

# Transcript of audio report:

## interview with Grace, programme participant in Nigeria

**[Introductory male voice]** Hi, and thanks for tuning in. You're listening to an Inclusive Futures audio report, brought to you by our global reporting team.

**[Second introductory male voice]** Hi, I'm Rasak Adekoya, a member of the Inclusive Futures team in Nigeria. In December 2019 I spoke to Grace, a newly recruited employee of the British Council, based in Abuja. Grace is a person with albinism and received training and mentoring in job seeking and interview skills through our Inclusive Futures employment programme called Inclusion Works, which helped her to secure the position after struggling during her job search.

We spoke about the negative attitudes Grace experienced during the application and interview process, and what life is like for persons with albinism in Nigeria, including the superstitious beliefs and often threatening behaviour towards people living with the condition in the country.

**[Rasak] Hi Grace. Please go ahead to tell us a bit about yourself.**

[Grace] My name is Grace, I'm 32 years old and I reside in Lagos State. I studied microbiology for my BSC and pharmaceutical microbiology for my MSC. After that, I graduated as a pharmaceutical microbiologist. I decided to go for a training in pharmaceutical microbiology with NABDAK for six months after which I also had another internship with a mostly pharmaceutical company for another six months, just for me to have an experience in my area of interest, which is microbiology. But along the line I have [had] to change my career to project management, because I got an internship for a year with [the] British Council where I was to support the project team.

**[Rasak] What is life like, living with disability in Nigeria?**

[Grace] Living with disability in Nigeria, I think is so, so, so challenging actually, because for me, I'm a person living with albinism and because of the myths and the facts surrounding albinism especially in Nigeria, have made people living with albinism to face different issues, different problems, especially: one, in the family; two, in the society. For a person living with albinism like myself, I had so many challenges: one, in employment; two, in socialisation; and also three, in communicating with people. It's not even the disability that is even the issue. I just noticed that it is the people that I relate with that are the problems, it's not the disabilities or even their own fault, likewise.

I just noticed that it is ignorance that causes this, because there are so many myths and superstitions surrounding persons with albinism. For example, when you see someone with albinism, they believe - especially in Nigeria or even in most African countries - they believe that when you are living with albinism you are either a curse or you are a punishment from heaven to that family or to the society. And also, they also have this myth that if you are a person with albinism you are good for rituals. So when you are relating with some people, what is in their mind is that, oh, this is money.

And why some people believe that? Okay, they believe that when you have sex with a person with albinism and HIV positive, they believe that it cures that HIV. So when someone with HIV just sees a person with albinism, what is in their head is, "Okay, will this person cure my HIV?" And this has been a serious issue because you would not know what is actually in such people's minds. Some people even believe that we are not human, that we are spirits, that we are even ghosts.

**[Rasak] Can you share some of your memories of growing up with albinism and attending school?**

[Grace] Socialisation for a person with albinism is not that easy. When I was young, I remember when my colleagues, or my mates in school when they are playing and I just show up, the next thing is it's either they disappeared, as in they'll run away, especially those ones that are very young. Because they see a person with albinism as a ghost.

Then when I was growing up, especially in schools, due to the challenges that persons with albinism have, we face two challenges. The first one is the sight, will I say low vision? Persons with albinism, we have different degrees of vision. Generally we have low vision, but in different degrees. We face serious challenges in school. Then apart from the sight, we have the skin challenge too, because the sun is not just our friend.

But, later when I was growing in university I also faced different challenges too. I faced so many challenges, like lecturers, when you go to them to ask them some questions, they believe that it's not necessary for them to answer you the proper way they are supposed to answer you.

They think you are not a human being that is really making sense.

**[Rasak] Grace, would you say disability has affected your job search in any way?**

[Grace] My disabilities, in terms of looking for jobs, has really, really affected me. Yes, it has affected me because I've applied to so many places, but on seeing you with other applicants, the next question is, are you also here for the interview? I used to be surprised, what does that mean? What's the meaning of that question? You sent a mail to me for an interview and I'm seated among the other applicants, so why are you asking me such questions? And, by the time they call your name for the interview, and you enter, the first impression on their face tells you, you are not wanted.

There's an English [saying] that says 'first impressions last longest'. So by the time you enter, and for me, I see people's actions – before you speak, I know what you are thinking. I would tell myself, I have to prove these people wrong and that's what I've been doing. You will see that a person with albinism is not wanted in this place.

**[Rasak] What does fulfilment look like to you?**

[Grace] For me to be fulfilled, is for me to impact lives. So I want to see myself impacting different lives.

**[Rasak] In this era of information flying around, how did you hear about Inclusion Works?**

[Grace] I was actually a member of a Lagos State Albinism Awareness Society in Lagos and I was the secretary of that society. So when I heard about the Inclusion Works, it was my

cluster head that called me [and asked if] am I interested in the inclusion work. I said yeah, that at least that will help me, and it will also help my skills. I also see it as a pathway to my career fulfilment.

**[Rasak] Can you tell us a bit about your mentor, and the support he gave you?**

[Grace] My mentor's name is Mr. Ayola Iwayemi. He was actually the facilitator for the employability skills training, which I was involved in, and eventually became my mentor. So my mentor has been so great. I was very happy that I got the facilitator as my mentor. When we finished the training, the first thing was to send my CV to him. He just reviewed, he rearranged the CV and sent it. So I looked at the CV and said, "Wow, this is professional enough. This is very, very nice."

But before the training, I would just be sending applications. In fact, I've sent almost 15 applications without a single feedback. So I'd be wondering, "Is it that these people did not see my application, or what does that mean?" not knowing that my application is, I don't know what they're looking for, but maybe it's in the dustbin or somewhere. But after the training, the first application that I made, I got a message saying, "Well received."

**[Rasak] What exactly did you learn through the training that helped you in your interview with the British Council?**

[Grace] In the training I learned employability skills and, what I picked [up] which has really helped me – the facilitator mentioned three things. He said, "The recruiter is looking for: one, can you do the job? Two, do you want the job? And three, are you fit to do the job?" The first one, which he says, can you do the job means, do you have the skills? The second one, do you want the job? Means your motivation towards that job. And the third one – are you fit for the organisation? Means, your values. So the recruiter is looking for three key things: your skills for the job, your motivation for the job, and your values. So, I learned those three key things. And those three key things actually helped me to get a job within three weeks.

After the employability skills, that was when I was called for interview.

**[Rasak] When do you start the new role, and what are your longer-term career aspirations now?**

[Grace] So for my new role, a mail was sent to me in mid-November 2019 and I was asked to resume in the first week of December, 2019. My aspiration is to become a professor in project management.

[Introductory male voice] If you'd like to hear more from our citizen reporters, why not visit [www.inclusivefutures.org](http://www.inclusivefutures.org)