



# Inclusive Family Planning in Northern Nigeria

**Project timeline:** January 2022 – July 2024

**Project budget:** £2.3 million

**Capturing the power of collaboration:** Sightsavers, BBC Media Action, Joint National Association of Persons with Disability (JONAPWD) and Network of Women with Disabilities (NWD).

**Sexual and reproductive health and rights are human rights everyone is entitled to.** Yet people with disabilities are often denied these rights and face discrimination when trying to access sexual health services - their sexuality may be treated as a taboo subject, or they may be desexualised. Women and girls with disabilities - almost one-fifth of the world's population of women - face further intersectional discrimination due to their gender<sup>1</sup>, disability and age. **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>. Evidence suggests that women and girls with disabilities in Nigeria face multiple forms of discrimination in accessing health services, including family planning<sup>3</sup> - from negative stereotyping by health workers to infrastructural barriers within health facilities. Further to this, women with disabilities are at increased risk of forced sterilisation or abortion and

more likely to experience sexual violence than women without disabilities. Nigeria's Discrimination Against Persons with Disabilities (Prohibition) Act, 2018, promisingly, includes healthcare as one of the areas the new National Commission for Persons with Disabilities are mandated to improve access to<sup>4</sup>. **However, there remains much to be done to widen access to health services for people with disabilities.**

## How we are helping

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

Targeting five states - Borno, Jigawa, Kaduna, Kano and Yobe - **our social behaviour change programme is delivering innovative mass media broadcasts and collaborating with health facilities to reach the widest possible audience.** Radio remains the most dominant media platform in Nigeria and this project builds on the success of a previous Disability Inclusive Development - Inclusive Futures project to achieve change.

**Locally led pillars of action include:**

- **At community level** we will raise awareness and improve knowledge of the rights of people with disabilities to access family planning services through broadcast of three new series of the popular BBC Media Action radio drama Madubi. Storylines will be designed to challenge negative stereotyping and help build community support for inclusive family planning and modern contraceptive use. The show will use character profiles developed during the project's formative research and feature actors with and without disabilities. Madubi will be broadcast in partnership with local radio stations and on the BBC World Service in Africa, with 52 weekly episodes reaching an anticipated 1.9 million people in northern Nigeria. We will also train local radio stations to produce content promoting access to family planning and sexual health and reproductive rights for people with disabilities.
- **At system strengthening level** we want to see health providers deliver inclusive, accessible sexual and reproductive health (SRH) services to people with disabilities.



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During the project's inception, a three-day co-creation workshop took place engaging a wide range of community partners. The team reviewed findings from the project's formative research on barriers faced by people with disabilities and drafted social and behaviour change approaches targeting different audiences, which are informing project activities.

Focusing on Kaduna state, we will train 3,000 health professionals at primary healthcare facilities, in partnership with local health authorities and OPDs. We will conduct accessibility audits of 40 primary health care facilities and develop action plans for sustainable modifications. Using a disability inclusive scorecard, we will bring together people with disabilities, service providers and local administration to address inclusion issues.

- **At governance and policy level** we want to see commitments to scale up inclusive health in Nigeria and, thanks to our partner OPDs who have received training in advocacy, effective advocacy plans are being developed. We will engage state and local government area health bodies on the project steering committee to further guide project implementation. We will also support the UK aid funded Lafiya project in Nigeria to mainstream disability inclusion in their sexual and reproductive health programming and are working together to advocate for disability inclusion within Nigeria's healthcare financing.

## Project impact to date



Madubi is in the final stage of production and will begin broadcast in the coming months. Capacity building training for partner radio stations has resulted in the additional broadcast of 20 co-produced inclusive family planning programmes. A number of these shows have been re-broadcast, indicating audiences are engaging and one station has used lessons from the radio training to produce its own television shows.



The involvement of local government in the project steering committee is additionally supporting planning and delivery.

## Discovering what works

The project will produce learning resources and add to the global evidence base on disability inclusion through briefings, blogs and dissemination events. Learnings will also be used to inform UK aid's Lafiya project in real-time and our research partner **PENDA** will be undertaking a randomised control trial to evaluate the effectiveness of the project at scale. Read our blog on the [project inception](#).

## 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 Women Enabled International, Fact Sheet: Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights of Women and Girls with Disabilities. Available online at: <https://womenenabled.org/reports/wei-fact-sheet-srhr/>
- 2 JONAPWD (2017), as referenced by Inclusive Futures / Institute of Development Studies (2020), Nigeria Situational Analysis - Version II - June 2020, p. 15
- 3 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. Available online at: [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/818118/query-2-family-planning.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/818118/query-2-family-planning.pdf)
- 4 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