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TAF Africa
... Disability Inclusion Champion

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TAF AFRICA KICKS OFF OBSERVER TRAINING IN ANAMBRA SOUTH

As Nigeria counts down to the November 8 Anambra Governorship Election, TAF Africa has once again demonstrated its commitment to promoting disability-inclusive

electoral participation through the training of election observers under the European Union Support to Democratic Governance in Nigeria (EU-SDGN II) Programme. The first phase of the training took place at Nnewi, bringing together observers deployed to Local Government Areas under the Anambra South Senatorial District. The training, which marks the beginning of a three-phase capacity-building exercise across the state, is designed to equip a total of 150 observers who will be deployed to polling units with the highest number of registered voters with disabilities on election day.



During the session, participants were trained on their roles and responsibilities as election observers, personal security and ethical conduct, effective use of the TAF Disability Hub App for real-time reporting, and how to apply the observer's checklist to ensure accurate, evidence-based monitoring.

This exercise reinforces TAF Africa's commitment to ensuring that the voices of persons with disabilities are not only heard but also reflected in Nigeria's democratic processes.

With the Anambra South leg successfully concluded, all eyes now turn to Onitsha, where the Anambra North training will hold next. The journey toward a more inclusive and participatory election continues; one observer, one voice, and one accessible polling unit at a time.



TAF AFRICA HOSTS STAKEHOLDERS' LIVE TELEVISION ENGAGEMENT ON DISABILITY-INCLUSIVE ELECTIONS IN ANAMBRA STATE



With funding from the European Union through its Support to Democratic Governance in Nigeria (EU-SDGN II) Programme, TAF Africa organized a two-hour Live Television Stakeholders' Engagement ahead of the November 8th Governorship Election in Anambra State.

The engagement, broadcast live simultaneously on ARISE TV, the Anambra Broadcasting Service

(ABS), and the Nigerian Television Authority (NTA) Awka, brought together critical stakeholders in the electoral and security ecosystem, media representatives, and leaders of disability clusters to discuss the preparedness of institutions to ensure that persons with disabilities (PWDs) participate fully and effectively in the forthcoming election.

The televised

engagement was designed to raise public awareness, mobilize citizen support, and promote accountability from duty bearers toward creating a barrier-free and inclusive political space, in line with democratic principles and the 2018 Discrimination Against Persons with Disabilities (Prohibition) Act.

The event comprised two unique panel discussions and was officially launched



with a statement of purpose by Amb. Jake Epelle, CEO/Founder of TAF Africa, highlighting the European Union's ongoing commitment to promoting democratic inclusion and citizen involvement in Nigeria.

Moderated by Amb. Jake Epelle, CEO/Founder of TAF Africa, the first session featured representatives from the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), the



Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC), and the Nigeria Police Force (NPF).

In her remarks, the Resident Electoral Commissioner (REC) for Anambra State, Dr. Elizabeth Agwu, affirmed INEC's commitment to inclusion, revealing that the Commission had conducted an accessibility audit of all polling units and registration areas.

"Some of our ad hoc staff are also persons with disabilities," she noted, emphasizing that polling units across Anambra are designed to be accessible to all voters.

Dr. Agwu disclosed that INEC has trained its security agents comprehensively down to the local government level to ensure they can support persons with disabilities effectively during the election. She

also announced that disability assistive tools, including Braille ballot guides for blind voters, magnifying glasses for persons with albinism, and Form EC30PWD for the deaf, would be deployed to facilitate inclusive voting.

Highlighting voter apathy as a major threat, she urged Anambra citizens to participate actively: "Not voting is encouraging the wrong person to win. Under





me, it is not business as usual,” she said emphatically.

On the part of security preparedness, Superintendent of Corps Okadigbo Edwin, Head of Media and Tactical, NSCDC Anambra State Command, explained that the Corps recognizes persons with disabilities as an integral part of society and has established Disability Desk Officers across all state and zonal commands to drive all-round inclusion in its operations, not only during elections.

He further stated that all NSCDC officers have been trained on basic

sign language communication to effectively engage deaf voters and other persons with disabilities during public assignments. In preparation for the election, the Corps trained its personnel on the provisions of Section 54 of the Electoral Act, which mandates priority voting for PWDs, and on the proper use of assistive tools provided by INEC.

He emphasized that NSCDC officers are also trained to prioritize the safety and evacuation of persons with disabilities in the event of violence or emergencies at polling stations.



Similarly, Superintendent of Police Tochukwu Ikenga, Police Public Relations Officer, Anambra State Command, reaffirmed the strategic deployment of police officers for the election. He emphasized that unarmed police officers, including both men and women, would be positioned within polling units to maintain calm, while armed officers secure the perimeters. "Policing is a service that requires empathy, a human face, and passion," he said, assuring that the police remain committed to protecting the rights and safety of persons with disabilities during the election.

The second session, moderated by Mr. George Anwayi, Senior Programme Officer at TAF Africa, focused on the role of media institutions and disability leadership in strengthening inclusive electoral participation.

Comrade Ugochukwu Okeke, State Chairman of the Joint National Association of Persons with Disabilities (JONAPWD), stated that persons with disabilities in Anambra are fully mobilized and prepared for the upcoming election. He highlighted JONAPWD's efforts in mobilizing PWDs during the Continuous Voter Registration (CVR) exercise, ensuring

they obtained their Permanent Voter Cards (PVCs) and participated in all training sessions organized by INEC and other organizations.

From the media perspective, Mr. Chris Molokwu, Managing Director of the Anambra Broadcasting Service (ABS), reaffirmed ABS's commitment to inclusive programming and equal opportunity. He noted that the station produces public service announcements and election awareness jingles targeting persons with disabilities, encouraging them to exercise their civic rights.

Also contributing, Mrs. Franca Uzoma-Olua, General Manager of NTA Awka, emphasized the station's continuous effort to mainstream disability representation in its news coverage. She revealed that sign language interpreters are regularly featured during NTA's news segment to ensure the deaf community has equal access to information.

The live engagement served as a strategic platform for collective reflection, accountability, and collaboration among electoral stakeholders. It reinforced the message

that inclusive democracy is achievable when all actors; government, security agencies, media, and persons with disabilities play their part.

In his closing remarks, Amb. Jake Epelle expressed appreciation to the European Union for its continued support through the EU-SDGN II Programme and reaffirmed TAF Africa's commitment to driving systemic change for the inclusion of persons with disabilities in Nigeria's governance and electoral processes. "An inclusive election is not charity, it is democracy in its truest form," Amb. Epelle stated. The Live Television Stakeholders' Engagement was a call to action. It spotlighted the ongoing collaboration between institutions and citizens to uphold the rights and dignity of persons with disabilities, to ensure that voters with disabilities are adequately included in Anambra's democratic journey.

TAF AFRICA TRAINS SIGN LANGUAGE INTERPRETERS FOR INCLUSIVE ELECTIONS IN ANAMBRA STATE



As Nigeria moves closer to the November 8, 2025, Anambra Governorship Election, TAF Africa has taken an innovative step toward strengthening electoral inclusion for persons with disabilities, particularly those with hearing impairments.

In partnership with the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) in Anambra state and with funding support from the European Union through the Support to Democratic

Governance in Nigeria (EU-SDGN II) Programme, TAF Africa organized a two-day training for members of the Association of Sign Language Interpreters of Nigeria (ASLIN), Anambra State Chapter.

The training aimed to prepare 25 sign language interpreters for deployment to polling units with the highest concentration of deaf voters during the Anambra Governorship Election, a pilot initiative that marks the first-

ever deployment of sign language interpreters in Nigeria's electoral process.

Delivering his opening remarks, the CEO/Founder of TAF Africa, Ambassador Jake Epelle, emphasized that persons with disabilities constitute a significant portion of the population

disability groups, as communication barriers often prevent them from fully understanding and participating in electoral activities.

"This training and subsequent deployment of sign language interpreters represent our commitment to ensuring that no voter is left behind



and, if adequately provided for, can influence election outcomes. He noted that people with hearing impairments remain among the most marginalized

in the democratic process," Epelle said. He further explained that the initiative is designed to serve as a pilot project that INEC can adopt and expand



nationwide in subsequent elections, setting a new standard for inclusion in Nigeria's electoral framework.

Representing the Anambra State Resident Electoral Commissioner, the Head of Department, Electoral Operations, Mr. Ejikeme Ejimofor, described the training as a "master stroke" in advancing electoral accessibility.

While delivering his goodwill message, Mr. Ejimofor commended TAF Africa and the European Union for their sustained efforts in championing

inclusive elections. He reassured participants of INEC's readiness to collaborate in ensuring the successful implementation of the initiative during the November 8 election.

Mr. Ejimofor also facilitated a technical session on "Understanding the Electoral Process and Polling Unit Operations," where he guided participants through polling procedures, voting protocols, and the Commission's accessibility provisions for persons with disabilities. Speaking on "Principles, Practice, and



Ethics of Sign Language Interpretation,” the ASLIN State Secretary, Mr. Enoch Anaemene, charged participants to uphold the highest standards of professionalism during their election duties. He emphasized the importance of neutrality, accuracy,

and confidentiality in electoral settings, advising interpreters to respect constituted authorities and maintain decorum at the polling units. “Your conduct and professionalism will determine how well this innovation is received and replicated nationally,” he noted.

TAF Africa’s Senior Programme Officer, Mr. George Anwayi, anchored a session on “The Role of Sign Language Interpreters in the 2025 Anambra Governorship Election.” He elaborated on the deployment strategy and coordination plan for interpreters across

polling units.

Mr. Anwayi highlighted the crucial role interpreters play in enabling deaf voters to access election-related information, understand ballot procedures, and make informed choices. He noted that the interpreters' work aligns with both the Electoral Act 2022 and the Discrimination Against Persons with Disabilities (Prohibition) Act 2018, which mandate equal participation for all eligible voters.

"TAF Africa is proud to pioneer this initiative in collaboration with INEC," he stated. "It is a pilot intervention that, once proven successful, will pave the way for a national framework that ensures full participation of deaf voters in future elections."

In her remarks, the Senior Communication Officer of TAF Africa, Miss Lynn Agwuncha, reiterated that the training emphasizes TAF Africa's firm commitment to promoting inclusive, accessible, and participatory elections in Nigeria.

She explained that through this initiative, sign language interpreters have been empowered with both technical and electoral knowledge to effectively bridge the communication gap between INEC officials and deaf voters on election day.

"Our vision is clear: an electoral process where disability is never a barrier to participation," Agwuncha stated.

The training concluded with participants

expressing enthusiasm and readiness to serve during the November 8 election. They commended TAF Africa and its partners for the opportunity to contribute to a more inclusive democracy and pledged to uphold professionalism throughout the exercise. This first-of-its-kind initiative represents a significant milestone in Nigeria's journey toward disability-inclusive governance. It not only addresses the communication challenges faced by deaf voters but also sets the tone for broader institutional reforms within Nigeria's electoral system.

TAF AFRICA ADVOCATES FOR NATIONAL SUPPORT OF SIGN LANGUAGE INTERPRETER DEPLOYMENT AHEAD OF ANAMBRA GOVERNORSHIP ELECTION

In pursuit of a more inclusive and accessible electoral process, TAF Africa has taken another strategic step by paying an advocacy visit to the national leadership of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC). The visit, which was held at the Commission's headquarters in Abuja,

was aimed at securing INEC's institutional buy-in and national endorsement for TAF Africa's planned deployment of sign language interpreters to polling units with the highest concentration of deaf voters during the upcoming Anambra State Governorship Election scheduled for

November 8, 2025.

This engagement forms a critical component of TAF Africa's European Union-funded Support to Democratic Governance in Nigeria (EU-SDGN II) Programme, under which the organization has continued to champion electoral inclusion for persons



with disabilities (PWDs) across Nigeria.

The TAF Africa delegation, led by its Founder and Chief Executive Officer, Ambassador Jake Epelle, was warmly received by the National Commissioner and Chair, Outreach and Partnership Committee of INEC, Professor Kunle Ajayi, who represented the Acting INEC

Chairman. Also present were key directors, deputy directors, and senior staff of the Commission.

In his remarks, Professor Kunle Ajayi commended TAF Africa for its sustained collaboration with INEC and for its innovative approach to promoting inclusivity within Nigeria's democratic space. He described the

planned deployment of sign language interpreters as a "welcome development and a continuation of the progressive partnership" between INEC and TAF Africa.

"INEC remains willing and ready to work closely with organizations like TAF Africa to ensure that persons with disabilities are fully included in the electoral process,"



Prof. Ajayi stated. He further emphasized that inclusivity is central to the Commission's mandate and that the proposed initiative aligns perfectly with INEC's broader accessibility framework. In his presentation, Ambassador Jake Epelle noted that the advocacy visit was essential to ensure that the Anambra pilot project carries a national face and institutional

legitimacy. He explained that TAF Africa's goal is to intervene not just as a state-level initiative but as a national model for inclusion, with the potential for replication in subsequent elections across the country.

Ambassador Epelle commended INEC for being, in his words, "the most inclusive organization in Nigeria, and this is data-proven." He highlighted

TAF Africa's past collaborative efforts with the Commission, including the Able2Vote campaign and the live television town hall engagements, both of which were instrumental in mobilizing persons with disabilities and amplifying their voices within the electoral discourse.

"No other institution demonstrates the level of commitment



to inclusion that INEC has shown, and this partnership continues to prove that democracy can indeed be accessible to all," Epelle remarked. Providing further context to the initiative, Mr. George Anwayi, Senior Programme Officer at TAF Africa, elaborated on the rationale for deploying sign language interpreters to selected polling units. He described the project as a practical

solution to a persistent communication gap that deaf voters face during elections, one that often leads to misunderstanding and, at times, mistreatment. He recounted instances from past elections where deaf voters were harassed or even assaulted by security operatives who mistook their silence or non-responsiveness for defiance. "This initiative will help bridge

that gap, improve communication, and protect the dignity and rights of deaf voters at polling stations," Anwayi explained. He emphasized that the interpreters, to be drawn from the Association of Sign Language Interpreters of Nigeria (ASLIN), Anambra State Chapter, will be trained and deployed to polling units with higher concentrations of deaf voters, ensuring





that communication barriers are removed and participation is enhanced.

Speaking on behalf of the Commission's Inclusivity Department, Mrs. Habiba Jatto, Deputy Director of Inclusivity, reaffirmed INEC's ongoing commitment to addressing the needs of persons with disabilities.

She highlighted the Commission's recent training of election officials, including Supervisory Presiding Officers (SPOs) and Presiding Officers (POs), to ensure they are well-equipped to identify and use assistive tools provided for PWDs during elections.

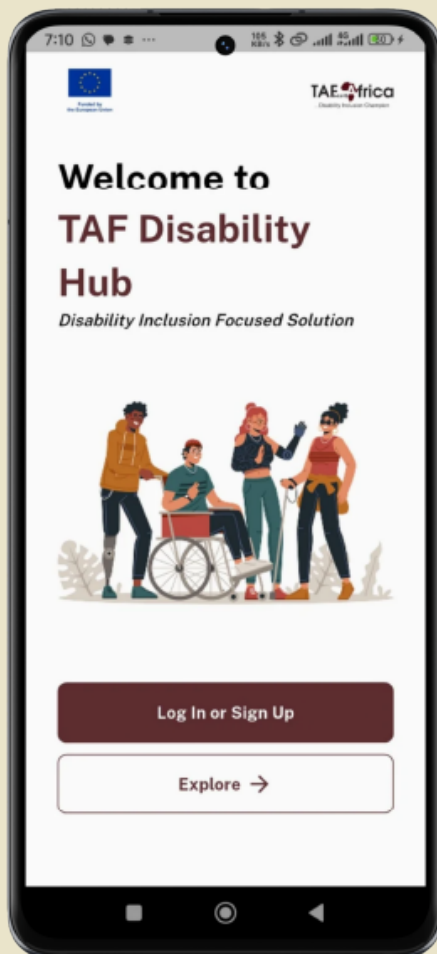
This pioneering initiative, backed by

the European Union through the EU-SDGN II Programme, is expected to serve as a proof of concept for future elections, demonstrating how targeted interventions can transform electoral participation for marginalized communities.



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