



PREFACE

Education is a fundamental human right and social development. However, full access to quality education remains a challenge due to various barriers. Addressing these challenges requires a strong commitment from governments, civil society, and the private sector.

The Voice of Disability Initiative (VDI) completed the 18-month project 'Girls with Disabilities in Bayelsa State' which was implemented with the generous support of the American Foundation for Democracy (AFD) through the IGNITE Consortium. Through this initiative, VDI supported girls with disabilities, organized mentoring sessions, and conducted advocacy engagements. We facilitated sensitisation dialogues and engaged caregivers to strengthen family and community support. The outcomes highlighted in this report show the potential for action in breaking down barriers and enabling girls to learn, thrive, and participate fully in society. On behalf of the Board of Trustees, we express our appreciation to our funding partner, AFD, for their contributions made to the successful implementation of this project. Importantly, we commend the courage and resilience of the girls whose stories and progress continue to inspire us.

It is our hope that the lessons and experiences from this project will strengthen advocacy and advance the rights of girls with disabilities in Nigeria.

Barr. Chike Uwaezuoke
Vice Chairman, Board of Trustees
Voice of Disability Initiative (VDI)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Voice of Disability Initiative (VDI) extends heartfelt gratitude to AmplifyChange for funding and supporting this project, and for believing in the vision of advancing the rights and wellbeing of women and girls with disabilities.

We deeply appreciate our implementing partners, community stakeholders, disability clusters, and government institutions in Enugu, Ebonyi, and Kwara States for their collaboration and commitment. Your partnership was vital in ensuring that voices were heard, barriers were challenged, and solutions were co-created.

Special appreciation goes to our dedicated staff, volunteers, and data collectors, whose passion and tireless efforts made this work possible.

Above all, we recognize and celebrate the women and girls with disabilities who shared their stories, participated actively, and inspired this journey of change. This report is dedicated to you, your courage and resilience continue to light the path toward a more inclusive and just society.



APPRECIATION

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to the entire IGNITE Consortium partners for believing in the ability of Voice of Disability Initiative to effectively deliver as an implementing partner on the project, as gracefully funding it, and for believing in the shared vision of education for all and advancing the rights and wellbeing of women and adolescent girls with disabilities.

We equally appreciate our local implementing partners and collaborators on the project inclusive of MDAs, community stakeholders, CSOs, JONAPWD in the two project states, our consultants and facilitators, fellow grantee partners, the press and media partners as well as all those not mentioned whose dedication and selfless support made this project a huge success. Through your passionate support and collaborations, voices were heard, barriers were challenged, confidence restored and solutions were co-created.

I also want to use this medium to appreciate our dedicated BoTs, staff, volunteers, data collectors and mentors to the beneficiaries, whose passion and tireless efforts hugely contributed to the recorded success.

We also recognize and celebrate the teachers, parents and caregivers of our adolescent girls with disabilities for the passion and daily investing in a brighter future for the beneficiaries, and also for actively participating and enabling this journey of change.

And finally, to the main beneficiaries - adolescent girls with disabilities in the two project states, both those in and out of school, for the resilience and determination to brave it all for greater prospects. We see you; we love you; and we are here for you all 🤝

This report is dedicated to all of us. For our courage and resilience and continuity in the movement toward a more inclusive and just society.

Love, Power and Feminist Support always.

Catherine Chinyere Edeh Esq.
Nigeria's First Female Deaf Lawyer
Executive Director, VDI

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PROJECT OVERVIEW:

The "Increasing Access to Education for Adolescent Girls with Disabilities in Bayelsa and the Federal Capital Territory" (IAE4AGWD) project implemented by Voice of Disability Initiative (VDI), is a comprehensive initiative aimed at increasing access to quality education for adolescent girls with disabilities (AGWD) who are in-school and out-of-school in Bayelsa State and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja. Recognizing the unique challenges faced by the target population, the project is designed to address the barriers that hinder their educational opportunities and to provide a supportive environment that fosters their academic and personal development. This project is strategically designed to enhance educational access for 320 adolescent girls with disabilities. In addition to focusing on the girls, the project extends its reach to include their parents, caregivers, and or guardians, recognizing their pivotal role in the girls' educational journey.

The Project specific objectives include;

1. To equip 320 adolescent girls with disabilities in FCT and Bayelsa States with tools and knowledge to attain full life potentials by end of October, 2025.
2. To strengthen 400 households in FCT and Bayelsa States to respond positively to adolescent girls' education by end of October, 2025.
3. Support school enrolment of 320 adolescent girls with disabilities through advocacy, referrals, soliciting for scholarship opportunities, provision of scholastic and sanitary materials among others.
4. To influence key decision makers to provide supportive environment for adolescent girls' education in FCT and Bayelsa States by the end of October 2025.

ABOUT THE IGNITE (Inspire Girls and Grassroots Networks for Transformative Education) Project funded by Urgent Action Fund

IGNITE (Inspiring Girls and Grassroots Organizations for Inclusive and Transformative Education) is a consortium led by the International Rescue Committee (IRC) in partnership with Urgent Action Fund-Africa (UAF-Africa), and the René Mowad Foundation (RMF), with funding from the French Development Agency (AFD).

The IGNITE project aims to amplify the voices and agency of feminist-led CSOs and adolescent girls to subvert gender-related social norms that hinder girls' participation in education and promote girls' social inclusion and empowerment. The project focuses on advancing gender equality in seven target countries in Sub-Saharan Africa and the Middle East including Nigeria, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, DR Congo, Ethiopia, Jordan and Lebanon. It supports feminist and youth-led CSOs in accelerating gender equality through sub-granting and collaborative organizational capacity strengthening in finance, administration, technical areas and research. The project also aims to provide direct support to adolescent girls and their families, removing barriers to education at individual, family and community levels and to collaborate with schools and other sub-national institutions to enhance support for adolescent girls in school and increase access to education for out of school girls.

PRIMARY BENEFICIARIES UNDER THE PROJECT:

S/N	NAME OF SCHOOL	CATEGORY	LOCATION
1	FCT School for the Blind	Public Sch.	Jabi-Abuja
2	FCT School for Children with Disabilities	Public Sch.	Kuje-Abuja
3	FCT School for the Deaf	Public Sch.	Kuje-Abuja
4	Karonmajigi Disability Centre	Out of Sch.	Karonmajigi-Abuja
5	Kuje Community Home for Children with Disabilities	Out of Sch.	Kuje-Abuja
6	Blossom Home for the Deaf & Blind	Private Sch.	Bayelsa State
7	Bayelsa State Government School	Public Sch.	Bayelsa State
8	Child Care Trust	Private Sch.	Bwari-Abuja
9	Safe Host School	Private Sch.	Jikwoyi-Abuja
10	Bedrock to Education		Obele Yenagoa Bayelsa State
11	Royal Ville School	Private Sch.	Dutse Abuja

PROJECT ACHIEVEMENTS AND OUTCOMES:

The project had Seven reporting periods, viz; Period 1, 2, 3, 4, 5,6 & 7



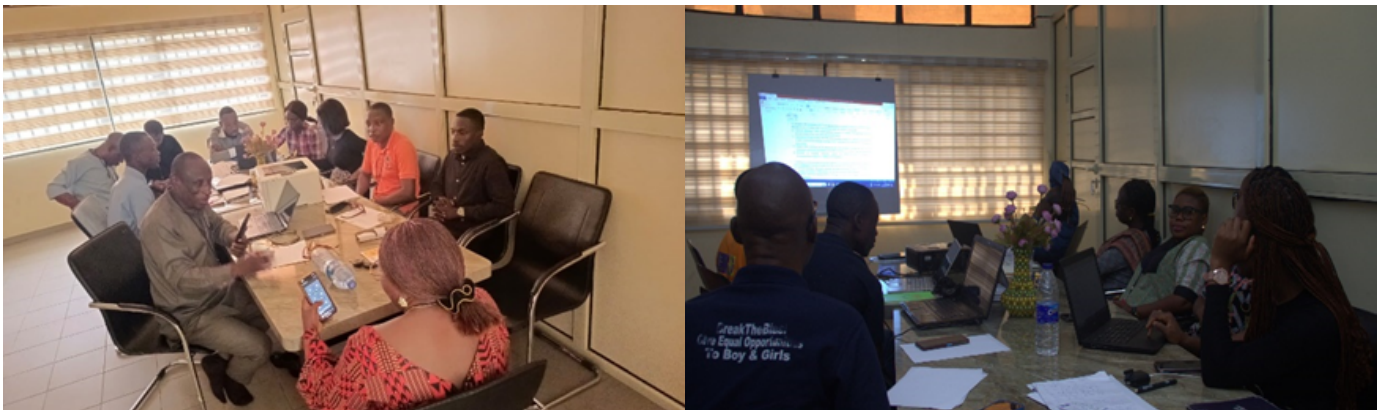
PERIOD 1

a. In the first quarter, significant strides were made in laying the foundation for effective implementation of the project and its success. A comprehensive assessment exercise was carried out and a total of 353 Adolescent girls with Disabilities identified and assessed in Bayelsa (153) and FCT (160) were identified. This assessment was crucial in ensuring that the project's resources are directed toward those most in need of educational support.



M&E Officer in Meeting with Disability Cluster Heads at Bayelsa State

b. An orientation meeting was held for VDI staff, focusing on the project's objectives, implementation procedures, and expected outcomes. This meeting was essential in aligning the team's understanding and approach, ensuring that all staff members are well-prepared to contribute effectively to the project's goals. 11 VDI staff were in attendance - This was to ensure that in the event of unavailability of any of IAE4AGWD project staff support can be sought from other project staff to ensure continuity of activity.



IAE4AGWD Orientation Meeting Sessions with VDI Staff

c. VDI recruited and trained sixteen (16) data collectors (8 in each project State), equipping them with the skills necessary to accurately collect the required Data. These data collectors are integral to the project's success, as their work ensures that the selected beneficiaries are appropriately supported throughout the project's duration.



Training Session with Data Collectors in Bayelsa State & FCT

PERIOD 2

Sequel to the comprehensive assessment and identification/enrolment of three hundred and fifty-three (353) adolescent girls with disabilities in the first quarter, Voice of Disability Initiative (VDI) in the second quarter, successfully organized a series of impactful Life Skills Training sessions for adolescent girls with disabilities and Sensitization/Dialogue meetings with their caregivers in Bayelsa State and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja. The trainings aimed to empower participants with essential life skills, boost their self-confidence, and equip caregivers with knowledge to better support their AGWDs.

a. Eight sessions of Life skills training conducted for AGWDs (4 in Bayelsa State and 4 in FCT- Abuja). A total of 226 AGWD were reached with Life Skills training in both project states - Bayelsa-133, FCT- 93).

Partner Insight: When we invest in girls with disabilities, we don't just change one life—we ignite generations of hope.



A cross session of Out-of-school adolescent girls with disability in Life Skills training at Golden Tulip Apartments and Resort - Bayelsa State



Barr. Catherine Edeh, the Executive Director of VDI addressing the parents of adolescent girls with disability during the Sensitization/Dialogue Meeting at Golden Tulip Apartments and Resort, Bayelsa State on the 13th Nov. 2024. In her address, she also shared her life experience on how she became deaf and also how she overcame the challenges and rose to where she found herself today.



Role-play on effective communication and listening skills during life skills training - Bayelsa State

b. Eight sensitization/dialogue meetings conducted for parents/caregivers of AGWDs (4 in Bayelsa State and 4 in FCT-Abuja). Total of 221 parents/caregivers were reached with Life Skills training in both project states (Bayelsa-123, FCT- 93).



Program Manager Mr. Edward Ogenyi facilitating Understanding Importance of Educational goal for Adolescent girls with disability during Sensitization/Dialogue Meeting to caregivers and parents of AGWD - Bayelsa State.



PERIOD 3

Major activities carried out within the period revolved around organizational capacity strengthening which was provided through a self-administered Organizational Capacity Assessment Tool (OCAT) provided by the IGNITE Consortium Team. VDI completed and submitted responses to all 239 questions in the OCAT tool, covering core areas such as governance, finance, human resources, MEL, and strategy. Etc. The OCAT process enhanced VDI staff's understanding of internal systems, increased team cohesion, and fostered a culture of reflection and continuous organizational learning.

Domain	YES	NO
GOVERNANCE	31	2
LOGISTICS &	14	1
HUMAN RESSOURCES	19	8
ORGANIZATIONAL	28	5
OPERATIONS &	27	13
FINANCIAL	37	9
EXTERNAL RELATIONS	34	11
TOTAL	190	49



PERIOD 4

Following the completion of the OCAT administered by the IGNITE team, Major activities carried out within the period focused on organizational capacity strengthening of Voice of Disability Initiative (VDI). These include;

a. Nigeria Ignite Partnership Meeting with PASGA:

The meeting aimed to introduce the Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) partners implementing the IGNITE project in Nigeria to the Pan-African Social Governance Approach (PASGA) team led by Prof. Fumilayo Para-Mallam, MNI. VDI was represented by the M&E Officer, Edward Ogiji, and Accountant, Mrs. Elizabeth Ogbeche. Key discussions focused on highlighting the progress and the challenges encountered as well as the need for collaborative efforts to ensure the success of the IGNITE project.

During this meeting, the target group for VDI was clarified to encompass Adolescent Girls and Women with Disabilities (AGWDs) who:

- Are out-of-school, aged 10-19 years
- Are aged 20-25 years owing to the late start in schooling common amongst PWDs
- Are in-school but face challenges with school retention due to their parents' economic status

This clarification was to ensure a focused approach in supporting AGWDs within these specific categories.

b. Evaluation Visit to VDI by the Ignite Team:

Within the period under review, the Evaluation Team from the IGNITE Consortium visited VDI office in Abuja, Nigeria. The visiting team comprised of individuals from Finance, Program and Monitoring and Evaluation. The aim of the visit was to provide hands-on technical support to VDI Finance team as well as to interact with AGWDs who have benefited from the IGNITE project on the field (Karonmajigi Disability Colony)



c. Evaluation Visit to VDI by the Ignite Team:

Within the period under review, the Evaluation Team from the IGNITE Consortium visited VDI office in Abuja, Nigeria. The visiting team comprised of individuals from Finance, Program and Monitoring and Evaluation. The aim of the visit was to provide hands-on technical support to VDI Finance team as well as to interact with AGWDs who have benefited from the IGNITE project on the field (Karonmajigi Disability Colony)

c. Advocacy Training Workshop for Ignite Partners organized by the IGNITE consortium

The workshop was attended by three VDI staff members, who benefited from the interactive and practical sessions led by expert facilitators. The training covered key areas including strategic communication techniques, stakeholder mapping and analysis, categorization and prioritization of stakeholders, and critical issues impacting adolescent girls' access to education. A particular focus was placed on addressing the unique challenges faced by girls with disabilities. The skills and knowledge gained from the training have been effectively applied to inform project planning and implementation strategies in Bayelsa and FCT, enhancing VDI's advocacy efforts and stakeholder engagement.





PERIOD 5

Quarter 5 of the project covered the period (June - August 2025). VDI made concerted efforts to implement all planned Quarter 5 activities as outlined in the updated project work plan. Notwithstanding that most of these activities extend beyond the current quarter and considerable progress was made in the quarter under review with identifiable outcomes coming from the two project states (FCT & Bayelsa state). Some of these activities include;

a. Mentoring of Adolescent Girls with Disabilities on Rights to Education:

Despite initial challenges encountered in enrolling participants for this activity, turn-out and level of enthusiasm seen in the AGWDs was very encouraging. At the end of each session, one could see in each of the participants renewed hope and determination to pursue their goals despite their disabilities. For example, because of the mentoring activity, Chiamaka Chukwu, a 25 years old blind woman and mother in the FCT has decided to return to school to rewrite her secondary school certificate examination. This will enable her gain admission to the higher institution to pursue tertiary education. This desire would not have been awakened without her encountering VDI through the mentoring activity. Additionally, the saying that right knowledge builds and improves quality of one's life couldn't be any truer. The transformative power of education coupled with the inculcation of life-skills from this activity has helped build resilience, self-confidence and determination in these AGWDs. There is now this innate confidence in their future and dreams.



Mentoring session for out of school AGWDs in Kuje Community of Abuja



Mentoring session for out-of-school AGWDs In Karmajiji Community



b. Facilitate School Enrollment of Adolescent Girls with Disabilities:

Sixty AGWDs benefitted from this intervention in Bayelsa State. Materials provided include school uniforms, writing materials, sandals, school bags, sanitary towels etc. Persons identified and equipped with scholastic materials were mostly those from poor households whose parents used their disability as an excuse not to send them to school even when in some cases, tuition were subsidized by the government.



Pupils of Opolo Community Special Needs School enthusiastically display educational resources donated by VDI courtesy of IGNITE. This heartwarming display showcases the positive impact of collaborative efforts between organizations and schools in supporting students with special needs



c. Advocacy Meetings with School Authorities & other Stakeholders:

Eight advocacy visits were conducted in this quarter. Stakeholders ranged from school authorities to community leaders as well as government agencies/ministries. Our central advocacy message being the imperativeness of enabling AGWDs access to inclusive education. In the short-term, these advocacy efforts have raised awareness among community members, parents, and stakeholders about the importance of girls' education, leading to increased support with the prospect of a more enabling environment, shift in societal attitudes and behaviors (that is, promoting gender equality and reducing discriminatory practices) and policy influence in the months to come.



Advocacy visit to Opolo Community leader in Bayelsa State - Comrade Collins Grey by VDI Team and JONAPWD representatives

Partner Insight: When we invest in girls with disabilities, we don't just change one life—we ignite generations of hope.

d. Advocacy Campaign on the Rights to Access Education for Adolescent Girls with Disabilities:

This activity was initially designed as a public enlightenment campaign in both project states (Bayelsa and FCT). However, it was implemented in Bayelsa as a Townhall meeting as a result of the state of Emergency declared by the Federal Government of Nigeria in the neighboring state (Rivers State) and the tense political climate in the country at the time. The town hall meeting which was attended by over 30 stakeholders, raised awareness about the challenges faced by adolescent girls, particularly those with disabilities and promoted a deeper understanding of their needs and rights. It also had the added advantage of providing a platform for knowledge sharing, where stakeholders learnt from each other's experiences and best practices, ultimately empowering them to make informed decisions on education access and well-being issues for adolescent girls with disabilities in the future. It also served as a means of promoting accountability among stakeholders, ensuring that they are committed to supporting adolescent girls and addressing their needs as pledged by every participant during the meeting.



VDI M&E Officer briefing participants at the Town-hall meeting with school authorities and key stakeholders in Bayelsa state of the IGNITE project aims



PERIOD 6

Quarter 6 of the project covers the period (October - December 2025). Quarter 6 activities include;

a. Ongoing Mentoring for Adolescent Girls with Disabilities on Rights to Education:

Building on the momentum gained on the activity from Q5, the mentoring sessions continued with renewed zeal and expectations on the part of both the mentors/champions and the AGWDs.

In the FCT, 3 new communities were identified and enlisted during the quarter. They include;

- School for the Deaf Kuje,
- School for Children with Special Needs Kuje and
- School for the Blind Jabi.

Cumulatively, this amounted to a total of 97 new beneficiaries participating across the FCT. Notwithstanding the flood break observed in Bayelsa State which led to students being away from school for over 2 months, the state also witnessed an addition of 36 new participants in the quarter under review. Specifically, one new community was enlisted in the mentoring activity; Opolo Community Special Needs School, Bayelsa.



b. Facilitate School Enrollment of Adolescent Girls with Disabilities:

a. Facilitate School Enrollment of Adolescent Girls with Disabilities:

Scholastic materials were distributed to 57 AGWDs in the FCT. Materials provided include school uniforms, writing materials, sandals, school bags, sanitary towels, etc. Identified beneficiaries were from a mix of the 3 Special schools in the FCT currently collaborating with VDI under the project namely; School for the Deaf Kuje, School for Children with Special Needs Kuje and School for the Blind Jabi.

The distribution of scholastic materials event organized by VDI drew dignitaries from various organizations, including the National Commission for Persons with Disabilities (NCPWD), FCT Universal Basic Education Board (FCT-UBEB), FCT Education Resource Centre (FCT-ERC), FCT Special Education Board (FCT-SEB), Federal Ministry of Education (FMoE), and the FCT Department of Special Needs Education as well as representatives from the media and was a resounding success. Overall, this has led to improved commitment and collaboration from school authorities and stakeholders.



c. Advocacy Meetings with School Authorities & Other Stakeholders:

A total of 4 advocacy visits were conducted in the FCT in Quarter 6. Targeted stakeholders included; FCT Universal Basic Education Board (FCT UBEB) as well as the 3 FCT special schools VDI is collaborating with under the project. Our central advocacy message is on the imperativeness of enabling AGWDs access to inclusive education. In the short-term, these advocacy efforts have raised awareness among community members, parents, and stakeholders about the importance of girls' education, leading to increased support with the prospect of a more enabling environment, shift in societal attitudes and behaviors (that is, promoting gender equality and reducing discriminatory practices). Additionally, it has fostered collaboration with VDI, leading to increased support for adolescent girls' educational and accessibility needs and rights.



QUARTERLY REFLECTION MEETING:

d. .Quarterly M&E Review Meetings

The meetings provided the team with an opportunity to reflect on the success of the scholastic materials distribution activity. The diverse attendance at the event was a testament to the significant progress made by the project, highlighting its ability to engage and mobilize a broad range of stakeholders. Additionally the issue of school fees support and enrolment was discussed and beneficiary schools were mapped out.



e. On-site visit and monitoring of project activities:

VDI M&E accompanied by the program officer attended some of the mentoring activities in person to assess the impact of the mentoring on the AGWDs. In addition, the M&E officer is present at all events organized by VDI under the project and so monitors such events onsite

PERIOD 7

Quarter 7 of the project, covering the period January to March 2026, saw VDI implementing ongoing activities carried over from previous quarters and various on-site monitoring visits as outlined in the work plan. The quarter culminates today in the execution of the final project activity: a Dissemination Meeting held across the two project states, aimed at sharing key project outcomes, lessons learned, and recommendations with stakeholders, including government officials, partners, and beneficiaries, to ensure sustainability and inform future programming.

OUR PROJECT'S IMPACT ON OUR TARGET BENEFICIARIES (AGWDs)

A. As a result of the Life skills training sessions conducted for AGWDs & Sensitization/dialogue meetings conducted for parents/caregivers of AGWDs in both project states;

- 226 AGWDs were equipped with critical skills in communication, decision-making, goal setting, self-awareness, and resilience. They equally demonstrated better decision-making skills in their personal lives and education pursuits.
- 221 Parents/caregivers of AGWDs were provided with strategies for family support for their AGWDs, there is a shift in perspective from perceiving their daughters as dependent to recognizing them as individuals capable of contributing meaningfully not only to the family but also the society at large. Finally, Parents acknowledged the importance of empowering their daughters with education and life skills.



B. The Advocacy Meetings with School Authorities & other Stakeholders:

- The continuous meetings with the school authorities have fostered collaboration with VDI, leading to increased support for adolescent girls' educational and accessibility needs and rights across the two project states.
- Bayelsa State currently has only one Government Special School in Opolo community to serve all students with disability in the state. our meetings with the Permanent secretary to the Bayelsa Ministry of Education has brought the great difficulty being encountered by students across the state to the front burner and assurances has been made to remedy the situation and establish more of such schools across the state.



C. Facilitate School Enrollment of Adolescent Girls with Disabilities:

A total of 117 AGWDs received scholastic materials from VDI with funding from UAF across the two project states (Bayelsa - 60, FCT - 57). Additionally, VDI provided school enrolment and retention support for 85 AGWDs in public and Privates schools across the 2 project states. Both Interventions has greatly reduced absenteeism and created a renewed enthusiasm to attend school amongst beneficiaries. Additionally, it has raised awareness on the need and right of every child with disability to be given an opportunity to access education especially at the grassroots as well as challenge social norms and promote inclusive environments, enabling girls with disabilities to continue learning.



D. Mentoring of AGWDs On Right to Education:

The mentoring sessions conducted under the IGNITE project have had a profound impact on promoting the right to education for AGWDs. The sessions provided a platform for AGWDs to receive personalized guidance, support, and empowerment, enabling them to overcome barriers to education. Through one-on-one mentoring, beneficiaries gained confidence, developed self-advocacy skills, and acquired strategies to navigate challenges in their educational journey. The sessions also contributed to a more inclusive and supportive learning environment. Mentors worked closely with teachers and caregivers to address specific needs of AGWDs, fostering a culture of acceptance and understanding. The sessions have helped to break down stigmas and stereotypes surrounding disability, promoting a rights-based approach to education. With the skills and knowledge gained, AGWDs are better equipped to claim their right to education and pursue their aspirations, paving the way for a brighter future and more inclusive societies.



ADVOCACY CAMPAIGN ON RIGHTS TO EDUCATION OF ADOLESCENT GIRLS WITH DISABILITIES (AGWDS) IN NIGERIA

During the implementation of the IGNITE project, Voice of Disability Initiative (VDI) amplified the voices of Adolescent Girls with Disabilities (AGWDs) by taking their advocacy campaign directly to the nation's living rooms. Recognizing the influential reach of the media, VDI engaged in a strategic series of interviews and appearances on major outlets, including Arise News, Channels TV, Max FM and other press and media partners.

Through these platforms, VDI moved beyond statistics to tell the human story of AGWDs, highlighting both the challenges they face and their immense potential. The organization issued a powerful call to action, urging stakeholders at all levels, from policymakers to community leaders, to make tangible investments in the education of AGWDs, ensuring no girl is left behind in Nigeria's development.



PROJECT'S IMPACT ON VDI AS IMPLEMENTING ORGANISATION

As a result of IGNITE's organizational strengthening initiatives, VDI has been able to develop the following resources;

- i.VDI Action Plan 2025 which now serves as a guide or trajectory for where the organization is headed in the new year (2026).
- ii.VDI Advocacy Plan which provides the organization with easy to use, structured and targeted messaging for the organization's advocacy activities across its thematic areas.
- iii.VDI was also able to develop relevant non-existent policies as well as update existing ones for use on other projects such as VDI Risk Management Policy, VDI Data Protection Policy, VDI Anti-Bribery, Corruption and Fraud Policy.
- iv.VDI under the IGNITE Digital Hackerton Challenge was able to create a content calendar for the 30 days of the challenge.
- v.The peer-to-peer coaching organized by IGNITE on advocacy (IGNITE Advocacy Lab) enabled VDI to gained deeper and hand son knowledge on advocacy
- vi.The Community of practice sessions organized by IGNITE as an informal, interactive learning space where IGNITE partners come together to share experiences, challenges, tools, and practical solutions on specific themes such as Program Management, MEAL, Human Resources, Communications, etc. has been very impactful on the organization and its staff.



PROJECT CHALLENGES & LESSONS LEARNED

A re-occurring lesson for VDI on the implementation of this project is the potential collaboration has in ensuring or birthing change. VDI at all times ensured to collaborate with key stakeholders in our project states, hence the huge impact recorded.

i. Collaboration with School authorities: In line with the mantra, nothing for us without us, VDI at all times collaborated with the Head teachers and principals of the various Special schools the project was implemented together with the various states' ministries of education, SUBEB and Special Needs departments. This facilitated entry and access to the target beneficiaries. Additionally, the several engagements held with the school teachers on the need to sustain inclusive education and learning environment was geared towards ensuring sustainability of the projects focus even after VDI's exit.

ii. Collaboration with the Media: VDI also collaborated with the Media in the course of implementing activities. This collaboration has ensured robust awareness creation about our programs in the three project states.

iii. Other collaborations: These include CSOs, MDAs, human rights defenders/law enforcement agents, disability rights activists like the newly formed ASLIN Women Association, traditional institutions and religious bodies, etc. impacted positively and enabled greater output and impactful results.

iv. The need to maintain open communication lines with Donor: At all times, VDI when faced with a challenge during implementation, VDI did not hesitate to reach out to IGNITE for support. This enabled both parties to provide tailored solutions to issues encountered on the field and deliver the required output/impact.



CHALLENGES:

1. Rural accessibility issues (Bayelsa State)

- Mitigation: Prioritized accessible locations, engaged local disability cluster heads for remote data collection.

2. Age target adjustment (9-19 years to 24 years)

- Mitigation: Expanded age range to capture delayed school enrollment of girls with disabilities.

3. Clarification on primary beneficiaries

- Mitigation: Defined target group: out-of-school AGWDs (10-19yrs), AGWDs in school lacking materials, AGWDs (20-24yrs) with delayed enrollment.

4. Financial reporting delay (VDI Finance Unit)

- Mitigation: Granted NCE, secured second tranche of funding.

5. UBEB approval for school engagements (FCT)

- Mitigation: Built relationships with school heads, waived approval on special cases

7. School enrollment support challenge

- Mitigation: Restrategized, focused on phone follow-ups with defaulting parents.



SUCCESS STORIES

1. A SECOND CHANCE AT EDUCATION: MIRACLE'S JOURNEY BACK TO SCHOOL

In many communities across Nigeria, adolescent girls with disabilities face some of the most severe barriers to education. Poverty, stigma, and lack of inclusive schools often force families to make difficult choices about their daughters' futures. For many girls, these barriers can lead to early marriage and the end of their education.

For Miracle, a 15-year-old girl with hearing impairment from Bayelsa State, this reality was dangerously close.

After dropping out of school due to financial hardship and lack of learning support, Miracle stayed at home for years. Like many girls with disabilities, Miracle had little opportunity to express her dreams.

Everything changed when the Voice of Disability Initiative (VDI) reached her community.

Reaching Girls Who Are Often Invisible

Through the IGNITE: Inspiring Girls and Grassroots Networks for Inclusive and Transformative Education project, implemented by Voice of Disability Initiative (VDI) with support from Urgent Action Fund Africa (UAF-Africa) and partners, efforts were made to identify adolescent girls with disabilities who were out of school and at risk of exclusion.

Community assessments conducted in Bayelsa State and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) identified more than 350 adolescent girls with disabilities, many of whom had dropped out of school due to stigma, poverty, inaccessible learning environments, and lack of family support.

Miracle was one of them.

VDI field staff visited her home and spoke with her parents about the opportunities available through the IGNITE project, opportunities that could help their daughter return to school and build a different future.

Changing Attitudes Within Families

One of the key strategies of the project is engaging parents and caregivers, who often make decisions about girls' education.

Through sensitization and dialogue sessions with parents and caregivers, families learned about:

- The rights of girls with disabilities to education
- The long-term benefits of keeping girls in school
- The risks associated with child marriage
- Practical ways families can support their daughters' learning

Across the project states, over 220 parents and caregivers participated in these sensitization sessions, gaining a better understanding of inclusive education and the importance of supporting their daughters' futures.

Building Confidence and Life Skills

Miracle also joined other adolescent girls with disabilities in life skills training sessions organized by VDI.

During these sessions, girls learned about:

- Self-confidence and resilience
- Goal setting and decision-making
- Communication and self-advocacy
- Understanding their rights

More than 226 adolescent girls with disabilities participated in these trainings across Bayelsa and FCT, gaining knowledge and confidence to pursue their education and life goals.

For Miracle, the experience was life-changing.

SUCCESS STORIES

For the first time, she spoke about her dream of becoming a teacher for children with hearing impairments so that other girls like her would not feel excluded from education.

Returning to School

With continued support from the IGNITE project, Miracle's parents decided to support her education.

The project is also supporting girls with:

- School enrolment support
- Payment of school fees
- Provision of school uniforms and learning materials
- Mentorship and psychosocial support

These interventions aim to ensure that 320 adolescent girls with disabilities in Bayelsa and FCT can enroll or re-enroll in school and remain in education.

Miracle is now back in school - determined to complete her education and pursue her dreams.

A Voice of Hope

Today, Miracle's parents have become advocates for education in their community.

For Miracle and her mother, this opportunity represents more than just returning to school—it is a chance to rebuild confidence, pursue dreams, and secure a better future.

Through interventions like this, the IGNITE Project is helping ensure that adolescent girls with disabilities are not left behind due to poverty, stigma, or lack of support.

Miracle's journey back to school is a powerful reminder that with the right support, every girl can rise.

2. HABIBAT GOES TO SCHOOL

Habibat Abdulkadir, a 13-year-old Fulani girl from a remote herdsman community in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Nigeria, faced serious barriers to education before the intervention of Voice of Disability Initiative (VDI) through the IGNITE Project. Due to poverty, language barriers, and cultural pressures, Habibat had never been enrolled in school. She was also a victim of child betrothal, and the betrothed family strongly opposed her education, even threatening actions that could disrupt her schooling. These challenges created fear and uncertainty about her future.

VDI intervened by enrolling Habibat in a public school and covering her school fees. The organization also provided essential school supplies such as sandals, socks, and a school bag to support her learning. Beyond financial assistance, VDI offered continuous psychosocial and mentoring support to Habibat and her parents, guiding them to prioritize her education and resist pressure from the betrothed family.

A key turning point occurred when Habibat's parents chose to stand firmly for their daughter's education and sought counseling support from VDI. Their decision allowed Habibat to remain in school despite cultural pressures.

Today, Habibat is a promising Primary 2 student performing well academically. Her parents now feel hopeful and proud, seeing education as a pathway to a brighter future for their daughter.

SUCCESS STORIES

3. **From Shame to Pride: A Mother Learns to Celebrate Her Daughter's Strength**

In Obele Community in Bayelsa State, the birth of a child with disability can sometimes bring not only emotional challenges but also deep stigma within families and communities. For Mrs. Favour Kerimama, raising her daughter Ruth, a young girl living with a physical disability (limb loss), had been a painful journey marked by shame, isolation, and fear of discrimination.

Ruth was enrolled at Bedrock to Success Group of Schools, but her mother struggled emotionally and financially to support her education. Due to fear of stigma from both the community and extended family members, Mrs. Kerimama often avoided exposing Ruth's disability in public. She preferred to carry Ruth on her back whenever they went out, believing that hiding the disability would protect her daughter from ridicule.

Everything began to change when the Voice of Disability Initiative (VDI) team visited their home during a Monitoring and Supportive Supervision mission under the IGNITE Project. During the visit, Barr. Catherine Edeh, Executive Director of VDI, shared her own personal story of growing up with deafness and overcoming barriers through resilience and support. Her words deeply resonated with Ruth's mother.

Barr. Catherine encouraged Mrs. Kerimama to see Ruth not as a burden, but as a child full of potential who deserves dignity, confidence, and opportunities like every other child. She advised the mother to dress Ruth proudly, not to hide her disability but to help build her self-esteem and confidence.

She reminded her that disability should never define a child's worth or limit her dreams.

The visit ended with a life-changing commitment: VDI pledged to support Ruth's education by paying her school fees for two academic sessions (2025/2026 and 2026/2027).

VDI also met with the school proprietor, Mrs. Wana Friday, who committed that the school would provide a safe and supportive learning environment for Ruth, ensuring protection from bullying, stigma, and discrimination.

Today, Ruth's mother speaks with renewed hope. She is learning to embrace her daughter's identity and is gradually becoming an advocate for her child's confidence and future.

Through the IGNITE project, VDI is not only supporting education but also transforming mindsets—one family at a time.

3. **"I Am Joy, and This is How I Found My Voice"**

My name is Joy. I'm a girl. I am blind. And for a long time, I thought I wasn't enough.

In my community in Bayelsa State, being a girl with a disability meant that dreams were things you watched others chase. My parents didn't believe I needed to go to school. "What's the point?" they said. "She can't see... how can she succeed?"

I begged them to let me go back, but no one listened. My dream of becoming a journalist felt like just that - a dream I'd never wake up to.

Then something changed.

SUCCESS STORIES

I was assessed and enrolled into the IGNITE project after which I participated in a life skills training organized by Voice of Disability Initiative (VDI) under project in Bayelsa. It wasn't just a training. It was a turning point. I remember a powerful session titled "I Am, I Have, I Can." And when the Executive Director of VDI told her own story of struggle and triumph, I saw myself in her strength. That day, something woke up inside me.

"I am Joy. I have a voice. I can write, speak, and change the world."

I went home with fire in my heart. I spoke to my parents again—and this time, they listened. They had also attended VDI's sensitization program and began to see me differently. They didn't see a disability anymore. They saw their daughter who still had a future.

Today, I'm back in school—a senior student at Blossom Home and School for the Deaf and Blind. I'm studying hard for my final exams, and I'm already writing short stories. One day, I'll write news articles, too. I want to give a voice to others like me.

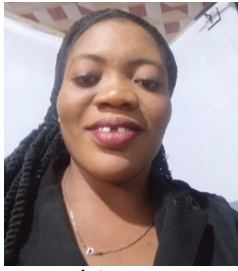
VDI gave me more than just motivation. They gave me a new school uniform, exercise books, school bag and sandals a scholarship. But most importantly, they gave me my confidence back.

I am Joy. I am not invisible.

I have a dream.

And I can become everything they once thought I couldn't.

TESTIMONIALS



The IGNITE mentorship program, organized by VDI, has empowered Adolescent girls with disabilities in Karomajiji and School of the Blind, Jabi. Most girls now exhibit increased confidence and self-worth, understand the importance of education, and can take care of themselves. They have ve learned to dream big, know their rights, stay safe, and work towards achieving their dreams in life. This transformative experience has shape their futures, fostering independence and leadership.

Through interactive sessions, personalized coaching, and inclusive activities, VDI and I created a supportive environment for Adolescent girls to thrive. Our approach focused on building self-awareness, skills development, and peer networking, ensuring sustainable impact. Led by our Executive Director, a deaf lawyer with disabilities, and with my own experience as a woman with disabilities, a leader in different disability organizations and a graduate of University of Nigeria, Nsukka, we embody the possibilities we are advocating for, making our message of empowerment and inclusion even more impactful.

We appreciate IGNITE and pray for Scale Up so that VDI can expand this impactful work to more Adolescent girls with disabilities in FCT and beyond, fostering a brighter future for many.

Ameh Peace Chinenye,
Political Science Education,
University of Nigeria, Nsukka
FCT Mentor, Ignite Mentorship
Program, VDI



The Adolescent Girls With Disabilities (AGWDs) Ignite Funded Project implemented by the Voice of Disability Initiative (VDI) has had a profound and transformative impact on the mentees under my mentorship at the Bayelsa State School for Children with Special Needs and within Bayelsa State. The project created a safe, inclusive, and empowering space where the girls could learn, express themselves freely, and build confidence despite the social barriers often associated with disability.

From my experience as a mentor, many of the girls initially struggled with low self-esteem, limited confidence in communication, and uncertainty about their future. Through consistent mentoring sessions, encouragement, and interactive discussions, they gradually developed stronger self-belief and clarity about their purpose. They learned how to define themselves beyond their disabilities, set meaningful goals, make better life decisions, prioritize education, and add value to themselves and their communities.

There were visible improvements in their confidence, communication, and social interaction. The mentees also learned how to plan and work towards achievable goals, believe in their abilities, and never give up despite challenges. They were encouraged to stand strong in the face of life's storms and practice daily confessions and affirmations that remind them how remarkable, powerful, and capable they are, and how great their future can be.

Recommendations:

1. Expand the program to reach more schools and adolescent girls with disabilities across Bayelsa State.
2. Introduce more life-skills and vocational training opportunities.
3. Provide continuous mentorship and follow-up support to sustain the progress achieved.

Overall, the project has greatly empowered the mentees and strengthened their confidence, resilience, and vision for a better future.

Porri Tamaraudeinyefa Aghoro (Tamara)
Academic Qualification: Bachelor's Degree in Fine Arts &
Design (Graphic Design), University of Port Harcourt, Rivers
State, Nigeria.
(Mentor - Bayelsa State)

TESTIMONIALS



Through the Ignite mentorship project in the FCT, adolescent girls with disabilities learned that education is a powerful tool for their future. Using participatory mentorship, storytelling, and role-model engagement through VDI, I shared my lived experience as a woman with disability and a graduate of a federal university. This helped the beneficiaries see that higher education and independence are realistic and achievable goals for them.

Martha Aga
M.Ed. (Special Edu Rehabilitation)
Unijos



I bring you warm greetings from the Chairman, members of the Board of Trustees, children, and management of the Child Care Trust, Bwari. We received with gratitude the School Fees Support. of #200,000 only for these girls with disabilities.

The VDI intervention through the Ignite funded project on the adolescent girls with disabilities in ourschool has assisted in urgumenting the boarding fees of these indegent students :

1. Zipporah Jonathan
 - Age - 13 years.
 - Class - Primary 5.
 - Disability - Hearing Impairment.
2. Esther Mba.
 - Age - 20 years
 - Class - Grade 3.
 - Disability - Down Syndrome

We can not thank you enough for your benevolence, which has improved and enhanced significantly the progress of the late First Lady's legacy, Chief Mrs Stella Obasanjo.

We pray that this project be sustained beyond this phase.

Please accept the assurances of the Chairman Board of Trustees' esteemed regards.

Lucy Dickson,
Programme Coordinator
☎+234 0803 289 0529
📧MrsLucyDickson@gmail.com



My name is Hon. Ekpomokumor Mayor Doutimiareye Chairman Joint National Association Of Persons With Disabilities Bayelsa Chapter.

The Voice of DisabilityInitiative (VDI) has been making waves in Bayelsa, empowering Adolescent Girls with Disabilities thro ugh their "Increasing Access to Education" project. This 18-month initiative, funded by the IGNITE Consortium through Urgent Action Fund (UAF-Africa), aims to support 320 out-of-school adolescent girls with disabilities in Bayelsa and FCT.

Key Impact Areas:

- Life Skills Training: VDI organized a 2-day workshop, equipping 90 out-of-school adolescent girls with disabilities with essential life skills, including experience-sharing, evaluations, mentorship, and sensitization.
- Advocacy: VDI urged Governor Douye Diri to prioritize access to education for persons with disabilities, emphasizing the need for inclusive education.
- Parental Engagement: The initiative engaged parents and guardians, encouraging them to support their children with disabilities in achieving their life goals.

Challenges Addressed:

- Limited access to education for adolescent girls with disabilities

TESTIMONIALS

Societal stigma and discrimination against persons with disabilities

- Inadequate infrastructure and resources for inclusive education

VDI also provides scholastic materials such as school bags, sandals, text books, exercise books, sanitary pads, writing materials, uniforms for over 300 adolescent girls with disabilities in Bayelsa state. This is really unprecedented.

I urge IGNITE/UAF to sustain this beautiful work through Scale-Up Grants; and all meaningful agencies and partnering agencies and donors to please support VDI on this laudable programme to enrolled our adolescent girls with disabilities to go back to school.

**Hon. Ekpomokumor Mayor
Doutimiareye
Chairman, JONAPWD Bayelsa
State.**



A Message of Appreciation from Bayelsa State School for Children with Special Needs

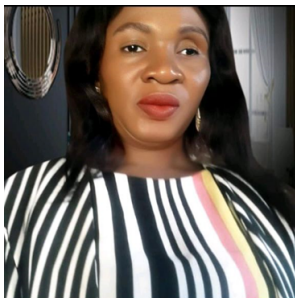
The Bayelsa State School for Children with Special Needs wishes to express its heartfelt gratitude to the NGO, Voice of Disability Initiative, for visiting our school and conducting an enlightening program for our adolescent female students. The initiative has gone a long way in educating and empowering our girls, especially those without parents or guardians, to take care of themselves and pursue their education with diligence.

The academic materials distributed to our students have brought immense joy to them and their parents. The materials have boosted the students' morale, encouraged them to love school, and improved their academic performance. The mentorship program has created a significant impact on the lives of our female students, and we are grateful for the positive change it has brought.

A Heartfelt Appreciation from Bayelsa State School for Children with Special Needs to Voice of Disability Initiative

The program has specifically benefited our female students in the following ways:

1. Empowered them with knowledge on reproductive health and hygiene
2. Encouraged them to pursue their education and career goals
3. Provided them with academic materials and resources
4. Boosted their self-esteem and confidence
5. Created a sense of belonging and connection among them
6. Exposed them to role models and inspiration
7. Developed their leadership skills and independence



I am Godiya Musa, the proprietress of Royal ville Great Kids Academy Zone 7 Peace Avenue Dutse Alahaji Abuja.

I want to appreciate and say a big Thank you to VDI and IGNITE funded project on adolescent girls with physical disabilities, in which Victorine Paul a Primary 4 student in our School who has sickle cell disorder was a beneficiary of a scholarship awarded to cover two terms.

It is our prayer that God will continue to empower VDI for more funded project like this, and enjoin IGNITE/UAF for continuation of the project.

Through your impactful project, Your dedication, support and mentorship, many physically challenged adolescent girls are having hopes again, and to see their dreams come true, May God continue to help your organizations for more sustainable Projects that will beam light in our world. Thank you VDI and IGNITE for being there for us.

**Godiya Musa
Proprietress, Royal Ville Great Kids
Academy
Peace Avenue, Dutse Zone 7, Abuja**

8. Provided access to counseling and support
9. Increased their awareness of available opportunities
10. Encouraged them to pursue their dreams and aspirations

Benefits to Bayelsa State School for Children with Special Needs Female Students from Voice of Disability Initiative

Here are 20 ways this program has benefited our special school female students:

1. Improved self-esteem and confidence
2. Better understanding of personal hygiene and health
3. Increased awareness of their rights and privileges
4. Enhanced knowledge of reproductive health
5. Empowerment to make informed decisions
6. Development of leadership skills
7. Improved academic performance
8. Increased access to educational resources
9. Reduced stigma and isolation
10. Sense of belonging and connection
11. Improved social skills and relationships
12. Exposure to role models and inspiration
13. Development of life skills and independence
14. Access to counseling and support
15. Increased awareness of available opportunities
16. Encouragement to pursue their dreams
17. Improved self-awareness and self-acceptance
18. Better relationships with peers and teachers
19. Increased participation in school activities
20. Development of a positive and hopeful outlook

A Special Thank You from Bayelsa State School for Children with Special Needs Management Team to Voice of Disability Initiative

Partner Insight: When we invest in girls with disabilities, we don't just change one life—we ignite generations of hope.

We particularly appreciate the payment of PTA levies for 30 adolescent female students from different disability sections, which has helped address some pressing needs in the school.

We, the Special School Management Team, extend our sincere appreciation to the Voice of Disability Initiative for choosing our school for this noble project. We pray that the good Lord blesses and protects them in all their endeavors.

We would like this great project to be sustained and continued beyond this phase. We welcome the Voice of Disability Initiative to continue implementing more programs and projects in our school.

Thank you to the Director-General and members of the Voice of Disability Initiative. May the Lord grant you strength, protection, and blessings for putting smiles on our female special needs students' faces.

Mrs. Ebire Custom Kurogha
Principal, Bayelsa State School for Children with Special Needs



The VDI intervention through the Ignite-funded project has greatly supported adolescent girls with disabilities in our school. The distribution of academic materials, support for PTA levies, and mentorship have improved their confidence and participation in school activities. I sincerely appreciate Ignite and hope this impactful project will continue to support more girls in the future.

Enuiyin Bose Odunayo
Guidance Counselor, Kuje School for the Deaf, Abuja



IGNITE MENTORSHIP PROGRAM ORGANIZED BY VOICE OF DISABILITY (VDI) IN BAYELSA STATE

The mentorship program has had a profound and transformative impact on the adolescent girls with disability in Blossom home for the deaf and Bayelsa State School for Children with Special Needs opolo

The project created a safe, inclusive, and empowering space where the girls could learn, express themselves freely, and build confidence despite the social barriers often associated with disability.

From my experience as a mentor, many of the girls at the initial state struggled with low self-esteem, no knowledge about of self worth and uncertainty about their future but, through consistent mentoring sessions, coaching, interactive sessions and encouragement, they gradually developed stronger self-worth, confidence, understand the need and importance of education, how to protect themselves against social violence, clarity about their purpose and what to do to achieve that purpose. They learned how to define themselves beyond their disabilities, set meaningful goals, make better life decisions, prioritize education, and add value to themselves and their communities.

There were visible improvements in their confidence, communication, and social interaction. The mentees also learned how to plan and work towards achievable goals, believe in their abilities, and never give up despite challenges.

They were encouraged to stand strong in the face of life's storms and practice daily confessions and affirmations that remind them how remarkable, powerful, and capable they are, and how great their future can be.

Overall, the project has greatly empowered the mentees and strengthened their confidence, resilience, and vision for a better future this only happens because of a supportive environment created for the adolescent girls with disability in Bayelsa state, we focused on creating self awareness and skill development and sustainable impact, all this was achieved and will still be achieved through the efforts of the VDI executive director barrister Catherine Edeh a deaf lawyer with disability and us i.e me as a graduate in community Health technology from Abia state school of health sciences and management technology and an interpreter for the persons living with disability Bayelsa state chapter who has also headed many organisation and currently serving as chairperson ASLIN Bayelsa state chapter. And my colleague in this job miss Tamara who isa bsc holder in Fine Arts & Design from University of Port Harcourt, Rivers State, Nigeria and a children minister.

Recommendations:

That VDI should

Expand the program to reach more schools and adolescent girls with disabilities across Bayelsa State.

Introduce more life-skills and vocational training opportunities.

Provide continuous mentorship and follow-up support to sustain the progress achieved.

Overall, the project has greatly empowered the mentees and strengthened their confidence, resilience, and vision for a better future we 🙌🙌🙌 u VDI.

