



# ABLE2VOTE

## VOTER EDUCATION CAMPAIGNS

FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES  
AND INTERNALLY DISPLACED  
PERSONS IN NIGERIA

Activity Implementation  
Report

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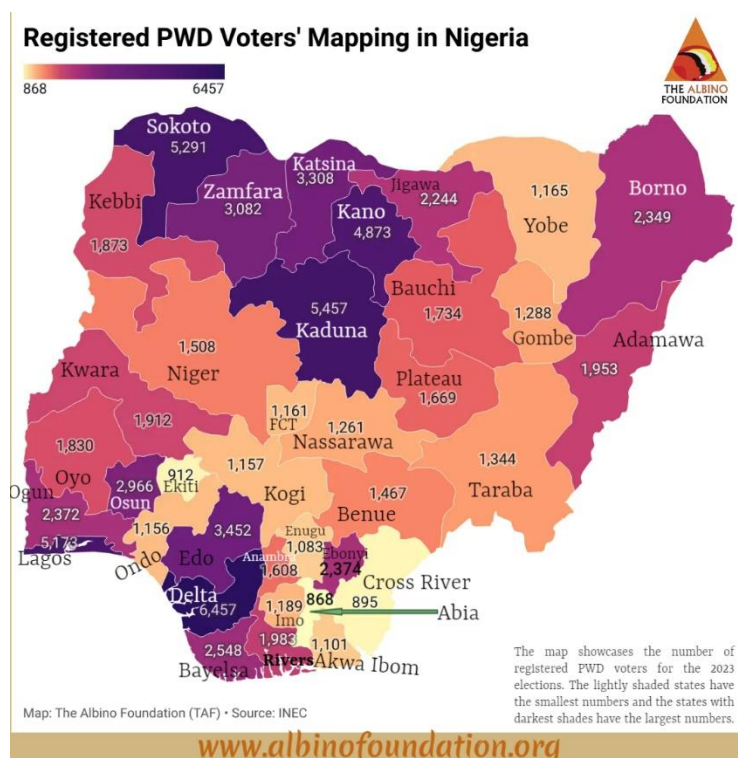


# TAF EU-SDGN II ABLE2VOTE CAMPAIGNS' REPORT OCTOBER-DECEMBER 2022



## 1. Background and Context:

Persons with disabilities (PWDs) make up the world's largest minority group and remain the most underrepresented in parliaments and political parties, which further limits their ability to directly engage in decisions that impact their lives.



It is therefore pertinent to know that changing socio-political norms and creating space for historically marginalized and vulnerable people to fill leadership roles in the society is no small task. This is particularly true for persons with disabilities (PWDs), who often face systemic, enduring exclusion and discrimination.

Nevertheless, Article 29 of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) addresses participation in political and public life, advocating that “States Parties shall guarantee to persons with disabilities political rights and the opportunity to enjoy them on an equal basis with others”. What are these political rights? Simply put, they entail the right to have a say in how the country is run, the right to vote in elections, the right to become a candidate in elections, the right to take part in politics. Therefore, irrespective on one's disability status or type, as citizens of Nigeria, we can all vote and be voted for, we all have the right to belong to one political party or the other.

Notwithstanding, the interpretation and application of key UNCRPD principles into day-to-day practice, remains a source of concern. Various barriers to the participation of PWDs in political and decision-making processes persist, be it pre-, during or post-election. Apart from the issues of societal stigma, low educational levels and illiteracy among the PWDs and the population at large also undermine participation and inclusion. There remain serious information gaps on how best to provide support for PWDs in elective positions or as electorates in the electoral processes. What is important therefore is to implement rigorous and timely interventions that would address the persistent gap within Nigeria's political culture and improve political participation and inclusion of persons with disabilities, especially in the 2023 general elections.

These form the basis on which The Albino (TAF) with funding support from the European Union (EU), collaborated with the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), Political Parties, OPDs, CSOs and other relevant Stakeholders toward enhancing the political participation of persons with disabilities in the electoral process in Nigeria. In view of this, TAF launched the #Able2Vote nationwide campaigns. The Able2Vote Campaign is a voter education campaign to sensitize PWDs on the need to vote and participate in electoral processes, as well as create awareness on the electoral processes and step-by-step guide on how to vote. It is targeted at a minimum of 30,000 PWDs from the six (6) geopolitical zones, 1000 in-person and about 4000 virtual participants per zone. However, because of budgetary constraints, in the North West, North East, South South, South East and South West zones, the number of budgeted participants was reduced to 100 as against 1000 in the North Central. The main objective of the project is to sensitize and create awareness among PWDs across the 6 geo-political zones in Nigeria on their right and the need to participate in politics and the electoral processes by coming out to vote, thereby increasing the number of PWDs who will exercise their civic rights and participate actively in the forthcoming general elections in 2023 and subsequent off cycle elections.

## ***2. Introduction to ABLE2VOTE***

The ABLE2VOTE voter education campaign began with a Press Conference on October 18<sup>th</sup> at the National Commission of Persons with Disabilities during which an MOU of collaboration was signed between TAF & NCPWD and TAF & WRAPA. The event launch was on October 19<sup>th</sup> in the North Central – Abuja, followed by subsequent implementations in the North West – Kaduna on October 24<sup>th</sup> and North East - Gombe on October 31<sup>st</sup>. The same agenda was adopted across the zones and the panel sessions were very resourceful and participatory with presentations from INEC’s voter education department, CSOs and OPDS on Security Issues around Disability and Prevalent Gaps in Electoral Rights of Persons with Disabilities: Priority Voting, Access to Polling Units, Voting Requirements, Voter Apathy, and Individual Cluster Needs.

To promote inclusivity of PWDs, panel members included persons with disabilities ranging from wheelchair users, persons with physical disabilities to visually impaired persons. The question-and-answer sessions recorded a continually active interaction between INEC Officials with sample electoral materials for explanations, CSOs and the participants. ABLE2VOTE campaign has been applauded and appreciated, as it has created a platform for political discourse and interactions on the cumbersome electoral procedures, lack of customized electoral materials, and inaccessible physical environment; sensitized PWDs on their voting rights, boosted their confidence, as well as eradicated certain barriers to the political participation of PWDs such as the negative attitudes of the public towards persons with disabilities. The media registered their presence in all zones and the events were streamed live but online participations were not accurately tracked or recorded.

### 3. Participation and Attendance

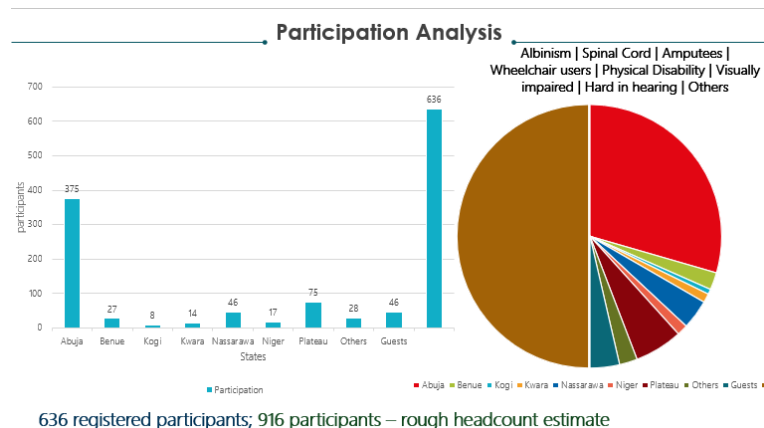
#### ABLE2VOTE North Central – Abuja

ABLE2VOTE Abuja had a remarkable attendance a little above the anticipated number of participants. A total number of 1009 persons (rough head count) were in attendance with 916 being



*A cross section of participants*

PWDs and 636 registered participants. In attendance were the INEC Chairman who delivered a Keynote address, INEC Federal Commissioners, Federal Ministries, and Agencies, representatives of various Embassies – USA, French, Chairmen/Presidents of various Commissions and Organizations – NIPR, NPC, Inclusive Friends, JONAPWD, etc. The panel was made up of Executive Directors of CSOs and OPDs such as Cedar Seed Foundation, Inclusive Friends, and INEC Officials.



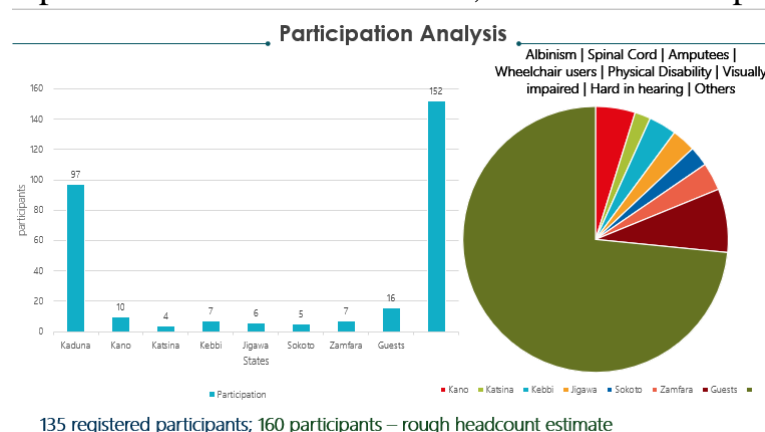
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*A group picture of the Panellists, Organizers and INEC Chairman*

#### ABLE2VOTE North West - Kaduna

Apart from the North Central, the number of participants in other zones was



significantly reduced to 100 due to security concerns and budgetary constraints. However, this had little or no effect on the impact of the activity in these zones as step down processes





Participants at the event

commenced almost immediately after TAF's events. In the North West, although a maximum of 100 participants was expected, a total of 178 persons were in attendance with 160 being PWDs among which 135 were duly registered.

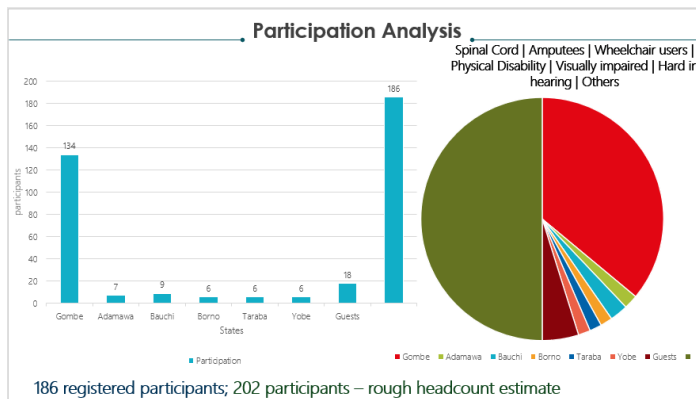
The event was

graced with the presence of INEC RECS and Administrative Secretaries from the zone, representatives from the Ministry of Human Services and Social Development, Kaduna State Planning and Budget Commission, Kaduna State Disability Affairs Board, JONAPWD and Individual cluster zonal leaders, etc.



A group picture of INEC Officials and Panellists

## ABLE2VOTE North East - Gombe



ABLE2VOTE NorthEast recorded active participations of INEC Administrative



Secretaries from Gombe, Adamawa, Bauchi and Yobe, Gombe State INEC Voter Education and



Participants at the events

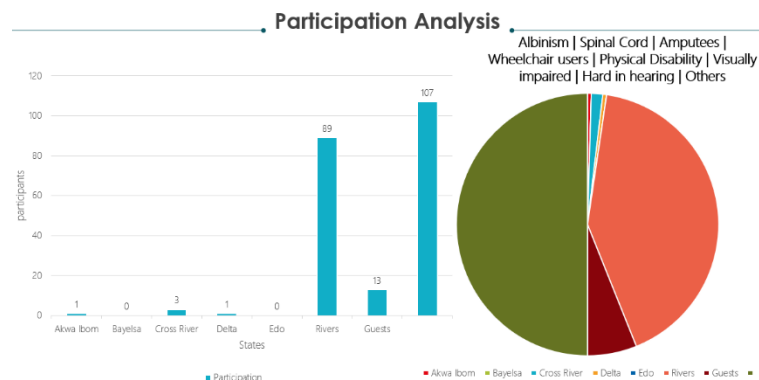
Publicity, and General Admin and Procurement Departments, PWD Desk Officers. Also in attendance

were representatives of the Ministries of Justice and Women Affairs. The event had a total participation of 202 among which 186 were PWDS and duly

registered. A PVC collection test showed that 80% of the participants have their PVCs.

## ABLE2VOTE South South – Port Harcourt

ABLE2VOTE South South convened persons with disabilities from across the



94 registered participants; 107 participants – rough headcount estimate



Panellists

South South Zone in Rivers State, precisely in Port

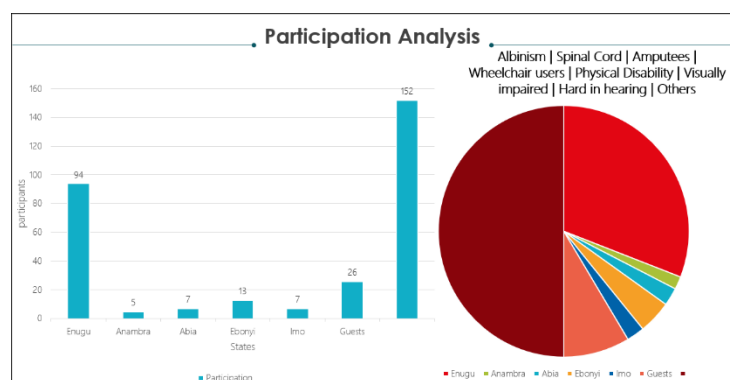


Participants at the events

Harcourt. A total number of 107 persons (rough head count) were in attendance, out of which 94 were PWDs.

## ABLE2VOTE South East – Enugu

In Enugu, participants from the states within the South East zone convened together in Enugu for the Able2Vote voter education campaign. A total number of 179 persons (rough head count) were in attendance with a total of 152 registered. In



152 registered participants; 179 participants – rough headcount estimate



A cross section of participants

attendance

were the Enugu INEC REC, Enugu and



Panellists



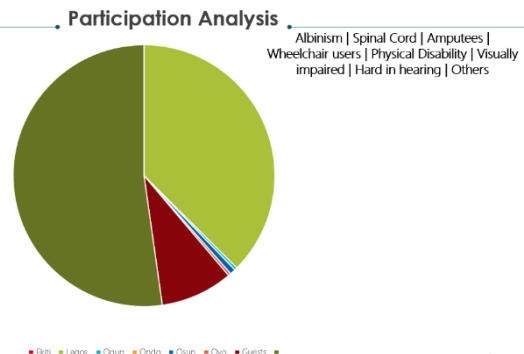
Abuja INEC Officials, State Director of NOA, Enugu NSCDC Officials, and Directors of OPDs and CSOs, etc. The Panel was comprised of INEC Officials, Disability Inclusion Experts, and Security Agency representatives.

## ABLE2VOTE South West – Lagos

The Able2Vote Zonal Campaigns for persons with



*Panel session*



124 registered participants; 132 participants – rough headcount estimate



disabilities was rounded up in the South West with the convergence of about 132 participants from the South West Zone. With active participations from INEC Officials, Disability Inclusion consultants and



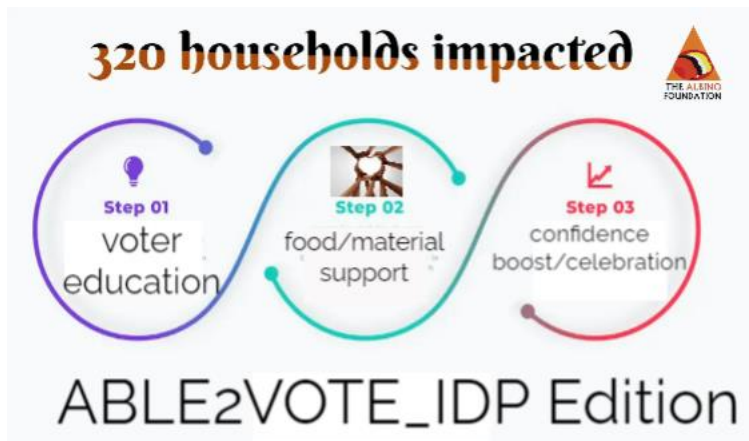
*Participants at the event*



CSOs, the panel session presented very robust discussions on voting rights and requirements, security issues and individual cluster needs.

#### **4. ABLE2VOTE IDP Edition**

In line with the Foundation's vision of an inclusive society for all, the voter



education sensitization campaigns were not limited to persons with disabilities only. The ABLE2VOTE campaign also targeted other members of the marginalized/vulnerable

group. Consequently, on December 3<sup>rd</sup>, in commemoration of the World Disability Day, The Albino Foundation identified with persons with disabilities among the Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) and hosted 320 households of in the IDP Camp at Durumi, Abuja. The sensitization campaign adopted a three-in-one target approach: voter education, celebration and confidence boost, and material and food support.

#### **5. Challenges**




Major challenges we have experienced in the implementation of the ABLE2VOTE Campaigns are related to budget and coordination and security. There was an immense need to address the persistent information gap among PWDs, as well as sensitize PWDs and the general public on the active political participation of PWDs to reduce voter apathy and attain various other objectives of the activity. However, due to budgetary constraints, The Foundation had to reduce the number of participants invited.

On the challenge of coordination, the coordination of ABLE2VOTE campaigns posed a challenge as the campaigns were targeted at large crowds and given the fragility of security situation in the country. However, TAF took the initiative to reduce the number of targeted in-person participants from 1000 to 100 which could be easily managed and employed the services of an ushering company for a more effective coordination.





## **6. Key Recommendations:**


Recommendations from the zonal campaigns are grouped under the following headings: Polling Units, INEC and Adhoc Staff, Political Parties, PVCs and Others.

### **Polling Units:**







-  It was recommended that sign language experts should be deployed at polling units. However, such specific polling units would be determined by the availability of data on PWDs with such needs and their polling units. This further buttress the need for data mining and baseline assessment on PWDs.
-  Security should be reinforced especially at polling units. If there is a situation of violence during election, PWDs will not be able to run or escape, thus endangering themselves.
-  Recommendations were made on the improvement of accessibility to polling units, availability of assistive devices and priority voting.

### **INEC and Adhoc Staff:**



-  All INEC Adhoc staff should be professionally trained on the use of facilities that aid the participation of persons with disabilities. Additionally, INEC is encouraged to employ PWDs as Adhoc staff as they understand their community better and this would also promote inclusivity.
-  INEC was encouraged to provide more assistive devices and make polling units more accessible to enhance the increased participation of PWDs in the elections. INEC was encouraged to speed up data mining for an efficient improvement on these key areas.
-  INEC was encouraged to increase and improve their implementation processes and policies on enabling PWDs to participate effectively in electoral processes.
-  INEC was encouraged to partner with TAF and other CSOs/NGOs to create a reliable database of PWDs to ascertain their statistics.

-  The need for INEC to recruit PWDs as Adhoc Staff was further stressed and recommended. Additionally, participants recommended the training of PWD desk officers for a better understanding on PWD specific needs

### **Collection of PVCs and Others:**

-  The training of persons with disabilities on the requirements and processes involved during an election should not end with ABLE2VOTE campaigns but should be carried on at various levels until PWDs are massively and actively participating in the electoral processes.
-  Participants were all encouraged to collect their PVCs.
-  PWDs were urged to arise and support themselves and the electoral process to succeed.
-  PWDs were advised to also apply to be enlisted as INEC Adhoc Staff.
-  Beyond being able to vote, PWDs were encouraged to also contest for elective positions.
-  Given how impactful ABLE2VOTE campaigns have been, TAF was encouraged to work with other local organizations for a step down to ensure that the key message of the campaign is heard by everyone, including those at the grassroots.

### **Political parties:** PWD Inclusion, Support to PWD candidates, Disability desk officers

-  The participants recommended the invitation and participation of all political party chairpersons for in-depth discussions on political perspectives.
-  Political parties were encouraged to create disability desks within their parties and to support the candidacy of PWDs.

## ***Conclusion***

The ABLE2VOTE Voter Education Campaign launched by The Albino Foundation has recorded massive impacts and success across the nation. Post event interviews with participants further underline the need for an even more rigorous sensitization activities to enhance an increased participation of persons with disabilities in the forth coming elections. Various stakeholders, organizations at national and state level have indicated interest in partnering with The Albino Foundation towards the stepping down of the activity. However, they are looking forward to funding support from The Foundation.

The Albino Foundation is open to collaborations and financial partnerships for increased strategic conversations on the issues of disability inclusion. Today, The Foundation boasts of various eminent and visible outcomes of its numerous years of activism, advocacy and sensitization, some of which include specific provisions for persons with disabilities in the new Electoral Act of 2022 on the definition of the terms PWD, special needs and vulnerable person; the disaggregation by disability status and type of disability in INEC's register of voters - Section 9(1) (b); ensuring that PWDs- persons with disabilities, special needs and vulnerable persons are assisted during voting and provided with suitable means of communication during polls. Section 54(2) and ensuring that a visually impaired and incapacitated voter may be accompanied into the polling unit by a person chosen by him or her. Section 54(1).

Apart from the review of the Electoral Act, we can all testify to the availability of various assistive devices such as magnifying glasses, braille ballot, special cubicles, etc., during the 2022 gubernatorial elections in Osun and Ekiti. These were all aimed at enhancing the active participation of persons with disabilities in the electoral process and made possible by contributions from TAF and other like-minded organizations. TAF has indeed attained the Champion of Disability Inclusion status and additionally funding support would only enable greater results and impacts.