



WAS THE EDO ELECTION DISABILITY INCLUSIVE?

*...TAF Africa's Report on Edo State 2024
Governorship Election*



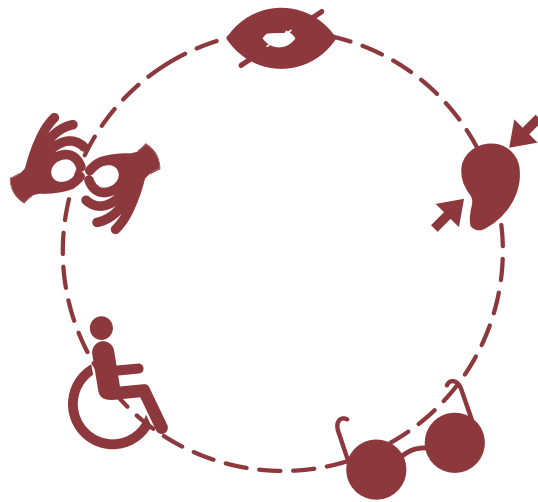
Funded by
the European Union

TAF Africa

... Disability Inclusion Champion

WAS THE EDO ELECTION DISABILITY INCLUSIVE?

*...TAF Africa's Report on Edo
State 2024 Governorship
Election*



Acronyms and Abbreviations

PWDs	Persons with disabilities
INEC	Independent National Electoral Commission
CSOs	Civil Society Organizations
PWA	Persons with Albinism
ADC	African Democratic Congress
JONAPWD	Joint National Association of Persons with Disabilities
AAN	Albinism Association of Nigeria
SCIAN	Spinal Cord Injury Association of Nigeria
NAPWPD	National Association of Persons with Physical Disabilities

Disclaimer: *This document is a product of TAF Africa, the views expressed in this report are completely ours and does not necessarily reflect position and opinion of the European Union or The European Union Support to Democratic Governance in Nigeria (EU-SDGN) programme.*



Table of Contents

Acronyms and Abbreviations	i
Executive Summary.....	iii
Introduction	v
Legal Framework for Disability Inclusion in Elections	1
TAF Africa’s Engagements for A Disability Inclusive 2024 Governorship Election in Edo State	6
Observers Deployment Methodology and Focus.....	11
Experiences of Persons with Disabilities at the Poll	14
Outcome of TAF Election Observation Mission	17
Impact And Lessons Learned	19
Recommendations For Inclusive Electoral Processes	20
Appendices	25

Executive Summary

TAF Africa conducted a comprehensive election observation mission during the Edo State governorship election, focusing on the participation of persons with disabilities (PWDs) in the electoral process. This mission, aligned with our commitment to promoting disability inclusion, deployed 20 stationary citizen observers and 5 roving media observers to polling units with registered PWD voters. The observation aimed to evaluate the compliance of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) with Section 54, Sub-sections 1 & 2 of the Electoral Act 2022, particularly in providing assistive tools and priority voting rights for persons with disabilities.

The findings revealed a mixed level of adherence to disability-inclusive measures. While there were commendable efforts in providing assistive tools such as large font posters for the deaf (Form EC 30 PWD) and magnifying glasses for persons with albinism (PWA) at some polling units, inconsistencies in their availability and distribution persisted. Observers also noted significant gaps in the physical accessibility of polling units, thereby limiting participation for wheelchair users and persons with mobility impairments. In addition, training gaps among election officials on disability inclusion were apparent, contributing to challenges in assisting PWD voters effectively.

Despite these setbacks, there was an encouraging turnout of PWD voters, demonstrating their resolve to participate in the democratic process. However, this enthusiasm emphasizes the urgency for systemic

improvements to promote an inclusive electoral environment.

TAF Africa recommends that INEC enhance its voter education campaigns to specifically address the rights of PWDs and raise awareness about available assistive tools. It is imperative to strengthen pre-election training for electoral officials on disability-inclusive practices and ensure the consistent deployment of assistive devices across all polling units. There should be robust monitoring mechanisms to ensure compliance with the provisions of Section 54, Sub-sections 1 & 2 of the Electoral Act 2022.

This report accentuates the critical need for collaborative efforts between stakeholders, including INEC, civil society, and government agencies, to deconstruct barriers and build a truly inclusive electoral system that empowers persons with disabilities to exercise their franchise with dignity and ease.



Introduction

The Edo State Governorship Election held on September 21st, 2024, marked a decisive moment in Nigeria's democratic journey. This election presented another critical opportunity for TAF Africa to evaluate the inclusivity of electoral processes, particularly for persons with disabilities (PWDs). Guided by our commitment to promoting the rights of PWDs and ensuring their full participation in democratic governance, TAF Africa deployed a robust team of observers to assess the extent to which disability-inclusive policies and practices were implemented during this critical electoral exercise.

Our observation mission is rooted in the Discrimination Against Persons with Disabilities (Prohibition) Act of 2018, which mandates public institutions, including the Independent National Electoral Commission

(INEC), to ensure accessibility for PWDs and Section 54, Sub-sections 1 & 2 of the Electoral Act 2022 which mandates INEC to provide assistive tools and accommodations for PWDs.

Over the years, TAF Africa has been at the forefront of advocating for the integration of disability-inclusive practices in Nigeria's political and electoral systems. This mission was no exception, as it aimed to monitor INEC's compliance with the provisions of the Act and its impact on the voting experience of PWDs.

The 2024 Edo State Governorship Election was significant for several reasons. First, it provided a testing ground for INEC's evolving frameworks and innovations to enhance electoral accessibility. Second, it allowed stakeholders to evaluate the effectiveness of

assistive tools and measures such as Braille ballot guides for the blind, magnifying glasses for persons with albinism, large font posters for the deaf (Form EC 30 PWD), and dedicated priority voting queues for PWDs. Finally, the election offered an opportunity to highlight the gaps and challenges that PWDs continue to face in exercising their civic rights, while also documenting best practices that could serve as a model for future elections.

TAF Africa's observation efforts were comprehensive and meticulously planned. We deployed 20 stationary citizen observers across polling units with registered PWD voters and 5 roving media observers. Equipped with our upgraded election observation application, these observers collected real-time data on the availability and use of assistive tools, physical accessibility of polling units, and the overall treatment of PWDs by election officials and other stakeholders. The observation mission also utilized the app's

eyewitness reporting feature, which allowed the immediate documentation of rights infringements or non-compliance with disability inclusion standards.

This report is the culmination of data-driven insights, eyewitness accounts, and analyses from our observation mission. It examines key aspects of the electoral process through the lens of disability inclusion, shedding light on both progresses made and persisting challenges. The findings and recommendations contained herein are intended to inform policymakers, election management bodies, and advocacy groups in their collective efforts to create an electoral environment where persons with disabilities can participate equally and freely.

This publication is not just a report but a call to action for stakeholders across all sectors to uphold the principles of equity, accessibility, and inclusivity in governance.



The Deputy Head of EU delegation to Nigeria and ECOWAS, Mr. Zissimos Vergos and a representative of the French Embassy received in the PWD Election Hub by the Founder/CEO, TAF Africa, Mr. Jake Epelle.



TAF Africa team during the post-election press briefing for the 2024 Edo Gubernatorial Election

1

Legal Framework for Disability Inclusion in Elections

The legal and policy frameworks surrounding disability inclusion in elections in Nigeria provide the foundation for ensuring the active and equitable participation of persons with disabilities (PWDs) in the democratic process. These frameworks include domestic legislation, electoral guidelines, and international commitments ratified by Nigeria. This chapter reviews the Discrimination Against Persons with Disabilities (Prohibition) Act 2018, the Electoral Act 2022, and the INEC Guidelines and Frameworks for disability inclusion, examining their implications for the Edo State Governorship Election of September 21, 2024.

1.1 The Discrimination Against Persons with Disabilities (Prohibition) Act 2018

Enacted as a landmark legislation for the rights of persons with disabilities, the Discrimination Against Persons with Disabilities (Prohibition) Act 2018 provides a comprehensive framework for combating discrimination and promoting inclusivity across all sectors, including political participation.

Key Provisions:

- **Accessibility Mandates:** Section 4 mandates that public institutions, including electoral bodies, make provisions for

accessibility in public services and infrastructure. This includes ensuring that polling units are accessible to persons with physical, visual, or other forms of disabilities.

- **Equal Opportunities:** The Act prohibits discrimination in political participation and requires the government to take affirmative steps to ensure that persons with disabilities are not marginalized.
- **Assistive Tools and Services:** Sections 24 and 25 emphasize the need for accessible services, including the provision of assistive devices, braille, sign language interpreters, and other aids during elections.

During the Edo election, TAF Africa's observation revealed varying levels of compliance with this Act. While some polling units provided assistive tools, others failed to meet these standards, highlighting the need for stricter enforcement of Section 4.

1.2 The Electoral Act 2022

The Electoral Act 2022, which governs the conduct of elections in Nigeria, includes specific provisions aimed at promoting inclusivity for persons with disabilities.

1.2.1 Key Provisions:

- **Section 54(1):** This section explicitly requires the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) to take measures to ensure that persons with disabilities are not disenfranchised. It mandates the provision of assistive devices such as braille ballot guides, magnifying glasses, and voter education tailored to PWDs.
- **Priority Voting:** Section 56(2) stipulates that persons with disabilities should be given priority during accreditation

and voting, ensuring a seamless electoral process.

- **INEC's Monitoring Obligations:** The Act also requires INEC to monitor and report on measures taken to include PWDs in the electoral process.

Despite these progressive provisions, TAF Africa noted lapses during the Edo election. While some polling units adhered to the priority voting protocol, the availability of braille guides and magnifying glasses was inconsistent, suggesting gaps in logistics and distribution planning.

1.3 INEC Guidelines and Frameworks for Disability Inclusion

To operationalize the provisions of the Electoral Act, INEC developed several frameworks aimed at promoting disability inclusion in electoral processes. Key documents include:

1.3.1 INEC Framework on Access and Participation of Persons with Disabilities in the Electoral Process:

- This framework outlines INEC's commitment to removing physical, attitudinal, and systemic barriers to electoral participation for PWDs.
- It emphasizes voter education campaigns tailored for PWDs, accessible polling units, and the recruitment of election staff trained in disability-inclusive practices.

1.3.2 Implementation in Edo Election:

In line with these guidelines, INEC partnered with organizations like TAF

Africa to deploy PWD Election Observers who monitored compliance with accessibility standards. However, while the framework is robust, its implementation in Edo exposed discrepancies:

- Only 50% of the observed polling units met the accessibility criteria set by INEC.
- Some election personnel displayed limited awareness of disability-inclusive protocols, underscoring the need for expanded training.

1.4 International Commitments

Nigeria is a signatory to several international conventions that accent the rights of PWDs, including their right to political participation:

1. **United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD):** Article 29 guarantees the political rights of persons with disabilities, including access to voting procedures, facilities, and materials.
2. **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs):** Goal 10 emphasizes the reduction of inequalities, while Goal 16 calls for inclusive and representative decision-making.

These international commitments complement Nigeria's domestic legal frameworks and provide a benchmark for evaluating electoral inclusivity. The legal and policy frameworks governing disability inclusion in Nigerian elections are among the most progressive in Africa. However, their impact hinges on effective implementation and continuous advocacy. The Edo election provided valuable insights into the state of disability inclusion in Nigeria's electoral process, highlighting both successes and areas for

improvement. As Nigeria moves toward the 2027 general elections, sustained efforts are needed to build on these lessons and create an electoral system that is truly disability inclusive.

TAF Africa
...Disability Inclusion Champion

Funded by the European Union

EDO DECIDES 2024
Governorship Election

LET YOUR VOICES BE HEARD THROUGH YOUR VOTE

PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES are **#AbleToVote**

IT'S TIME TO GO

VOTE
for the Future you want
GO OUT AND VOTE

www.tafafrica.co

EU SDGN
European Union Support to Democratic Governance in Nigeria (EU-SDGN) Programme
www.eusdgn.org

IMPLEMENTING PARTNERS

DAI, DAI, PLAC, KUKAH, IPG, CEMESO, TRUST FUND, ElectHER, TAF Africa, SOS CHILDREN'S VILLAGES, and others.

2

TAF Africa's Engagements for A Disability Inclusive 2024 Governorship Election in Edo State

The 2024 Edo State Governorship Election presented an opportunity to assess and improve the inclusion of persons with disabilities (PWDs) in Nigeria's electoral processes. In alignment with its mission to promote the rights and participation of PWDs in governance, TAF Africa embarked on a series of strategic engagements aimed at promoting a disability-inclusive electoral process in Edo State. These initiatives targeted critical stakeholders, ranging from electoral management bodies to media organizations, to ensure that barriers limiting the political participation of PWDs were identified and addressed.

2.1 Advocacy Visit to the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC)

Recognizing the pivotal role of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) in ensuring inclusive elections, TAF Africa initiated an advocacy visit to the INEC office. The focus was on eliciting feedback regarding the integrity, usage, and gaps in INEC's existing data on PWDs. Specifically, the discussions centered on improving the accuracy of disaggregated data to enhance election planning and resource

allocation.

During the visit, INEC acknowledged the significant strides made during the 2022 Continuous Voter Registration (CVR) exercise, where, for the first time, data was disaggregated by disability type. According to the data, 3,452 PWDs were registered in Edo State, including 649 persons with albinism, 147 visually impaired persons, 334 deaf persons, 1,157 persons with physical disabilities, 21 persons with Down syndrome, and 48 persons with autism. However, it was noted that these figures excluded PWDs registered before 2022, prompting discussions on expanding and updating the database to reflect the actual number of voters with disabilities.

TAF Africa also explored avenues for collaboration with INEC to address gaps in the electoral process and ensure improved participation of PWDs in both the Edo and Ondo off-cycle elections. This collaboration emphasized

the provision of assistive devices, accessible voting materials, and dedicated training for election officials to cater to the needs of PWDs.

2.2 Advocacy for Inclusive Media Reportage

A critical aspect of TAF Africa's pre-election strategy was its engagement with media organizations to promote inclusive coverage of electoral processes. Through advocacy visits to select media houses in Edo State, TAF Africa sought partnerships to ensure disability-focused reportage. The visits highlighted the importance of amplifying the voices of PWDs and shedding light on their experiences during elections.

These efforts yielded significant results. Several media organizations committed to providing comprehensive coverage

of the TAF Africa Disability Inclusion Election Hub. Vibes FM, a radio station in Edo State, demonstrated exceptional support by offering 13 episodes of free airtime for the “Able to Vote” voter education campaign. This program provided critical information to PWDs, raising awareness about their voting rights, the availability of assistive tools, and the importance of active participation in the election.

2.3 “Able to Vote” Voter Education Campaign

To empower PWDs with the knowledge and tools necessary to participate effectively in the election, TAF Africa launched the Able to Vote voter education campaign. The campaign was tailored to the specific needs of PWDs in Edo State, focusing on their rights and the provisions available to ensure a barrier-free voting experience.

Participants were educated on electoral provisions, including assistive tools such as Form EC 30 PWD, Braille ballot guide, magnifying glasses, and priority voting arrangements. The presence of INEC’s disability desk officer at the event lent credibility and accentuated the commission’s support for inclusive elections.

The campaign also addressed the need for PWDs to hold INEC accountable for compliance with the electoral framework, emphasizing the importance of active participation to secure their rights. TAF Africa’s community mobilization efforts ensured that registered PWD voters in Edo State were aware of their rights and equipped to exercise them. The campaign also provided a platform for PWDs to share their experiences and challenges, creating a feedback loop that informed subsequent advocacy efforts.



TAF Africa's Senior Programme Officer, Mr. George Anwayi, facilitating a session at the Able to vote voter education campaign in Edo state



Cross section of participants at the Able to Vote voter education campaign for Persons with Disabilities in Edo State.

2.4 Recruitment, and Training of Election Observers

TAF Africa recruited and trained 20 election observers across local governments in Edo State. The training program equipped observers with the knowledge and tools to document incidents of non-compliance and ensure accurate, real-time reporting. Observers utilized TAF Africa's upgraded election observer app to transmit data to the PWD Election Hub, enabling swift analysis and response to identify challenges. This system played a critical role in highlighting areas where electoral processes could be further improved to accommodate the needs of PWDs.

Funded by the European Union

TAF Africa
...Disability Inclusion Champion

Download our new app!

Scan me

GET IT ON Google Play

Download on the App Store

TAF Election Observer app is TAF Africa's initiative, a user-friendly platform designed for our trained election observers to provide real-time updates on the participation of persons with disabilities (PWDs) in an election. The app also has an EYE WITNESS feature that would allow the general public to report incidences related to persons with disabilities in their area.

<http://bit.ly/taf-app>

TAF ELECTION OBSERVERR APP

3

Observers Deployment Methodology and Focus

The methodology was structured to ensure a comprehensive, data-driven analysis through strategic observer deployment, rigorous polling unit selection, and effective data collection mechanisms.

3.1 Observer Deployment Strategy

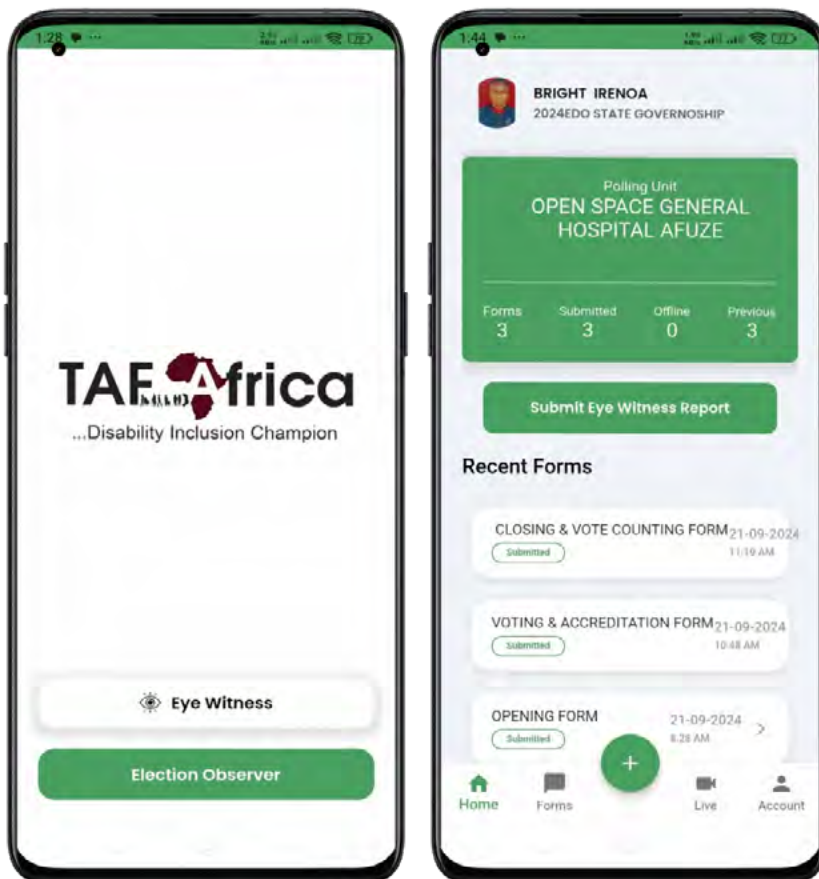
Number of Observers:

- **20 Stationary Observers:** Deployed to specific polling units with many registered voters with disabilities to closely monitor accessibility and compliance measures throughout the voting process.
- **Role:** Their primary responsibility was to observe the accessibility of the electoral process, focusing on the inclusivity of PWDs, and to document the provision and use of assistive tools.
- **5 Roving Media Observers:** Tasked with covering broader regions, capturing incidents of non-compliance, and gathering media content that highlighted the voting experiences of PWDs.
- **Role:** Their primary responsibility was to document violations, interact with voters, and gather multimedia evidence to support advocacy for enhanced disability inclusion.

Polling Unit Selection Criteria:

- **PWD Voter Registration Data:** As identified through INEC records, priority was given to polling units with the highest number of registered voters with disabilities,
- **Geographical Representation:** Polling units were selected to ensure urban and rural representation, highlighting disparities in accessibility and resource provision.
- **Historical Trends:** Units known for prior challenges with disability inclusion were prioritized to evaluate improvements or persistent gaps.

3.2 Tools for Data Collection: TAF Africa Election Observer App



This mobile application facilitated real-time data transmission from observers to the PWD Election Hub for analysis.

Key features included:

A. Checklists: Standardized templates for assessing accessibility and assistive tools.

B. Eyewitness feature:

Enabled observers to document and report critical incidents of non-compliance or voter disenfranchisement.

C. Photographic Evidence:

Integrated functionality for capturing and uploading visuals to validate observations.

3.3 Focus of Our Observation Mission

3.3.1 Accessibility of Polling Stations:

- Evaluated the physical accessibility of polling units, including the absence of physical barriers.
- Assessed the distance and ease of navigation for voters with mobility challenges.

3.3.2 Compliance with Assistive Tools:

- Verified the availability and use of assistive tools, such as braille

ballot guides, magnifying glasses, and large font posters (Form EC 30 PWD), as mandated by the electoral act.

- Examined the preparedness of INEC officials in handling assistive tools and their ability to assist PWD voters effectively.

3.3.3 Overall Experiences of Voters with Disabilities:

- Gathered qualitative insights on the voting experiences of PWDs, including interactions with electoral officials and fellow voters.
- Monitored for incidents of discrimination, undue delays, or challenges faced during the voting process.
- Documented the inclusivity of security arrangements to ensure a safe environment for PWDs.

This methodology ensured a holistic evaluation of the electoral process, providing actionable insights to enhance the inclusion of persons with disabilities in future elections.

4

Experiences of Persons with Disabilities At The Polls

4.1 Challenge of Visual Impairment and Independence Compromise

At Agbado Primary School V, a blind voter experienced significant difficulties due to the absence of Braille Ballot guides. The voter had to rely on Assisted Voting, where a family member helped complete the voting process. This situation undermined the voter's right to privacy and independence. In another instance at Oredo Ward 12 Unit 21, a voter with albinism expressed frustration as magnifying glasses meant to assist individuals with low vision were not available. The lack of

these essential tools left the voter feeling excluded and forced to take additional time to interpret the ballot with external assistance, further delaying the voting process.

4.2 Denial of Priority Voting Rights

In Polling Unit 22, Ward 06, Oredo LGA, a person with albinism was denied priority voting. This voter, who typically avoids prolonged sun exposure due to heightened sensitivity to UV rays, was forced to wait in line with other voters. The experience was distressing and highlighted a failure to enforce provisions that ensure persons

with disabilities are treated with dignity and given appropriate accommodations.

4.3 Physical Accessibility Barriers

At Agbado 1, Ward 12 Unit 21 in Oredo LGA, a voter using a wheelchair was denied vehicle access to the polling unit by security agents. The individual had to park at a significant distance and maneuver through uneven terrain to reach the polling station. This caused physical strain and delayed participation. Such barriers run contrary to INEC's commitment to ensuring accessible polling units and highlight the need for improved training and awareness among election officials and security personnel.

4.4 Administrative Failures and Denial of Voting Rights

In Ward 11, Polling Unit 27-29 at Immaculate Conception College, a visually impaired voter who had previously cast their vote at the same polling unit found their name missing from the voters' register. Despite attempts to resolve the issue, including being redirected to another polling unit, the voters were ultimately unable to exercise their franchise. This administrative oversight not only deprived the voters of their fundamental right but also highlighted systemic flaws in INEC's voter registration and verification processes.

4.5 Intimidation and Vote-Buying

In Uselu 1, Olua Primary School, and Unit 23, Ward 6, Uhumwonde LGA, vote-buying activities by agents of major political parties created an intimidating environment. Persons with disabilities reported feeling unsafe and pressured, particularly as their vulnerabilities made them easy

targets for coercion. One individual shared their fear of retaliation after refusing monetary inducements, further emphasizing the need for stringent measures to curb such electoral malpractice.

4.6 INEC arrival at Polling Units and opening of Polls

From the data gathered by TAF election observers, INEC officials arrived at polling units 8:30 – 9:30 showing significant improvement from the previous election cycles.



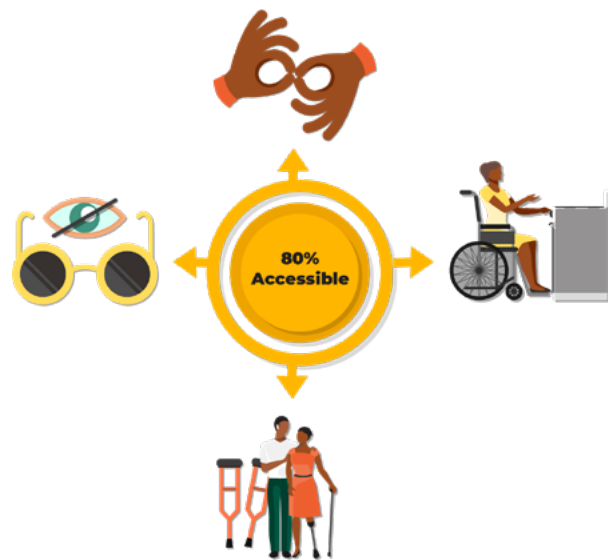
Members of TAF Africa's election observation team observing the accreditation and voting process of a person with disability

5

Outcome of TAF Election Observation Mission

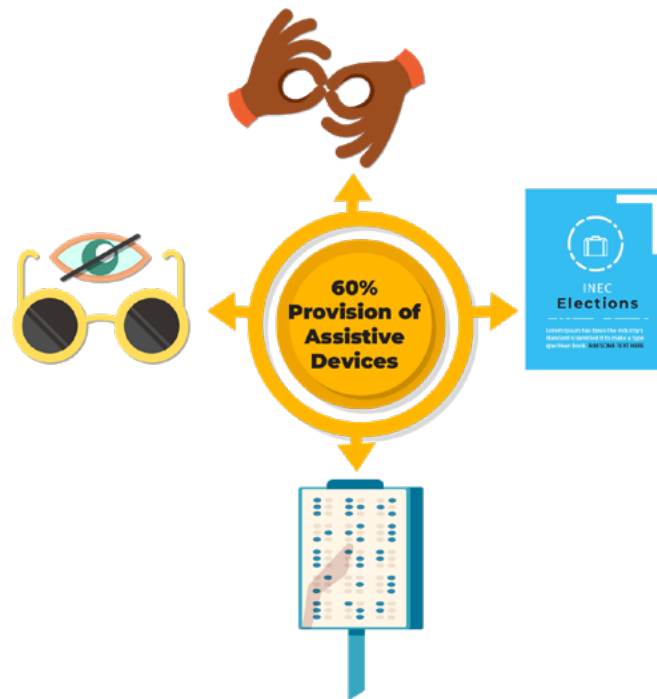
5.1 Polling Unit Accessibility

The data collected by TAF election observers indicated that the polling units observed were 80% accessible to persons with disabilities.



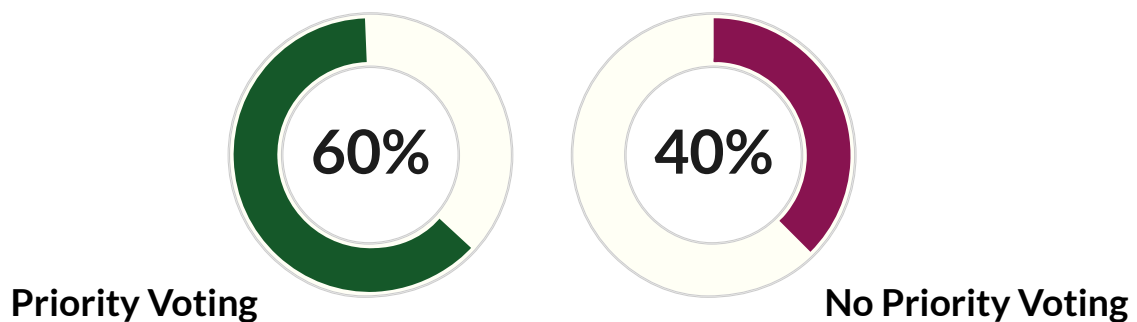
5.2 Polling Units with Assistive Tools

The result collated by the observers indicated that 60% of the polling units observed have assistive devices particularly the presence of large posters for hearing impairs. It was however, noted that 40% of the observed polling units were without assistive devices thereby leaving the PWD voters with the only alternative of relying on the assistance from others to exercise their franchise.



5.3 Polling Units with Priority Voting

The results for the polling units observed also indicated that 60% of the PWDs were giving priority to cast their votes. On the other hand, 40% of the PWDs electorates were denied priority both by INEC representatives and other citizen electorates.



6

Impact And Lessons Learned

Through its engagements in Edo State, TAF Africa demonstrated the power of strategic advocacy and collaboration in promoting electoral inclusivity. The efforts not only enhanced awareness among stakeholders but also set a precedent for future elections. While the advocacy visits and voter education campaigns were impactful, feedback from PWDs revealed persistent challenges, including the underrepresentation of PWDs in INEC's database and limited accessibility of certain polling units.

These insights emphasize the need for sustained advocacy, continuous improvement of electoral processes, and expanded partnerships to ensure that no voter is left behind. TAF Africa's pre-election engagements in Edo State highlighted the importance of a multi-stakeholder approach to achieving disability-inclusive elections. The successes and lessons from these initiatives provide a blueprint for future efforts, to ensure that the voices of PWDs are not only heard but also acted upon in the democratic process.



7

Recommendations For Inclusive Electoral Processes



7.1 Recommendations to the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC)

Ensure Consistent Deployment of Assistive Tools:

- Conduct pre-election audits to identify polling units where assistive tools like Braille Ballot guides, magnifying glasses, and EC 30E PWD forms are critically needed.
- Develop a real-time tracking system for the distribution and deployment of assistive tools to ensure all polling units are adequately equipped.

Improve Training for Electoral Officials:

- Provide specialized training on the importance and proper utilization of assistive tools and priority voting procedures.
- Monitor compliance through on-the-ground supervisors to address lapses during voting.

Enhance the Voters' Register System:

- Establish a more robust system for managing voters' registers, ensuring that all eligible voters, including PWDs, are accurately documented.
- Introduce a verification mechanism before election day to avoid disenfranchisement due to administrative errors.

Collaborate with Disability Organizations:

- Partner with organizations of persons with disabilities (OPDs) to conduct mock elections, identifying and addressing barriers to accessibility.



7.2 Recommendations to Policymakers

Strengthen Disability Inclusion Policies:

- Amend electoral laws to mandate stricter penalties for non-compliance with provisions for disability inclusion during elections.
- Increase budget allocations for assistive tools and accessibility enhancements in polling units.

Establish Independent Monitoring Mechanisms:

- Create an oversight body to assess the inclusiveness of electoral processes and recommend actionable improvements.



7.3 Recommendations to Security Agencies

Provide Disability-Inclusive Training:

- Train security personnel on disability rights and the necessity of accommodating PWDs at polling units, including ensuring safe and unhindered physical access.

Ensure Polling Unit Accessibility:

- Collaborate with INEC to identify and remove physical barriers at polling stations before election day.



7.4 Recommendations to Media Organizations

Amplify Disability-Inclusion Advocacy:

- Highlight the experiences of PWDs during elections to promote awareness and accountability.
- Partner with disability-focused organizations to create content that educates the public on the importance of accessible and inclusive elections.

Monitor and Report Non-Compliance:

- Investigate and report incidents of non-compliance, such as the denial of priority voting or the absence of assistive tools, to promote accountability among stakeholders.



7.5 Recommendations to Civil Society Organizations (CSOs)

Promote Voter Education:

- Collaborate with INEC to develop targeted voter education programs for PWDs, emphasizing their electoral rights and how to address barriers on election day.

Advocate for Structural Reforms:

- Mobilize support for policies that enhance accessibility and inclusion in the electoral process.
- Organize post-election audits to evaluate INEC's adherence to disability-inclusive practices and advocate for identified gaps to be addressed.



7.6 Recommendations to Political Parties.

Implement Disability Quotas for Representation:

- Political parties should consider implementing disability quotas to ensure that persons with disabilities are adequately represented in political offices and decision-making processes. This can help promote inclusivity and ensure that the unique perspectives and needs of persons with disabilities are considered in policy development. Additionally, parties should provide necessary support and resources to candidates with disabilities to support them effectively participate in the political process.

Collaborate with Disability Organizations for Training

- Collaboration with organisation of persons with disabilities to provide expertise and training on disability inclusion for party members and staff. This training can cover best practices for accessibility, communication, and

inclusive campaigning.

Develop Inclusive Membership Registers

- Political parties should establish comprehensive membership registers that include disaggregated social characteristics, such as disability status, so that they can foster genuine representation and design targeted inclusive policies.



Appendices

APPENDIX 1

TAF AFRICA'S PRE-ELECTION STATEMENT ON THE 2024 EDO STATE GOVERNORSHIP ELECTION: COMMITMENT TO A DISABILITY-INCLUSIVE AND ACCESSIBLE ELECTORAL PROCESS

September 20, 2024

Introduction:

As the people of Edo State head to the polls on September 21, 2024, to elect their next governor, TAF Africa reaffirms its dedication to ensuring that persons with disabilities (PWDs) are fully included in the electoral process. We will actively observe the election to ensure that it is credible, transparent, inclusive, and accessible to all.

The election occurs amid economic hardships, security concerns, and a widespread lack of trust in political institutions. These factors, combined with a declining voter turnout, pose significant challenges, particularly for vulnerable groups, including PWDs.

We recognize the importance of ensuring that eligible voters with disabilities can exercise their rights in a fair and accessible environment. TAF Africa remains committed to assessing the operational application of

the Electoral Act provisions affecting PWD participation. We will deploy a comprehensive observation team and leverage cutting-edge technology for real-time reporting on issues related to disability inclusion.

The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) has made pronounced strides in advancing electoral inclusivity. According to official data, 2,629,025 voters are registered for this election, including 4,199 persons with disabilities, reflecting an increase in the engagement of PWDs since the last governorship election in 2020. However, as a civil society organization championing the rights of persons with disabilities, we recognize that much remains to be done to ensure that all voters, particularly those with disabilities, can participate without hindrance or discrimination.

TAF AFRICA'S DEPLOYMENT PLAN FOR THE 2024 EDO STATE GOVERNORSHIP ELECTION

In line with our mandate to promote inclusivity in Nigeria's electoral processes, TAF Africa is deploying a team of 20 trained stationary observers across polling units with registered persons with disabilities in Edo State. In addition, we have assigned 5 roving media observers to monitor the election across different regions. Our observers are specifically tasked with assessing the compliance of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) with the provisions of the Electoral Act (Section 54, Sub-sections 1 & 2), which mandate the provision of assistive tools for persons with disabilities. These tools include Braille Ballot guides for the blind, magnifying glasses for persons with albinism, written instructions for the deaf, and ensuring priority voting for persons with disabilities.

TAF Africa has upgraded its election observer app, in a bid to enhance the quality and efficiency of our observation efforts. This app will facilitate

real-time data transmission from our observers to our PWD Election Hub, where the data will be analyzed, aggregated, and accessed through our election monitoring dashboard. This technology-driven approach will allow us to swiftly document and report any irregularities and ensure prompt advocacy for the rights of persons with disabilities during the election.

PRE-ELECTION OBSERVATIONS

TAF Africa has closely monitored the pre-election preparations and has observed several key trends and challenges related to the inclusion of persons with disabilities:

- 1. Lack of PWD Representation in Candidacy:** Despite the increase in registered voters with disabilities, we note with concern that no persons with disabilities are contesting in this election. Out of the 17 political parties fielding candidates, only one is female, and no persons with disabilities are contesting. This reflects the continued underrepresentation of Persons with disabilities in political leadership and decision-making positions.
- 2. Assistive Tools Misallocation in Previous Elections:** During the 2023 off-cycle elections, we observed mismatches in the deployment of assistive tools, such as magnifying glasses for persons with albinism being sent to polling units with blind voters, but without the corresponding Braille Ballot guide. This kind of oversight severely hampers the ability of PWDs to cast their votes independently and confidently.
- 3. Voter Apathy and Security Concerns:** The declining voter turnout in previous elections (from 32% in 2016 to 27% in 2020) coupled with ongoing economic and security challenges, may result in further apathy. The likelihood of election-related violence also presents a significant

concern for the safety and mobility of persons with disabilities. This is largely due to the perceived irregularities in previous elections and security volatility. Addressing this trust deficit requires proactive action from INEC and other stakeholders to build confidence in the integrity of the electoral process.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In light of these observations, TAF Africa calls on all key stakeholders in the electoral process to take urgent and decisive actions to ensure the 2024 Edo State governorship election is inclusive, accessible, and safe for all voters, especially persons with disabilities.

Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC):

1. INEC must demonstrate its capacity to conduct a transparent, credible, and inclusive election by effectively managing logistics to ensure the early commencement of voting across all polling units. Early voting will allow persons with disabilities to vote and return home without exposing them to potential violence or long queues.
2. INEC should implement a standardized protocol for the equitable deployment of assistive tools, to ensure that polling units with registered PWDs receive the appropriate support. The commission must avoid mismatches, such as deploying magnifying glasses to polling units where blind voters are present, but no Braille Ballot guide is available. This was a key issue observed during the 2023 off-cycle election.
3. INEC must ensure electoral staff are briefed on inclusivity protocols, including priority voting and the proper use of assistive devices.

Political Parties:

4. We urge political parties to embrace inclusivity, not just in their campaign messaging but also in their actions. Parties should make special provisions for the inclusion of persons with disabilities in their structures and advocacy, to promote the participation of PWDs in future elections as candidates and voters.

PWD registered voters:

5. We encourage all registered voters with disabilities to come out and exercise their right to vote. Your participation is crucial in ensuring that the leaders elected represent the interests of all, including persons with disabilities. TAF Africa remains committed to advocating for your rights and ensuring the election is accessible to you.

Security Agencies:

6. TAF Africa calls on security agencies to strictly adhere to the code of conduct for election security, and ensure the safety of all voters, particularly persons with disabilities.

Media and Civil Society Organizations:

7. The media and civil society organizations play a critical role in ensuring transparency in the electoral process. We call on them to actively report on issues concerning the participation of persons with disabilities and hold INEC and political parties accountable for delivering a fair and inclusive election.

As Edo State prepares for this crucial election, TAF Africa will remain vigilant, advocating for the rights of persons with disabilities and ensuring that their voices are heard. We are committed to working with all stakeholders to promote an electoral process that is truly inclusive, where citizens with

disabilities can participate fully and fairly.

God Bless the good people of Edo State!

Signed:

Amb. Jake Epelle Fnipr

CEO/Founder,

TAF Africa

APPENDIX 2

TAF AFRICA MID-DAY PRE-ELECTION OBSERVATIONS ON THE 2024 EDO STATE GOVERNORSHIP ELECTION

September 21, 2024

Introduction:

Before the commencement of the Edo state Governorship election and in line with our mandate to promote inclusivity in Nigeria's electoral processes, TAF Africa deployed 20 stationary citizen observers and 5 roving media observers to select polling units across Edo State for the 2024 Governorship Election. The observers were deployed to polling units with registered voters with disabilities to observe and report voting experience, and the provision of assistive tools as mandated by the Electoral Act.

The inclusion of persons with disabilities in the electoral process is a critical aspect of achieving true democratic participation. Section 54 of the Electoral Act, Sub-sections 1 and 2, explicitly require the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) to provide assistive tools such as Braille ballot guides for the blind, magnifying glasses for persons with albinism, and written instructions (form EC 30E PWD) for the deaf to ensure their effective participation in the electoral process. INEC is also required to prioritize voting for persons with disabilities to enhance their experience at polling stations.

Key Observations:

1. Weather Impact on Voter Turnout, Accreditation, and Voting

Processes: A heavy downpour in the early hours of the day, and its persistence throughout the morning, significantly affected voter turnout at many polling units. This was particularly noticeable among voters with disabilities, whose movement and access to polling units were impeded by the poor weather conditions. The rain also caused delays in the commencement of accreditation and voting in several polling units, as confirmed by INEC ad-hoc staff. These delays further discouraged the turnout of vulnerable groups, including persons with disabilities, who often face additional logistical challenges in accessing polling stations.

- 2. Provision of Assistive Tools:** Our observers noted with concern that although the written instructions for the deaf (form EC 30E PWD) were deployed across all observed polling units, other critical assistive tools, such as Braille ballot guides for the blind and magnifying glasses for persons with albinism, were absent in several locations, including those with registered voters requiring such aids. For instance, at Olua Primary School, Uselu I-VI, PU 008, a blind voter could not cast his vote independently due to the absence of a Braille ballot guide, with polling officials confirming that they were not provided with any.
- 3. Priority Voting for Persons with Disabilities:** On a positive note, it was observed that INEC ad-hoc staff had been briefed on the priority voting rights of persons with disabilities. PWDs were generally accorded priority access at the polling units visited.

Preliminary Recommendations:

- 1. Rectification of Assistive Tool Gaps:** INEC must urgently provide the necessary assistive tools, including Braille ballot guides and magnifying glasses, to all polling units with registered PWD voters before the close

of voting today. This is because ensuring that persons with disabilities can vote independently is critical to upholding their right to participate in the democratic process.

- 2. Extension of Voting time in Affected Areas:** Considering the adverse impact of the heavy rain on voter turnout, especially for PWDs, we recommend that INEC consider extending the voting time in polling units severely affected by the weather. Such an extension would ensure that all eligible voters, particularly those with disabilities, are not disenfranchised due to circumstances beyond their control.
- 3. Continuous Training and Sensitization of Election Officials:** While the awareness of priority voting rights was commendable, it is imperative that INEC intensifies the training and sensitization of both permanent and ad-hoc staff on the needs of PWD voters. Such training should emphasize the importance of making polling units more accessible and the provision of all necessary assistive tools.
- 4. Improved Communication Channels for Voter Support:** INEC should enhance communication and support systems to allow voters with disabilities to report any issues they encounter in real time. The availability of these channels would enable immediate corrective measures to be taken and ensure that such incidents are properly documented for future improvement.

TAF Africa remains committed to supporting the full inclusion of persons with disabilities in Nigeria's electoral processes. We will continue to observe the election as it progresses and provide updates on the experiences of voters with disabilities. We urge INEC to uphold its commitment to inclusivity and ensure that all voters are given the opportunity to participate in today's

election without barriers.

Signed,
Jake Epelle Fnipr
Founder/CEO,
TAF Africa

APPENDIX 3

TAF AFRICA'S POST-ELECTION OBSERVATION REPORT ON THE EDO STATE GOVERNORSHIP ELECTION OF SEPTEMBER 21, 2024; A CALL FOR ACCOUNTABILITY AND IMPROVED INCLUSION IN ELECTIONS

September 22, 2024

Introduction:

TAF Africa deployed a comprehensive election observation mission for the Edo State Governorship election on September 21, 2024, with 20 stationary citizen observers and 5 roving media observers stationed at key polling units with registered persons with disabilities (PWDs). Our mission was focused on assessing INEC's compliance with its legal mandate to provide assistive tools for persons with disabilities, as stipulated in Section 54, Sub-sections 1 & 2 of the Electoral Act, 2022, and to evaluate the overall experience of voters with disabilities in exercising their electoral rights.

While we acknowledge certain efforts by INEC to facilitate a more inclusive voting process, it is imperative to highlight the critical shortcomings that severely impacted the voter experience for persons with disabilities. TAF Africa's findings reveal significant gaps in the implementation of disability-inclusive measures, which calls for immediate action.

Key Observations:

While we commend INEC's effort to ensure that persons with disabilities

were given priority voting access across many polling units observed, we are deeply concerned about the gaps in the provision of essential assistive tools and barriers to access that PWDs encountered during the voting process and other issues observed.

Inconsistent Deployment of Assistive Tools:

1. Despite INEC's mandate to provide Braille Ballot guides for the blind, magnifying glasses for persons with albinism, and Form EC 30E PWD written instructions for the deaf, we observed that the deployment of these essential tools was inconsistent and insufficient. While written instructions for the deaf were commendably present across all polling units, including those with no voters with hearing impairments, the critical absence of Braille Ballot guides and magnifying glasses in polling units where they were needed, including Agbado Polling Unit 25 and Oredo Ward 12 Unit 21, is inexcusable. This failure forced blind voters to resort to Assisted Voting, compromising their independence and privacy, as witnessed in Agbado Primary School V. Similarly, persons with albinism were left disadvantaged, as magnifying glasses were not provided in polling units observed, limiting their ability to participate fully.

Over-Deployment of EC 30E PWD Forms (Written Instructions for the Deaf):

2. While the provision of written instructions for deaf voters (Form EC 30E PWD) was commendable, these forms were observed across polling units where there were no voters with hearing impairments. This over-provision indicates a lack of targeted resource distribution, while other assistive tools were conspicuously absent.

Priority Voting Not Uniformly Applied:

3. While we commend the general adherence to priority voting for persons with disabilities, an isolated but significant incident of non-compliance was recorded. At Polling Unit 22, Ward 06, Oredo LGA, a person with albinism was denied priority voting, in clear violation of INEC's directive. This incident undermines the dignity of voters with disabilities and violates their right to an accessible and inclusive electoral process.

Obstructions and Malpractice:

4. TAF Africa also observed vote-buying activities at select polling units, including Uselu 1, Olua Primary School, and Unit 23, Ward 6, Uhumwonde LGA by agents of the All-Progressives Congress (APC) and the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP). Such illegal practices not only obstructed the voting process but also created an intimidating environment for voters, especially persons with disabilities, who already face heightened vulnerabilities.

Barriers to Physical Access:

5. At several polling units, PWDs faced challenges related to physical accessibility. Notably, at Agbado 1, Ward 12 Unit 21 in Oredo LGA, a person with a physical disability was prevented from driving into the polling unit by security agents, forcing them to park outside and struggle to access the polling station. This is a clear violation of the rights of persons with disabilities to participate in elections on an equal basis.

Administrative Lapses:

6. At Ward 11, Polling Unit 27-29, Immaculate Conception College, a visually impaired voter was denied his right to vote due to administrative failures. Despite confirming his prior voting history at the same polling unit, his name was inexplicably missing from the voters' register. He was redirected to another unit, only to face the same issue. This failure by INEC to properly manage the voters' register deprived him of his fundamental right to vote, and such incidents must be addressed with utmost urgency.

Overall Voting Experience:

7. While no significant violence was reported in the polling units where TAF Africa deployed its observers, the issues raised above; particularly the absence of critical assistive tools, the denial of priority voting, and administrative lapses, paint a troubling picture of the experience of persons with disabilities during the Edo State election.

Recommendations:

Following our observations during the Edo state governorship election, TAF Africa presents the following recommendations to ensure that future elections in Nigeria are fully inclusive and accessible to persons with disabilities:

- **Targeted Deployment of Assistive Tools:**

1. INEC must ensure that assistive tools such as Braille Ballot guides, magnifying glasses, and other necessary aids are deployed based on the needs of registered PWD voters in each polling unit. A more

efficient distribution mechanism should be established to avoid over-deployment of certain tools and the non-provision of others.

- **Training and Sensitization of Ad-Hoc Staff:**

2. All INEC staff must be adequately trained to understand the needs of persons with disabilities and ensure the full implementation of disability-inclusive provisions. This training should include clear guidelines on priority voting and the handling of assistive tools to provide PWDs with the necessary support during elections.

- **Enhance Physical Accessibility at Polling Units:**

3. Physical access to polling units remains a critical issue. INEC must collaborate with security agencies to ensure that PWDs are not hindered by unnecessary restrictions. Polling units should be placed in easily accessible locations, and security agents should be sensitized to the specific needs of PWD voters.

- **Strengthen the Integrity of the Voter Register:**

4. INEC must address the recurring issue of voters' names missing from the register, particularly for PWDs who may already face challenges in accessing polling units. The voter registration process must be made more reliable, and a clear process for resolving discrepancies should be in place on election day.

- **Tackle Vote-Buying and Polling Unit Disruptions:**

5. The presence of vote-buying agents and the resulting obstructions at polling units is a serious issue that undermines the integrity of the electoral process. INEC and law enforcement agencies must intensify efforts to prevent such activities, ensuring that voters, especially persons with disabilities, are able to vote freely and without

harassment.

We call on INEC to take immediate and decisive actions to address these systemic failures and ensure full compliance with the provisions of the Electoral Act. The consistent absence of assistive tools like Braille Ballot guides and magnifying glasses is a clear violation of the rights of voters with disabilities and undermines the credibility of the electoral process.

TAF Africa demands a full investigation into the lapses observed and immediate reforms to ensure that persons with disabilities can participate in future elections with dignity, autonomy, and equality. INEC must not only ensure that assistive tools are deployed uniformly but must also guarantee that all polling units are free from any form of discrimination or obstruction. We are firm in our commitment to advocating for the rights of persons with disabilities and call on all stakeholders to join us in holding the electoral system accountable for inclusive and democratic elections in Nigeria. Thank you, and God bless the good people of Edo state!

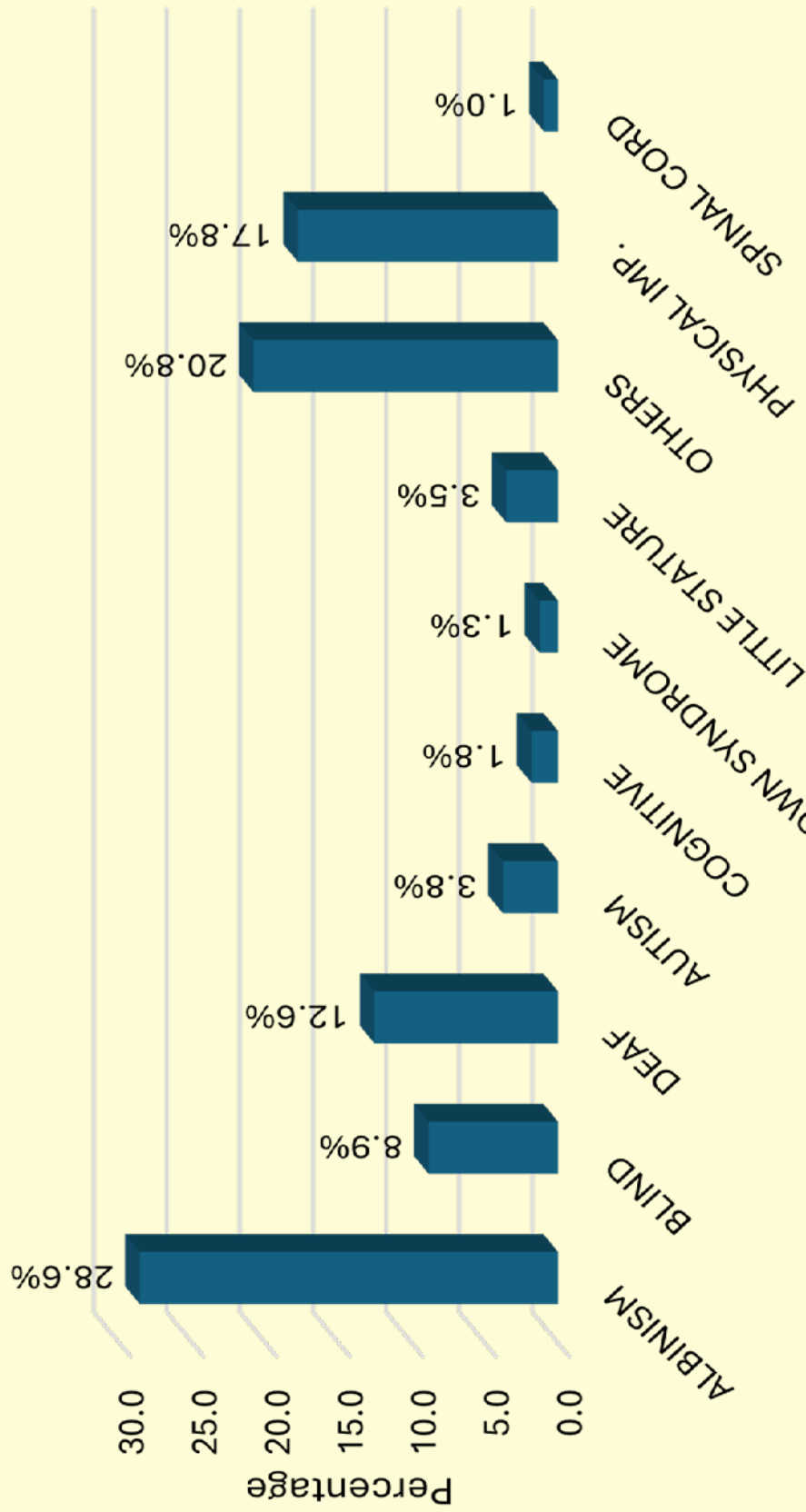
Signed:

Amb. Jake Epelle Fnipr
CEO/Founder,
TAF Africa

APPENDIX 4: Edo State LGA Summary of PWDs Data By Clusters

LGA	Albinism	Blind	Deaf	Autism	Cognitive	Down Syndrome	Little Stature	Others	Physical Imp.	Spinal Cord	Total
Akoko-Edo	25	8	13	0	3	1	3	66	71	2	192
Egor	51	10	43	6	1	1	6	51	35	4	208
Esan Central	21	10	8	1	2	0	4	20	14	1	81
Esan North-East	17	2	11	1	1	3	0	3	14	0	51
Esan South-East	21	6	16	19	7	4	36	16	22	1	148
Esan West	17	7	5	5	0	0	1	22	22	1	80
Etsako Central	13	14	10	3	0	2	12	12	23	0	89
Etsako East	48	12	10	0	1	2	3	23	15	1	115
Etsako West	44	16	18	3	0	2	3	42	25	3	156
Igueben	15	3	3	3	0	0	2	9	8	0	43
Ikpoba-Okha	130	41	63	16	5	4	3	75	71	2	410
Oredo	112	49	66	25	16	4	4	67	63	7	413
Orhionmwon	43	15	13	6	1	2	4	30	15	0	130
Ovia North-East	67	13	20	5	3	2	3	33	12	1	159
Ovia South-West	28	4	9	1	2	0	1	24	20	0	89
Owan East	41	5	3	1	2	1	0	8	9	0	70
Owan West	17	8	9	0	2	5	3	19	14	2	79
Uhunmwode	33	7	6	3	1	0	4	21	9	0	84

Source: Independent National Electoral Commission



APPENDIX 5: Edo State Percentage Distribution of Eligible PWD Voters by Each Cluster.

TAF Africa's Report on Edo State 2024 Governorship Election



European Union Support to Democratic Governance in Nigeria (EU-SDGN) Programme
www.eusdgn.org

IMPLEMENTING PARTNERS



✉ info@tafafrica.co
🌐 www.tafafrica.co

Plot 990 Nal Blvd,
Central Business District, Abuja,
Federal Capital Territory, Nigeria

