered remarkable economic performance over the past ten years, lifting millions out of extreme poverty and making schooling and healthcare available to larger shares of their populations; whereas, others have lagged. Nigeria is Africa's largest economy, yet three in every five Nigerians live in poverty (Stears, 2017). Resources are unevenly distributed and this has resulted in persistent inequities across generations and regions. The poor are poor because the rich are rich. Such an exclusion of the common man in the growth process hinders long-term economic growth and weakens national solidarity, evident in recent terrorist activities and calls for Restructuring (Stears, 2017). Fagbenro-Byron (2018) highlights some causes of inequality as social exclusion, attitudinal, environmental and institutional exclusion. He observes that the major people suffering from exclusion are the youths,

women, the disabled and the elderly, because the government has failed in constructing an inclusive society where everyone has equal access to social and economic amenities, political structures and administration.

Gender Inequality

Generally, people are categorised as either male or female, depending on their chromosomes and/or genitalia. Gender is commonly defined as the social identity of a person, while sex refers to one's biological identity as defined by physical and/or chromosomal makeup (Parziale, 2008). Gender inequality can be defined as allowing people different opportunities due to perceived differences based solely on issues of gender. Gender discrimination is the prejudicial treatment of an individual or group due to gender. Gender inequality and discrimination are generally discussed in relation to women, but anyone can experience gender-based inequality or discrimination (Aliogo 2018). In the World Economic Forum's 2017 Global Gender Gap report, Nigeria ranks 122 out of 144 countries in its efforts at increasing participation and expanding opportunities for women. Although women make up 49 percent of the population, they are under-represented in almost all areas – economy, governance, finance, etc. – to the detriment of the society (Stears 2017). Examples of gender inequality include poor men, men of colour, gay men, to name just some of the groups other than women, who are affected by economic, racial, and sexual discrimination. Overall, it is the women who bear the brunt of poverty, violence, and inequality in the workplace. Indeed on the average, the world's women earn 24 percent less than men (Robinson, 2018 cited UNWomen, 2015).

Inequality Relating to Ethnicity, Religion and National Identity

Ethnic identity has a very strong psychological or emotional component that divides the people of the world into opposing camps - 'Us' and 'Them'. Ethnic identity identifies, divides and unites people along a series of vertical axes. Rather than pursue a central national identity, OmoOdo Agba (2015a) laments that Nigerians do not have a nation. What Nigerians struggle to protect is their sectional identity rooted in pungent ethnicity - predominantly, Hausa-Fulani, Igbo and Yorùbá – the ethnic nationalities often mistaken for and erroneously believed to have been fused into one Nigerian nation. The dexterity of the Fulani oligarchy in the Nigerian polity pre-dated Nigeria's independence when the notion that the Northerners had the exclusive Manifest Destiny to rule Nigeria in perpetuity became crystallised (Kperogi, 2015). Femi Fani-Kayode, a former Minister of Aviation in Nigeria, reportedly argued in *The Punch* (2015) that the British architects particularly designed Nigeria such that the poor North would continue to rule, while the rich South would remain oppressed in an article captioned: "The Ninth Earl of Bathurst and the Nigerian State".

The Rev. Samson Ayokunle, the current president of the Christian Association of Nigeria, CAN, whilst reacting to three of the 2018 appointments approved by President Buhari in different federal agencies, described the appointments as lopsided and against the spirit of a united Nigeria. In his words:

> Mr Buhari on September 1 appointed Abbas Umar as the Managing Director of the Nigerian Security Printing and Minting Company, on September 13 he appointed Yusuf MagajiBichi, from Kano State to replace Matthew Seiyefa from Bayelsa who had been operating in an acting capacity since Lawal Daura was sacked in his absence; and on September 14, he also

appointed Zainab Ahmed as the acting Finance Minister to replace Mrs Kemi Adeosun who resigned as a result of her failure to participate in the NYSC programme and for parading a forged NYSC Certificate of Exemption (Yahaya, 2018).

Furthermore, the manner of the Federal Government's distribution of the relief package in respect of the Coronavirus pandemic, which hit Southwestern Nigeria more than any of the other zones suggests that Nigeria has favoured zones as presented below:

FG Relief Cash Transfer - Zone by Zone (NCDC 2020)

(1)	North-West	–	₦112.7 billion
(2)	North-Central	–	₦88.1 billion
(3)	North-East	–	₦44.4 billion
(4)	South-West	–	₦39.1 billion
(5)	South South	–	₦10.4b
(6)	South-East	–	₦3.3b

Disability Inequality

According to the WHO 2011 World Disability Report, about 15 percent of Nigeria's population or at least 25 million people, have a disability. Many of them face a number of human rights abuses including stigma, discrimination, violence, and lack of access to healthcare, housing, and education (Shandra, 2018). Individuals with disabilities experience lower education levels, lower employment rates, fewer household resources, and poorer health than people without disabilities. Yet in spite of comprising more than one-eighth of the US population, people with disabilities are seldom integrated into sociological studies of inequality (Shandra, 2018).

The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

The **Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities** (UN-CRPD) is an international human rights treaty of the UN intended to protect the rights and dignity of persons with disabilities. The text was adopted by the UN General Assembly on 13 December, 2006 and came into force in 2008. It was ratified by the EU in 2010 and by 2015, a total of 156 states had ratified it. As at November 2019, it had 163 signatories and 181 parties, which included 180 states (Steinert, Steinert, Flammer and Jaeger, 2016). The ratifying states acknowledged that the principles of the Convention should be transposed into their national legislations. The guiding principles of the Convention are respect for inherent dignity, individual autonomy including the freedom to make one's own choices, non-discrimination, full and effective participation and inclusion in society, equality of opportunity and accessibility. The general idea of the UN-CRPD is inclusion of PWDs into the society and communities.

UN.org (2016) reveals that the Convention followed decades of work by the UN to change attitudes and approaches to persons with disabilities. It takes the movement from viewing persons with disabilities as "objects" of charity, medical treatment and social protection to viewing persons with disabilities as "subjects" with rights, who are capable of claiming those rights and making decisions for their lives based on their free and informed consent as well as being active members of society.

The Convention describes persons with disabilities 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. However, the use of the term "include" should not be interpreted as excluding those who have short-term or fluctuating conditions. It clarifies and qualifies how all categories of rights apply to persons with disabilities and identifies areas where adaptations have to be made for persons with disabilities to effectively exercise their rights and areas where their rights have been violated, and where protection of rights must be reinforced.

Article 1 defines the purpose of the Convention:

> to promote, protect and ensure the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by all persons with disabilities, and to promote respect for their inherent dignity

Under **Articles 2 and 3**, the Convention provides for general principles such as communication, which include Braille, sign language, plain language and nonverbal communication, reasonable accommodation and universal design. Rights that are specific to this convention include the rights to accessibility, including IT, the rights to live independently and be included in the community (art. 19), to personal mobility (art. 20), habilitation and rehabilitation (article 26), and to participation in political and public life, and cultural life, recreation and sport (art. 29 and 30). In addition, parties to the Convention must raise awareness of the human rights of persons with disabilities (art. 8), and ensure access to roads, buildings, and information (art. 9).

Article 33 to 39 govern reporting and monitoring of the Convention by national human rights institutions and Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. By virtue of Art. 27, State Parties are required to recognise the right of persons with disabilities to work on an equal basis with others. This includes the right to the opportunity to gain a living by work freely chosen or accepted in a labour market and work environment that is open, inclusive and accessible to PWDs. That State Parties shall safeguard and promote the realisation of the right to work, including for those who acquire a disability during the course of employment, by taking appropriate step including through legislation, to *inter alia* PWDs' right to vote by secret ballot in elections and public referendums is under Art. 29.

SDGs and Disabilities Act

The enactment of the Discrimination Against Persons with Disabilities (Prohibition) Act 2018 is a good step in the fulfilment of Nigeria's obligations under the CRPD. Government and relevant authorities are expected to put effective measures in place for its full implementation to ensure equal treatment and participation of people with disabilities across Nigeria (Ewang, 2018). The SDGs explicitly mentioned disability and persons with disabilities **eleven times**. Disability is referenced specifically in the parts related to education, growth and employment, inequality, accessibility of human settlements, as well as data collection and the monitoring of the SDGs (UN.org, 2020). Although the word "disability" is not specifically cited in all goals, the goals are indeed, relevant to ensuring the inclusion and development of persons with disabilities. SDGs Envision 2030 works to promote the mainstreaming of disability and the implementation of the SDGs throughout its 15-year lifespan with objectives to raise awareness of the 2030 Agenda and the achievement of the SDGs for persons with disabilities; promote an active dialogue among stakeholders on the SDGs with a view to creating a better world

for persons with disabilities; and establish an ongoing live web resource on each SDG and disability.

Nigeria's Disability Act

Nigeria ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities (CRPD) in 2007 and its Optional Protocol in 2010. Since then civil society groups and people with disabilities have called on the government to put it into practice. For example, Oyegbade (2019) notes that the stakeholders at a session facilitated by Partnership to Engage, Reform and Learn (PERL) charged the national Assembly and the Presidency to ensure gazetting of the law, establish the national commission for disability, provision of fund (budget) for the commission to be effective, create awareness for the law and domestication of the law at the state level across the state of the federation.

Earlier to the passage of National Disabilities Act,

> Lagos State government signed, into law, the Lagos State Special People's Law in 2010 and established Lagos State Office of Disability Affairs (LASODA) to oversee the affairs of PWDs in the State. Also, in 2017, the Kwara state government signed into law Kwara State People with Disabilities (Amendment) Law 2017. At the federal level, the bill for the new law was passed by the House of Representatives and the Senate Joint Committee in November 2016, but was not transmitted to President Buhari for his signature until December 2018 (Ewang, 2019). On 23 January, 2019, the president signed the Disability Bill into Law. The "Discrimination against Persons with Disabilities (Prohibition) Act 2018 was a definitive milestone for those affected and probably all the citizens. The Act envisages the condition and limitations of persons living with disabilities and makes provision for their inclusion in the society, at least to mitigate their emotional and psychological trauma (Oyegbade, 2019).

The law prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability and imposes sanctions including fines and imprisonment for contravention. It also stipulates a 5-year transitional period for modifying public buildings, structures, and automobiles to make them accessible and usable for people with disabilities. The law provides for the establishment of a National Commission for Persons with Disabilities, responsible for ensuring that people with disabilities have access to housing, education, and healthcare and also to receive complaints of violation of rights and support victims to seek legal redress amongst other duties.

It is worthy of note that the law only encourages PWDs to participate in political administration, because there is no provision for them to vote and be voted for. However, it made alms begging an offence. Above all, to ensure that PWDs enjoy their rights under the Act, roles are assigned to specific stakeholders as highlighted in this study.

The Roles of Critical Stakeholders in the Implementation of the Nigeria's Disability Act

Federal Ministry of Information

Under Part II of the Act, the Federal Ministry of Information shall make provisions for promotion of awareness regarding the rights, respect and dignity of persons with disabilities and their capabilities, achievements and contributions in the society.

Town Planning Authority

Part III of the Act mandates relevant authorities to scrutinise and ensure that building

plans conform with the building code. In other words, all public buildings and structures, whether movable or immovable or automobile, shall be made accessible to and usable by PWDs, including those on wheelchairs. All public buildings which were inaccessible to PWDs shall be modified to be accessible to and usable by PWDs within the transitory period of five years from the commencement of the Act (2018). In addition, any officer or officers who approve(s) or direct(s) the approval of a building plan that contravenes the building code shall be liable to a fine of a minimum of ₦1,000,000 or two years in prison or both.

Transporters – Land, Railway, Seaports and Airlines

Parts IV, V and VI enjoin all providers of transport services – land, railway lines, seaports, airlines - operating in Nigeria to make provisions for lifts, ramps and other accessibility aids to enhance the accessibility of their transportation, parking lots to persons with disabilities, including those on wheelchairs within the transitory period of five years from the commencement of the Act (2018). PWDs shall also be accorded priority whilst boarding and or disembarking from all modes of transportation.

Government

PART VII specifically provides that in all situations of risk, including situations of violence, emergencies and the occurrences of natural disasters, the government shall take all necessary steps to ensure the safety and protection of PWDs, taking cognisance of their peculiar vulnerability. They shall be given first consideration on the queue and as much as possible, they shall be attended to outside the queue. Liability on conviction of violator is six months' imprisonment or a fine of ₦50,000.00 or both.

By virtue of Part IX, government shall provide free and unfettered right to education without discrimination or segregation up to the secondary school level for PWDs, provide accessible, inclusive and, at least, a trained personnel to cater for the educational development of PWDs at all public schools, whether primary, secondary or tertiary and cause the education of special education personnel to be highly subsidised. Moreover, government shall guarantee that persons with disabilities have unfettered access to adequate healthcare without discrimination on the basis of disability.

Public and Persons with Disabilities

Part VIII of the Act makes it illegal for the public or PWDs themselves to employ, use, involve, parade PWDs in public with the intention of soliciting for alms-begging or as guise for the purpose of begging in public. A person in contravention is liable, on conviction, to 6 months in prison or a fine of ₦100,000 or both.

Role of Employers of Labour

Under Part IX (s.27), all employers of labour in public organisations including the government, corporate, the multinational institutions, among others, shall reserve 5 percent of their workforce for PWDs who shall have the right to work on an equal basis with others. A person in contravention is liable on conviction to nominal damages of a minimum of ₦250,000.00 payable to the affected PWD and ₦500,000 in case of a company. In addition, any principal officer of the company involved in the violation shall be liable to ₦50,000 damages payable to the affected PWD.

Political Participation

Part XI provides that PWDs shall be encouraged to fully participate in politics, public life activities and administration of political parties. It has no provision to the effect that PWDs can vote and be voted for in elective positions. Under Part XII of the Act, a National Commission to oversee the affairs of PWDs was established. Sections 1(1) and (2) provide that:

There is hereby established a body to be known as the National Commission for Persons with disability to be placed under the Presidency. The Head Office of the Commission shall be situated in the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja.

Role of the President and the Senate

The chairman of the Governing Council of the Commission and one representative from each of the six geopolitical zones of Nigeria shall be appointed by the president subject to the confirmation of the senate. The chairman and members of the Council shall each hold office for a term of four years and may be re-appointed for a further term of four years but no more. The Governing Council of the Commission shall consist of a part-time Chairman, one person from each of the geopolitical zones who shall be persons with disability and a representative each from the Federal Ministry of Education, Federal Ministry of Health, Federal Ministry of Sports, Federal Ministry of Women Affairs, Federal Ministry of Housing, Federal Ministry of Transport, Federal Ministry of Environment, Federal Ministry of Labour and Productivity, Federal Ministry of Justice, National Human Rights Commission and the National Planning Commission.

Functions of the Disability Commission

The functions of the Commission shall include the following:

(1) to formulate and implement policies and guidelines as appropriate for the education and social development of persons with disability;
(2) to prepare schemes designed to promote social welfare of persons with disability and the estimate of cost of implementing such schemes;
(3) to ensure compliance of not less than 5 percent workforce, public enlightenment, promotion of inclusive schools, provision of education assistive devices (Braille, sign language and other skills for communicating), vocational and rehabilitation centres of PWDs;
(4) to receive of complaints of persons with disabilities on the violation of their rights; support an individual's right to seek redress in court, investigation, prosecution or sanctioning (in appropriate cases); and
(5) to ensure research development and education on disability issues and disable persons.

The Commission shall ensure that adequate control is maintained over the budgetary allocations, income from all avenues and assets of, or in the custody of the Commission and over its incurring of liabilities. It also has the power to do any lawful thing, to sue and be sued in its corporate name, acquire, hold and manage movable and immovable property.

The Commission shall establish and maintain a fund into which all subventions and budgetary allocations from the Federal Government of Nigeria, such monies as

may from time to time be granted to the Commission by anybody or institutions within or outside Nigeria shall be paid and credited and shall defray all expenditures incurred, including salaries, fees, remuneration, allowances, pensions and gratuities payable to its members and employees and cause the account of the Commission to be audited quarterly and audited yearly externally (Part XIII).

Executive Secretary of Disability Commission

Part XIII provides that there shall be an Executive Secretary for the Commission who shall have such qualification and experience as appropriate for a person required to perform the functions of that office and be a person with disability, to be responsible to the Council for the execution of the policies and the administration of the Commission. However, the body to appoint the Executive Secretary and the duration of office is not provided.

Auditor-General of the Federation

The Auditor-General of the Federation shall inspect and audit the account and records of financial transactions of the Commission.

Findings

This study found that the statutory provisions of the UN Convention and Nigeria's Act on protection of the rights of PWDs are vast but not exhaustive, because there is no provision for their civic rights to be voted for in the two laws, although the UN Convention gives the right to vote. Also, there are inequalities in income, gender, age, ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation, class and religion globally and in Nigeria.

During a focus group discussion conducted among PWDs in Ilorin, Kwara state, it was found that PWDs face extreme poverty arising from lack of basic needs, denial of employment even with adequate qualifications, discrimination from the government and the public, non-inclusive education for children with disabilities, among others.

An in-depth interview discussion with the Legal Officer of the Lagos State Office of Disability Affairs (LASODA) – Babatunde Safiu – revealed that policies and activities to protect the inclusive and opportunity rights of PWDs in Lagos state are conducted and monitored through LASODA. The Chairman, Lagos State Joint Association of Persons with Disabilities (JONAPWD) – Ogundairo Oluwadamilare – during an in-depth interview confirmed that the representation and opportunities for PWDs in Lagos state have improved under LASODA.

There is agitation for the implementation of Disabilities Act and establishment of the National Disability Commission among relevant stakeholders, to oversee the affairs of PWDs in Nigeria. Oyegbade (2019), reports that stakeholders from various clusters in the disabilities community in Nigeria demanded the immediate implementation of this Disability Act at a recent strategy session facilitated by Partnership to Engage, Reform and Learn (PERL).

Conclusion

There is no doubt that inequality is in different dimensions and degrees, depending on the angle the subject is addressed. However, a common denomination of inequalities is

discrimination. This is the main issue that SDGs envisioned to tackle under Goal 10 of Reduced Inequality, so that by 2030 all forms of discrimination associated with inequalities in income, gender, age, ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation, class and religion shall have been reduced to the barest minimum. In pursuit of this goal, international instruments, national laws and global discourse are deployed to ensuring that all persons including PWDs are strategically positioned to enjoy their rights of inclusiveness, accessibility and opportunities toward the attainment of justice and strong institution.

Recommendations

Since the goal of SDGs is to pursue sustainable development and the basic sustenance of man is food therefore, there should be continuous focus on the pursuit of national food security and increased employment, this being the fundamental way out of inequalities. Local manufacturing companies should be encouraged to create more job opportunities and remove unnecessary tax loopholes. Furthermore, there is the need for government and policymakers to invest in human capital that target women, so as to reduce gender gap in education, socio-economic and political situations towards increasing women participation and boosting the Nigerian economy. To improve gender equality, political parties should implement quotas for women to increase their participation in the political processes as recommended by the National Gender Policy.

In addition, in the light of Nigeria's multi-dimensional inequalities, a multi-faceted approach comprising fiscal policy, labour and financial market reforms with higher investments in education and health to improve access and quality to the citizenry, are required to tackle inequality (IMF, 2017).

Also, to facilitate the implementation of the Disabilities Act, there is the need for the National Disability Commission to be established by the Federal Government with required personnel, functional machineries/facilities and adequate funding, as this is most strategic in ensuring access to the rights of inclusiveness and opportunities for PWDs in Nigeria.

More importantly, to improve awareness about the roles of critical stakeholders and the public in the implementation of the Disabilities Act, the government, CSOs and disability rights activists need to engage in widespread, consistent and elaborate advocacy and sensitisation in the media, town hall meetings, rallies, seminars, among others. Moreover, to ensure the implementation of the provisions of the Disabilities Act, the government should inaugurate a task for monitoring, empowering the judiciary to adjudicate effectively and ensure enforcement of penalties against violators.

Above all, there is the need to build the personal esteem of PWDs through regular motivational speeches, education about their rights, inclusiveness in programmes, activities and benefits and show of love to them.

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