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on Lagos Talks 91.3FM

TOPIC

**DRIVING INCLUSION FOR PEOPLE
LIVING WITH DISABILITIES**

EPISODE 13



There is a whole lot to learn every day from being around people living with disability. Disability in this context is simply defined as a situation where a person's ability is mismatched with their work environment or their environment at large. Sometimes, it is the perception of people that really makes a difference in the situation. For instance, it is difficult to look at people living with disability as people that should be pitied and that is the last thing they would like to be seen as. Essentially, it is important to understand the situation these people are going through because they have more hurdles to go over before they get to do their jobs.

Inclusion means including a person or persons living with disabilities in our everyday activities by making sure they have access to resources and the same opportunities in ways that are similar to the abled peers and also ensure they participate in every aspect of life to the best of their abilities and desires.



The impact of the Discrimination Against Persons with Disabilities Act, 2018 signed into law by President Muhammadu Buhari on January 23, 2019 has been very minimal but the awareness has gradually been on the increase. The Act has not been fully implemented by organisations. It is one thing to have a law that is more procedural, it is another thing to make sure it is engrained in different aspects of the society. So, it is not just about getting people living with disability jobs, it is more about enabling them because some of them may even want to be entrepreneurs, for example.

The law states that employers shall have 5% of their workforce as people living with disability. Have we really

defined what disability is at the workplace and do we know how many people living with disability?

So, there are quite a number of things in that Act that is very useful but it is not being implemented well enough. More importantly, the Act also empowered the National Commission to help persons living with disability get economic, social and civil rights but it has not been seen that the Commission showcases their activities well enough because there are a number of people living with disability in Nigeria who need a great deal of help.

Disability is in different and various forms. It could be physical or intellectual; and it could even be classified as invisible, which is evident in certain conditions such as insomnia, backache which is called cervical sclerosis. If time is spent to do a proper assessment of the workforce across the country, it would be realized that there are a whole lot of people going through one form of disability or the other that has not really been paid attention to.



There is a World Health Organisation report that says one in seven people in Nigeria live with disability, meaning there are a lot of people around us who live with disability that we have little or no knowledge about. So, the first thing as earlier mentioned is to do an assessment, and even provide the required support, of those that are already in the working class. Secondly, we need to do a whole lot more in enabling people with disability and not look at them as mere people that beg. There are quite a number of people that are highly qualified to do different types of jobs but are not given the opportunity. They are rather screened off because of the way the environment is created with lots of barriers that need to be overcome.

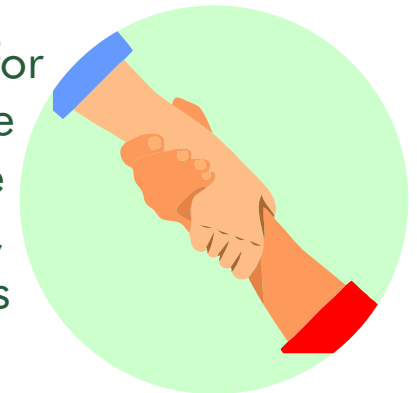
Employment of People Living with Disability in Nigeria

Organisations are beginning to embrace people living with disability, considering the fact that great talents continue to seek organisations whose values reflect inclusion and authenticity. People living with disability are part of society and the workforce should reflect what is happening in society.



Organisations can create enabling environment for people living with disability through more awareness and sensitisation of employees on how best to relate with them. In terms of structures, organisations should make their office space, complex or buildings more accessible to them in compliance with the Act. Furthermore, our policies in workplaces need to be reviewed to accommodate disability inclusion if it is to be entrenched in our work environment. Most importantly, organisations should thrive and try their best to be as inclusive as they can with regards to embracing people living with disabilities in Nigeria.

To create an enabling environment for persons living with disability, there is a need for structural setup and work tools. For instance, they need some work aids to enable them maximize their output like screen readers, brail displays, etc., which some organisations regard as avoidable expenses. This is where government, NGOs, development organisations, philanthropists and so on need to come in with access initiatives in order to provide a conducive work environment for such individuals.



The Nigeria Business Disability Networks (NBDN) was birthed by the Chartered Institute of Personnel Management of Nigeria (CIPM) and Sight Savers, a development organisation championing disability inclusion. The NBDN has 15 notable member organisations; and in that Network, there is a representation of people living with disability. The objective of the Network is to continue to drive inclusivity for people living with disability and to boost the disability confidence of member organisations.



In conclusion, it is important for organisations to bring onboard people living with disability and educate the workforce to relate with them appropriately. Secondly, we need to understand their conditions and change the narratives, by putting in place things that would enable them to come on board. Organisations are, therefore, encouraged to be more intentional about inclusion. Sensitisation is very essential in ensuring that people learn more about people living with disabilities. For example, sensitisation training can be deployed to create awareness and to rid the workplace of discrimination. Organisations should continually strive to ensure they remain as inclusive as possible.

