
SPOTLIGHT: Nigeria

Passing of the Discrimination Against Persons with Disabilities (Prohibition) Act, 2019

Setting the Scene

In 2011 and 2015, the National Assembly passed the Discrimination Against Persons with Disabilities (Prohibition) Bill 2009, but it was vetoed by the former President and not enacted into law. Subsequently, the bill for the new law was passed by the House of Representatives and the Senate joint committee in November 2016. However, it was not sent to the President for his signature until December 2018.



In 2019, the President signed the National Disability Act in the lead-up to the general election after being challenged by an organization of persons with disabilities (OPDs) during a public media chat. This Act now makes it a punishable offense to discriminate against an individual based on their disability. Among other provisions, the Act requires the government to provide necessary accommodations and establishes a National Commission for Persons with Disabilities, which has been a critical ally and partner for many OPDs.

Who led the cause?

The advocacy was led by the Joint National Association of Persons with Disabilities (JONAPWD), a Nigeria umbrella organization of persons with disabilities. A grant to build a coalition brought together key partners, including government actors. This big win in Nigeria was also made possible with the support of the Association of Lawyers with Disabilities in Nigeria (ALDIN). The adoption of the Act has since been leveraged by allies of the disability rights movement, such as the Christian Blind Mission International in the development of the 2023 Nigerian Humanitarian Response Plan.



"The Act prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability and imposes sanctions, including fines and prison sentences, on those who contravene it." - JONAPWD

Milestones 2018-2022

- 1. After years of delays and uncertainty, ALDIN invoked the Freedom of Information Act in 2018**, demanding transparency from the Nigerian National Assembly about the current status of the National Disability Bill.
- 2. Together with OPDs, JONAPWD led a media campaign** to build pressure for the bill to be signed.
- 3. In January 2019, the president of Nigeria signed the bill into law, making the Discrimination Against Persons with Disabilities (Prohibition) Act a reality.**
- 4. In August 2020, the National Commission for Persons with Disabilities was established in line with article 31 of the National Disability Act**, opening many opportunities for inclusive policies and the implementation of the act.
- 5. The National Disability Act was used by OPDs** to advocate for disability- inclusive policies and programs.

Why is this win so important?

- The Act is an important foundation for rights-based advocacy work in Nigeria.
- The Act signals an important shift towards the recognition of the rights of persons with disabilities in Nigeria.
- The Act advances the disability agenda as a human rights issue.
- This win exemplifies the power of uniting diverse OPDs and government actors.

DRF/DRAF Contribution

The technical assistance provided by DRF/DRAF to JONAPWD contributed to the use of a communication specialist that supported with public awareness campaigns on social media and press conferences. These helped to shape public perceptions and encouraged others to join in the demand to pass the National Disability Act. Additionally, DRF's Coalition Grant brought in ALDIN in the demand for information on the status of the national disability bill, and lobbying for its signing.

