

# Inclusive Eye Health in Kogi State, Nigeria

**Project timeline:** December 2019 – September 2022

**Project budget:** £545,000

**Capturing the power of collaboration:** Sightsavers, Haly Hope Foundation, Advocacy for Women with Disability Initiative, Nigerian Association of the Blind, The Albino Foundation, Joint National Associate of People with Disabilities, Kogi State Ministry of Health, Kogi State Ministry of Women’s Affairs and Social Development.

Access to inclusive health care is an integral human right - everyone, wherever they live, should be able to receive quality, affordable health care. However, more than 400 million people worldwide lack access to even basic health care services<sup>1</sup>. People with disabilities face a wide range of barriers accessing services, from discrimination in the community and within the health sector, to inaccessible health facilities and higher out-of-pocket health expenses. **Disability Inclusive Development - Inclusive Futures is working to make health systems accessible in line with the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities so people with disabilities can get access to the health care they need, when and where they need it.**



## The situation in Nigeria

It is estimated that up to 15% of Nigeria’s population, at least 25 million people, have a disability<sup>2</sup> and up to 4.25 million adults aged over 40 years are visually impaired or blind<sup>3</sup>. Evidence suggests that people with disabilities in Nigeria face the same multiple forms of discrimination in accessing health services experienced around the world by people with disabilities - including negative stereotyping by health workers and environmental barriers within health

facilities<sup>4</sup>. Nigeria’s Constitution and Discrimination Against Persons with Disabilities (Prohibition) Act, 2018, prohibits discrimination and, promisingly, includes healthcare as one of the areas the new National Commission for Persons with Disabilities are mandated to improve access to<sup>5</sup>. **However, in practice there remains much to be done to widen access to health services for people with disabilities.**

## How we helped

**To address these challenges, we brought together a consortium of experts to improve access to and use of eye health services for people with disabilities in Nigeria**, including Organisations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs), international non-governmental organisations and research institutes.

Working with local and state government in Kogi State, this innovation project tested and adapted Sightsavers' inclusive eye health model to develop a contextually relevant inclusive service that could be scaled in Kogi State's mainstream eye care programme. The project worked with four primary and secondary health facilities in the Kabba and Ankpa local government areas to mainstream disability inclusion and gender equity **through three pillars of action:**

- **At community level** awareness was raised on the rights of people with disabilities to access health care using Sightsavers' newly developed social behaviour (SBC) change toolkit. An SBC strategy was co-created with OPD partners, with accessible messages delivered using a wide variety of media including radio jingles and TV adverts. The project placed a strong focus on supporting people with disabilities to enrol onto basic health insurance to address the issue that an estimated 97% of Nigerians have no health insurance.
- **At system strengthening level** we wanted health systems to become disability inclusive. Our four partner health centres were audited using the award winning [Sightsavers accessibility standards and audit package](#). Accessibility renovations were completed at three centres, with close engagement and monitoring from OPD partners. We trained health workers and government health officials at all centres in inclusive eye health service delivery. Alongside improvements in services at health



“Now, we’re all educated. We are being enlightened that: “You should come and do this and know your eye status, whether you have a problem or not.”

Yakubu, a wheelchair user from Kogi who heard about inclusive eye health screenings on local radio and was encouraged to attend an eye health check-up for the first time.

centres, regular outreach eye health camps took place and were supported to improve inclusion. The Washington Group Questionnaire was used to determine disability prevalence amongst patients at all service locations.

- **At governance and policy level** partner OPDs led engagement with government stakeholders on the rights of people with disabilities in Kogi State with significant success. Advocacy efforts secured the official Gazetting of the Disability Rights Law in Kogi State and kickstarted its implementation. This subsequently contributed to the inauguration of the Kogi State Office for Disability Affairs, institutionalizing disability inclusion at a larger scale.

## Project impact



By project completion, almost 700 health workers and government officials had been trained in inclusive eye health, subsequently delivering quality eye health services to 1,620 people with disabilities (50 percent women) at health centres and outreach camps, including over 125 cataract surgeries. The seven outreach camps succeeded in attracting many patients with disabilities. Accessibility scores in the three renovated health centres increased by an average of 35 percent - with all facilities rated 'moderate' to 'good' - and surveys showing significantly increased satisfaction amongst patients with disabilities - from 12% at baseline to 70% at endline. As a result, the project saw improved health seeking behaviour among people with disabilities.



OPD partners held leading roles in the project steering committee and were central to the project's successful delivery. OPD supported advocacy saw the project's outreach messages reach an estimated 100,000 people and they supported an additional 8,300 people with self-reported disabilities to enrol onto basic health insurance.

## Discovering what works

The project produced learning resources and added to the global evidence base on disability inclusion in healthcare through research and blogs. Read our [Rapid Assessment of Avoidable Blindness](#) and our blog [What does behaviour change have to do with inclusion?](#) Further research produced included a cost and budget impact analysis, formative research on social and behaviour change and a project developmental evaluation.

## Breaking barriers for people with disabilities

Disability inclusion is critical for reaching the Global Goals and we have produced the evidence on what works in a range of different areas. We now need the allocation of resources for disability inclusion in health to turn evidence into action.

**To find out more visit**

[inclusivefutures.org/inclusive-education](https://inclusivefutures.org/inclusive-education) or contact Claire Walsh at [cwalsh@sightsavers.org](mailto:cwalsh@sightsavers.org).

## Endnotes

- 1 World Health Organization (2015) TRACKING UNIVERSAL HEALTH COVERAGE - FIRST GLOBAL MONITORING REPORT. Available online at: [https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/174536/9789241564977\\_eng.pdf;jsessionid=A30A8A3DDC7695FB94D6A7231C3A57DA?sequence=1](https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/174536/9789241564977_eng.pdf;jsessionid=A30A8A3DDC7695FB94D6A7231C3A57DA?sequence=1)
- 2 JONAPWD (2017), as referenced by Inclusive Futures / Institute of Development Studies (2020), Nigeria Situational Analysis - Version II - June 2020, p.15
- 3 Federal Ministry of Health (2007) The Nigeria national blindness and visual impairment survey 2005-2007, p.2. Available online at: <https://iceh.lshtm.ac.uk/files/2014/04/NigeriaSurvey.pdf>
- 4 Arulogun O. S. Titiloye M. A. Afolabi N. B. Oyewole O. E., & Nwaorgu O. G. B (2013). 'Experiences of girls with hearing impairment in accessing reproductive health care services in Ibadan, Nigeria'. African Journal of Reproductive Health, 17, 85 – 93. doi: 10.4314/ajrh.v17i1. as referenced by Fraser, E. and Corby, N. (2019), Disability Inclusion Helpdesk Report - Family Planning for Women and Girls with Disabilities, p.8
- 5 Ewang A. 2019, Human Rights Watch <https://www.hrw.org/news/2019/01/25/nigeria-passes-disability-rights-law>, as referenced by Inclusive Futures / Institute of Development Studies (2020), Nigeria Situational Analysis - Version II - June 2020, p.15