

# VDI NEWSLETTER



## From the Executive Director's Desk

Dear Readers,

As we present the third edition of our newsletter, I am deeply honoured to reflect on the incredible journey we have embarked on together. This year has been one of remarkable progress and resilient doggedness, that have only strengthened our resolve to advocate for the rights and inclusion of persons with disabilities.

Our work goes beyond the Voice of Disability Initiative (VDI); it is a shared mission that touches the lives of countless individuals and communities. We have forged powerful partnerships, championed groundbreaking initiatives, and most importantly, amplified the voices of those who have been marginalized for far too long. This edition highlights not just our achievements but also the stories of resilience, courage, and collaboration that fuel our passion for change.

In a world that often overlooks the needs and contributions of persons with disabilities, we remain steadfast in our commitment to driving inclusive policies, creating accessible spaces, and empowering individuals to be agents of their own destinies. The road ahead is long,

but with the support of our allies, partners, and every individual who believes in our cause, we are confident in our ability to create a more inclusive and just society. As you read through this newsletter, I hope you find inspiration in the stories of impact and dedication. Together, let us continue to push boundaries, break down barriers, and build a future where everyone, regardless of ability, is valued and empowered to reach their full potential. Thank you for your continued support and partnership in this vital work.

With sincere appreciation,  
**Edeh Catherine C. Esq**  
 Executive Director  
 Voice of Disability Initiative (VDI)



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**2-DAY CAPACITY BUILDING WORKSHOP FOR SRH/DISABILITY RIGHTS ADVOCATES IN KWARA**



Voice of Disability Initiative (VDI), in collaboration with the Joint National Association of Persons with Disabilities (JONAPWD Kwara State Chapter), conducted a 2-day capacity building workshop for SRH/Disability Rights Advocates from May 8th to 9th, 2024, at De Peace Heaven Hotel, Ilorin, Kwara State. The workshop, part of the 2-Year SRHR project funded by AMPLIFYCHANGE, brought together 30 advocates and notable dignitaries, including Prof. Azubuike, Deputy Vice Chancellor of the University of Ilorin, and Hon. Commissioner for Education and Human Capital Development, Hajia Sa'adatu Modibbo-Kawu.

In her address, VDI's Executive Director, Barr. Catherine Edeh, commended the Kwara State Government for the Disability Rights Law of 2017 but urged the Executive Governor, Mallam AbdulRahmam AbdulRazaq, CON, to establish a Disability Commission and set up Disability Support Desks with Sign Language Interpreters in healthcare facilities to ensure accessibility for persons with disabilities in the state.



**2-DAY CAPACITY BUILDING WORKSHOP FOR SRH/DISABILITY RIGHTS ADVOCATES IN EBONYI**



The 2-day capacity building workshop for SRH/Disability Rights Advocates, which took place on May 30th, 2024, is a key activity under the 2-Year SRHR project funded by AMPLIFYCHANGE. This project is being implemented in three states: Kwara, Enugu, and Ebonyi.

In her welcome remarks at the workshop held at Cirenes Hotel, Abakaliki, the Executive Director of VDI, Barr. Catherine Edeh, emphasized the importance of including disabled women, girls, and children in government initiatives in Ebonyi. She highlighted that VDI's core values and commitment are aligned with the state government to ensure that no woman or child with a disability is left behind.

Barr. Edeh also called on the Ebonyi state government, led by Governor Francis Nwifuru, to expedite the passage of the disability bill into law. She urged the State House of Assembly to urgently consider and implement the necessary measures to ensure the enactment of this crucial legislation for the welfare of people with disabilities in Ebonyi.

Day 1 workshop featured an overview of AMPLIFYCHANGE Project, Rights-based advocacy, understanding Disability Rights Law, SRHR of women and girls with disabilities, experience sharing on SRHR violation and recommendations. Participants also discussed the challenges hindering the passage of the Disability Rights Bill into law, among other critical issues.

**2-DAY CAPACITY BUILDING WORKSHOP IN ENUGU STATE**



Disability Inclusion Advocacy received a boost in Enugu State as Civil Society Organizations led by Voice of Disability Initiative (VDI) in collaboration with the Joint National Association of Persons with Disabilities (JONAPWD) Enugu State Chapter concluded a 2-day capacity-building workshop at Residency Hotel, Enugu from 4th - 5th June, 2024. The workshop is part of the activities under the 2-Year SRHR project being funded by AMPLIFYCHANGE in Enugu, Kwara and Ebonyi States.

In a Communique released at the end of the training, the Executive Director of VDI, Barr. Catherine Edeh and Leadership of Civil Society Organizations called on the Executive Governor of Enugu State, His Excellency Dr. Peter Ndubuisi Mba, to as a matter of urgency:

- (i) Establish a Disability Commission to be domiciled directly under the Executive Governor of Enugu State to oversee the affairs of persons with disabilities
- (ii) Set up Disability Support Desks and engage Sign Language Interpreters in government institutions especially healthcare facilities to enable access to healthcare services.

**"INCLUSION IS GIVING EVERYONE A FAIR CHANCE TO SHINE." - UNKNOWN**

**ADVOCACY VISIT TO INTERNATIONAL IDEA (ROLAC)**



On June 10, 2024, a team from the Voice of Disability Initiative (VDI), led by Executive Director Barr. Edeh Catherine, paid a courtesy and advocacy visit to the International IDEA (Rolac). The visit was aimed at strengthening our collaborative efforts towards enhancing the inclusion and rights of persons with disabilities in governance and civic engagement. During the meeting, our team highlighted the ongoing challenges faced by people with disabilities and discussed potential strategies to amplify their voices within the democratic process. The dialogue shows the importance of partnership and shared commitment to building a more inclusive society.

**ONE DAY SENSITIZATION PROGRAM ON SEXUAL REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH AND RIGHTS (KWARA STATE)**

On July 9, 2024, Voice of Disability Initiative (VDI) hosted a one-day sensitization program on Sexual Reproductive Health and Rights at De Peace Hotel, Ilorin, Kwara State. This event is part of the 2-year SRHR project funded by AMPLIFYCHANGE, focused on raising awareness about crucial health issues affecting women and girls with disabilities.

The program included educational sessions on sexual and reproductive health, as well as the distribution of sanitary pads and food items to support their daily needs. By combining advocacy with direct support, VDI aims to enhance the well-being and empower women and girls with disabilities in the region.



Also, during the one day sensitization, Voice of Disability Initiative (VDI) distributed sanitary pads, soaps and food items to over 150 women and girls with disabilities in Kwara State. This initiative is also part of the ongoing 2-year Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) project funded by AMPLIFYCHANGE. The distribution aimed to address both the menstrual hygiene needs and nutritional challenges faced by these women and girls, ensuring they have access to essential resources that support their overall well-being.

**NOTHING ABOUT US WITHOUT US**

**COURTESY VISIT TO THE SPECIAL ADVISER TO THE GOVERNOR ON SPECIAL NEEDS**



The Executive Director of VDI, Barr. Catherine Edeh on 10th of July, 2024 briefed the Senior Special Assistant (SSA) to the Governor on Disability Matters on the progress of establishing the Kwara State Disability Commission.

This initiative, part of a two-year project funded by AMPLIFYCHANGE, aims to enhance the rights and welfare of persons with disabilities in Kwara State. Barr. Edeh highlighted the strides made and the critical steps remaining in the journey toward setting up the Commission, emphasizing its importance in ensuring inclusivity and accessibility for persons with disability, especially women and girls

**COURTESY VISIT TO MINISTRY OF JUSTICE, KWARA STATE**



The VDI Team, with support from AMPLIFYCHANGE, paid a courtesy visit to the Solicitor General of the Kwara State Ministry of Justice on July 11, 2024. The primary goal of the visit was to advocate for the establishment of the Kwara State Disability Commission. This commission aims to enhance support and rights for persons with disabilities in the region. The discussion highlighted the importance of creating a dedicated body to address disability issues and promote inclusivity. The VDI Team is committed to working closely with the Ministry to advance this crucial initiative.



**COURTESY VISIT TO KWARA STATE COMMISSIONER FOR MINISTRY OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT**



The VDI Team on 12th July, 2024 with support from AMPLIFYCHANGE, met with the Kwara State Commissioner for Social Development, Hon. Abosede Olaitan Buraimoh, to advocate for the establishment of the Kwara State Disability Commission. The team emphasized the critical need for a dedicated body to oversee and implement disability rights and services across the state. Hon. Buremoh expressed her support for the initiative and acknowledged the importance of having such a commission to ensure that persons with disabilities receive the attention and resources they deserve. The meeting marked a significant step forward in the ongoing efforts to promote disability inclusion in Kwara State.

**COURTESY VISIT TO MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, KWARA STATE**



On July 9 2024, the VDI team paid a courtesy visit to the Kwara State Commissioner for Education & Human Capital Development, Hon. Sa'adatu Modibbo-Kawu. The visit was part of their ongoing efforts to advocate for the establishment of a Kwara State Disability Commission, a key initiative under the 2-Year project funded by AMPLIFYCHANGE.

During the meeting, the VDI team brought to attention the urgent need for a dedicated body to oversee the rights and welfare of persons with disabilities in Kwara State. Hon. Modibbo-Kawu acknowledged the significance of this initiative and expressed her support, noting that the commission would be instrumental in ensuring that educational and developmental opportunities are accessible to all, especially those with disabilities.



**VISIT TO PROF. NIKE YETUNDE SIDIKAT IJAIYA**



On July 12, 2024, VDI held a debriefing meeting with Prof. Nike Yetunde Sidikat Ijaiya to discuss the ongoing efforts and progress towards the establishment of the Disability Commission in Kwara State. This initiative, under the 2-Year Project funded by AMPLIFYCHANGE, is crucial in ensuring that the rights and needs of persons with disabilities are recognized and addressed at the state level.

**ONE DAY SENSITIZATION PROGRAM ON SEXUAL REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH AND RIGHTS (EBONYI STATE)**



With support from AmplifyChange, VDI organized a one-day sensitization program on Sexual and Health and Rights for Women and Girls with Disabilities in Ebonyi State on 23rd July, 2024.

The program, which highlighted the distribution of sanitary pads, soap and food items to over 150 women and girls with disabilities, also featured HIV and hepatitis screening and health talks delivered by Mr. Andrews Chibueze, Program Manager of Ebonyi State Agency for the Control of AIDS (Ebonyi-SACA) and Mrs Geraldine Nnamene a professional lab scientist who came from Enugu State.



While speaking to the media, Executive Director Barr. Catherine Edeh emphasized the need for the state government to back the disability rights law, stating that its absence, including the lack of disability support desks and sign language interpreters in government hospitals, is further exacerbating limited access to quality healthcare services for women and girls with disabilities.

Given the situation, the program calls for the urgent attention of the Governor of Ebonyi State, His Excellency Rt. Hon. Francis Ogonna Nwifuru to recognize the need to ensure that the rights of persons with disabilities are protected in line with the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) and the principle of Leaving No One Behind.

ONE DAY SENSITIZATION PROGRAM ON SRHR FOR WOMEN AND GIRLS WITH DISABILITIES IN ENUGU STATE.



Voice of Disability Initiative (VDI) organized a one-day sensitization program on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) for women and girls with disabilities on July 30th, 2024, at Sunshine Hotel, Otigba, Enugu State. This impactful event aimed to raise awareness about SRHR issues, empower participants with essential health knowledge, and address the unique challenges faced by women and girls with disabilities.

COURTESY VISIT TO MINISTRY OF HEALTH, EBONYI STATE



The program also featured comprehensive health screenings, which includes HIV, hepatitis, and blood pressure tests, even one on one counselling sessions ensuring that participants received vital health services. Additionally, during the program, over 150 women and girls with disabilities in Enugu State benefited from the distribution of food items, sanitary pads, condoms and soaps from VDI with support from AmplifyChange, further enhancing their well-being and hygiene.

On July 26, 2024, the team from Voice of Disability Initiative, led by Executive Director Barr. Catherine Edeh, visited the Ebonyi State Ministry of Health to advocate for the sexual and reproductive health and rights of women and girls with disabilities and address gender-based violence. During the visit, Barr. Edeh while addressing the SA, emphasize the need for the commissioner to urge the state government to create the establishment of disability support desks in hospitals and government facilities and the employment of sign language interpreters to accommodate the communication needs of deaf women and girls.



The event also brought together stakeholders and health professionals who facilitated discussions on reproductive health and provided practical advice on navigating the barriers posed by disabilities, reinforcing the importance of inclusivity in health and rights advocacy, and ensuring that no one is left behind in the quest for better health and empowerment.



COURTESY VISIT TO THE MINISTRY OF INFORMATION



COURTESY VISIT TO THE SPEAKER, ENUGU STATE HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

The Voice of Disability Initiative (VDI) team, led by Executive Director Barr. Catherine Edeh, made a significant advocacy visit to the Speaker of the Enugu State House of Assembly, Rt. Hon. Uche Ugwu, on July 29, 2024. The visit aimed to push for the establishment of the Enugu State Disability Commission, emphasizing the need for legislative support to ensure the rights and inclusion of persons with disabilities within the state. The engagement with the Speaker marked a crucial step in VDI's efforts to secure a dedicated government body to address the unique challenges faced by the disability community in Enugu State.

On July 29, 2024, the VDI Team, led by Executive Director Barr. Catherine Edeh, visited the office of the Commissioner for Information, Hon. Aka Eze Aka, to advocate for the establishment of Enugu State Disability Commission and disability support desks across the state. This crucial initiative seeks to elevate the visibility and accessibility of services for persons with disabilities, ensuring their voices are heard and their rights protected. By pushing for the creation of these support structures, VDI aims to promote a more inclusive environment where the needs of persons with disabilities are effectively addressed, aligning with the broader goal of leaving no one behind in the pursuit of social justice and equity.





**VDI/UAF - IGNITE PROJECT**

VDI ON THE MOVE: The implementation of IGNITE Project is set to start in full force as Voice of Disability Initiative (VDI) holds an orientation meeting with Data Collectors at De Glory Hotel, Yenegoa, Bayelsa State. The IGNITE project aims at increasing access to education for out-of-school Adolescent Girls with Disability in Bayelsa and FCT.

The orientation meeting which took place between 16th and 17th August 2024 was anchored by Monitoring and Evaluation Officer, Mr. Ogiji Edward alongside Mr. Izu Douglas.

- Highlights of the meeting include:
- Understanding data tools for effective data capturing
  - Ensuring data quality and control
  - Respecting individual respondent's rights
  - Use of observation and direct questions
  - Maintaining privacy and confidentiality
  - Question and answer session for clarification
  - Clarifying work duration and reporting channels
  - Commitment and signing of letter of offer.

**VDI WENT LIVE AT ENERGY FM, ENUGU STATE TO PUSH FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF DISABILITY COMMISSION**



VDI's Programs Manager, Mr Edward Ogenyi and Enugu State JONAPWD Chairman, Mr Onyebuchi Mba on Live Radio program at ENERGY FM Enugu to push for disability inclusion especially the establishment of Enugu State Disability Commission on 31/7/2024 with support from AMPLIFYCHANGE.

**ADVOCAY VISIT TO MINISTRY OF CHILDREN, GENDER AFFAIRS AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT**

On 31st July, 2024 VDI Team led by Barr. Catherine Edeh paid an Advocacy visit to the Enugu State Commissioner for Children, Gender Affairs & Social Development, Mrs. Ngozi Enih to advocate for the establishment of Enugu State Disability Commission. This activity is part of the 2-Year SRHR Project being funded by AMPLIFYCHANGE in Enugu, Kwara and Ebonyi States



"No culture can live if it attempts to be exclusive." - Mahatma Gandhi

**WORLD BREASTFEEDING WEEK, 2024**

On August 14, 2024, the Executive Director of Voice of Disability Initiative giving a speech at the ASHWAN program tagged: Closing the Gap, Breastfeeding Support for All.



Barr Catherine Edeh in a group photo session at the "PEER TO PEER TO FOR PEER EDUCATORS" Organized by Association of women living with HIV (ASWHAN), with support from UNAIDS and UN WOMEN.



On 16 August, 2024, the Executive Director of Voice of Disability Initiative

**VOICE OF DISABILITY INITIATIVE (VDI) HOSTS COMPREHENSIVE STRATEGIC PLAN REVIEW RETREAT**



Voice of Disability Initiative (VDI) organized an extensive Strategic Plan Review Retreat from the 19th to the 23rd of August, 2024, bringing together the organization's Board of Trustees (BoTs), management staff, consultants, and representatives from various partner organizations.

The retreat commenced on the 19th of August with the arrival of all participants. This day was dedicated to ensuring that everyone, including VDI's Board of Trustees, management staff, consultants, and representatives from partner organizations, was settled in to their rooms at MSP Residence Located at 113 Emeka Anyaoku Street, Area 11, Garki. Following the arrivals, VDI held an in-house pre-strategic plan meeting exclusively for its BoTs and management staff. This session provided an opportunity to align on key objectives and strategies, as well as to onboard new staff members, ensuring that everyone was well-prepared for the critical discussions ahead.

The core of the retreat took place on the 20th and 21st of August, where the Strategic Plan Review sessions were conducted. These sessions were attended by a diverse group of stakeholders, including representatives from the Ministry of Justice, the Association of Lawyers with Disabilities, the National Commission of Persons with Disabilities, the Association of Women Living with Disabilities (ASHWAN), NAPTIP, and several other organizations. Each participant played a vital role, contributing their expertise and perspectives to refine and enhance VDI's strategic direction. The review sessions were characterized by robust discussions, collaborative problem-solving, and a shared commitment to advancing the rights and inclusion of persons with disabilities.

The retreat culminated in a one-day capacity-building workshop held on the 22nd of August. This training, specifically designed for VDI's BoTs and management staff, focused on critical areas such as board governance, effective communication strategies, financial management, and more. The goal was to equip VDI's leadership with the knowledge and skills necessary to steer the organization towards its strategic objectives effectively. The training emphasized best practices in organizational governance and fostered a

deeper understanding of the communication and financial management strategies that will be pivotal in achieving VDI's mission.

The retreat not only served as a platform for reviewing and refining VDI's strategic plan but also strengthened the organization's internal capacities and build stronger collaborations with external partners. The insights gained and the skills developed during these sessions will undoubtedly propel VDI forward in its mission to empower and advocate for the rights of persons with disabilities across Nigeria.



Chief Chijioko Nwafor (Board Member) giving a speech during the Event.

**INHOUSE PRE-EVENT MEETING**



Inhouse, pre-event meeting of the BoTs and management team on Monday 19th August 2024 at MSP Residence Garki, Abuja to kickstart Strategic Plan Review Retreat.



Barr. Daniel Uwaezuoke (BOT Vice Chairman)



Cross Section of Staff and BOT during the Meeting



The ED (VDI) appreciating Madam Onyi Mamah for fasttracking the advocacy visit to the office of the former Executive Governor of Enugu State.



**PHOTO SPEAKS FROM THE 3 DAYS EVENT**



Madam Geraldine Obieze (board member) presenting during the event



Group 1 busy with their task during the SP Retreat.



Group 2 busy with their task during the SP Retreat.



BOT Vice Chairman Barr. Daniel Uwaezuoke (in white stripe) presenting his group task.



Dr Lawrence Edelifo Idemudia rep the ES, NCPWD



Clement Elo-Ogene, A student Rep. Divine Love School Lagos



Group 3 busy with their task during the SP Retreat.



BoTs and the programs manager paying rapt attention during the Retreat



Madam Onyi Mamah giving her good will message during the retreat



Stoehnie.H. Izang Rep. from ASWHAN



Group 4 having a discussion on their task during the SP Retreat.



Rep. from ALDIN , Barr.Sanni M. Moyi



Rep. from Legal Aid Barr. Ogah Ogbenyi



Tina Abeku, a Media Personnel from The Guardian



The ED giving her welcome speech



Group 1 presenting their findings from the SP Review.



Mr Obinna Nwankonye (Rep. from NHRC)



Madam Augusta Akparata Emenogu, Gender Advocate.



Dr Edward Ogernyi, Prograns Manager (VDI)



Rep. from Federal Ministry of Justice Barr. Doris Okoroba Benjamin



Dr O. K Ogungbade (VDI focal Person, Kwara State)



Mr Chris Agbo, Qualitative Magazine

**ONE DAY CAPACITY BUILDING FOR BOTS AND VDI STAFF**

On August 22nd 2024, as part of the strategic plan retreat, VDI held a one day Capacity building training facilitated by Mr Andrew. it was specifically designed for VDI's Board of Trustees (BoTS) and Management staff, focused on critical Areas such as Board governance, financial Management, Effective Communication Strategies and policy review at MSP Residence Hotel. With support from Amplifychange. The goal was to equip VDI's leadership with the knowledge and skills necessary to steer the organization toward its strategic objectives effectively. The training emphasized best practices in organizational governance and build a deeper understanding of the communication and financial management strategies that will be pivotal in achieving VDI's mission.



**MR ANDREW TAKING A SESSION ON INTERNAL CONTROL**



**MR FRANKLIN EMMANUEL TAKING A SESSION ON EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES**

**COURTESY VISIT TO NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES (NCPWD)**

On August 23rd, 2024, the Voice of Disability Initiative (VDI) Board members and management team, under the leadership of the Executive Director, Barr. Catherine Edeh, paid a courtesy visit to the Executive Secretary of the National Commission for Persons with Disabilities (NCPWD), Chief Ayuba Gufwan. The visit, held at the NCPWD headquarters, was a significant step in strengthening the collaboration between VDI and the Commission in the ongoing efforts to advocate for and implement inclusive policies for persons with disabilities across Nigeria.



During the meeting, Chief Ayuba Gufwan commended VDI for its unwavering commitment to the disability community. He highlighted the organization's impactful advocacy initiatives that have consistently pushed for the inclusion and recognition of the rights of persons with disabilities at both national and grassroots levels.



Chief Gufwan emphasized the importance of collaborative efforts in achieving substantial progress in the disability sector and assured the VDI team of NCPWD's readiness to partner closely with them. He expressed a strong commitment to a robust partnership that would see both organizations work hand in hand to address critical issues facing the disability community, including policy implementation, access to essential services, and the promotion of equal opportunities for all persons with disabilities. The meeting concluded with a mutual agreement to explore more avenues for collaboration, ensuring that the voices of persons with disabilities are heard and that their rights are upheld across all sectors of society.



**ED AT THE 2ND NATIONAL DEAF WOMEN SUMMIT**



On the 27th day of August 2024, the Executive Director of Voice of Disability initiative (VDI) Barr. Edeh Catherine, was honoured as a keynote speaker in the 2nd National Deaf Women Summit. Addressing the theme "Empowering Deaf Women, Empowering Voices," she passionately advocated for the empowerment and inclusion of Deaf women. She went further to urge the deaf women to view their disabilities as strengths rather than limitations. She emphasized the power of unity, encouraging the women to come together and combat discrimination to achieve greatness collectively.



**DEAF NOT DAFT**

I have a hearing loss, please speak clearly  
 I'm a lip reader, please face me  
 Why people act like I'm daft, because I can't hear?  
 Not being able to hear, doesn't mean I can't learn  
 I'm Deaf, not Daft  
 No I'm not rude, and I'm definitely not stupid  
 I simply can't hear you, and this is who I am  
 Stop talking about me like I'm not there  
 Stop raising your voice on me than usual,  
 It is not about the voice, it is about understanding  
 I'm Deaf not Daft  
 Just because my ears don't work like it should  
 Doesn't mean my brain doesn't  
 Being deaf doesn't make you daft, and being  
 hearing doesn't make you smart  
 Don't look down on me with pity  
 I'm Deaf not Daft  
 I just got another kind of ABILITY  
 That is different from yours  
 I'm a human too, please. Treat me with respect.

**Emily Osobase**  
 (Communication officer)

**YOU CAN CONTACT VOICE OF DISABILITY INITIATIVE ON:**

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