



**VOICE OF DISABILITY**  
**INITIATIVE**  
*...we speak inclusion of equity*

## ADVOCACY BRIEF:

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# ADVANCING DISABILITY INCLUSIVE SRHR SERVICES AND ESTABLISHING THE KWARA STATE AGENCY FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITY



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



This brief advocates for urgent advancement in disability inclusive Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) services and the formal establishment of the Kwara State Agency for Persons with Disability. Despite legal and policy milestones, including Nigeria's ratification of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the passage of relevant state and federal laws, significant barriers persist in ensuring equitable SRHR for people with disabilities, particularly women and girls.

Persons with disabilities (PWDs), especially women and girls, face higher risks of gender-based violence, poorer health outcomes, and limited access to sexual and reproductive health information and services. While Kwara State enacted the People with Disabilities Bill in 2016 and has begun movements towards setting up a disability-focused agency, implementation gaps remain, and many communities still face exclusion.





## BACKGROUND

Nigeria is home to an estimated 29 million persons living with disabilities (PLWD). For PWDs, especially women and girls, access to SRHR services is severely limited due to physical, informational, attitudinal, and systemic barriers. Research shows that 16% of the global population with disabilities is routinely cut off from essential sexual and reproductive health services—this holds particularly true for Nigeria, where social stigma, infrastructure, and insufficient policy implementation hinder progress.

Kwara State stands out as one of the early adopters of disability legislation. The People with Disabilities Bill (2016) seeks to prevent discrimination and create enabling environments for PWDs in education, social development, health, and other facets of public life. However, the law's full effect remains unrealized, with the actual establishment and resourcing of an implementing agency still pending.



## KEY FINDINGS



### Barriers to Disability Inclusive SRHR in Kwara State

- \* **Physical Inaccessibility:** Many health facilities lack ramps, sign language interpreters, accessible communication, and privacy for persons with physical, sensory, or intellectual disabilities.
- \* **Negative Attitudes:** Health providers and community members sometimes harbor misconceptions that women and girls with disabilities are not sexually active or in need of SRHR services consequently resulting to display of non-disability friendly attitude.
- \* **Low SRHR Knowledge & Utilization:** Studies in North Central Nigeria (Kwara inclusive) found low awareness and utilization of SRHR services among women and girls with disabilities due to lack of accessible information and negative social beliefs.
- \* **Exposure to Violence:** Girls and women with disabilities are particularly vulnerable to sexual abuse and exploitation, with limited recourse to justice or protection services.
- \* **Policy and Implementation Gaps:** Although state and federal legislation recognize disability rights, agencies and mechanisms for full implementation and oversight are often lacking in structure, funding, and engagement with organizations of persons with disabilities (OPDs).
- \* **Limited Agency Representation:** Current provisions do not consistently ensure leadership of PWDs or representation from all three senatorial districts in the proposed agency's governing mechanisms.



## REALITIES IN KWARA STATE

\* An active disability law exists, but irregularities have prompted amendment efforts to better align with international standards, such as ensuring the agency's executive secretary is a person with a disability.

\* Movement toward establishing a dedicated Kwara State Agency for Persons with Disability is ongoing, but implementation remains limited and urgent.

\* Active NGOs, including VDI, are pushing for greater prioritization of SRHR in all disability programming and for formal institutional backing through a robust state agency.

\* Other Nigerian states—including Lagos, Plateau, Ekiti, and Nasarawa—have established similar agencies, positioning themselves as frontrunners in disability inclusion. Kwara can align with this trend and tap into opportunities available to inclusive states at the national and international levels.



**Agency Role and Benefits** A dedicated agency will serve as a central mechanism to coordinate all disability-related interventions, promote inter-ministerial collaboration, ensure implementation of the law, and facilitate resource mobilization through partnerships and funding opportunities, including national and international SDG-aligned grants. The Agency should also play a central role in data management—registering and maintaining updated records on persons with disabilities to inform planning, budgeting, and service delivery.



## POLICY & PROGRAMMATIC RECOMMENDATIONS FOR GOVERNMENT (STATE AND FEDERAL)

\* **Establish and Resource the Agency:** Formally inaugurate and adequately fund the Kwara State Agency for Persons with Disability, in accordance with revised legal standards that ensure PWD participation at leadership and board levels.

\* **Advance Disability Inclusive SRHR:** Integrate accessible and inclusive SRHR services into all public hospitals, primary healthcare facilities, and community-based outreach, with a focus on accessibility (physical, attitudinal, and informational).

\* **Data and Monitoring:** Strengthen disability data collection and monitoring within health and social service sectors for evidence-based planning.

\* **Capacity Building:** Provide regular training of health providers, educators, and frontline workers on disability-inclusive SRHR service provision.

\* **Legal & Social Protection:** Establish clear pathways for reporting and redress in cases of discrimination, abuse, or denial of services for PWDs, especially women and girls.

\* **Establishment Process:** The establishment process should be guided by a legally sound framework, possibly through an executive bill or amendment to existing legislation, in collaboration with key ministries and civil society.



## FOR HUMANITARIAN AND DEVELOPMENT ACTORS

- \* Community Sensitization: Leverage OPDs and DPOs for grassroots sensitization campaigns on PWD rights and SRHR, targeting families, communities, and service providers.
- \* Inclusive Communication: Develop and disseminate SRHR information in accessible formats: Braille, easy-to-read, sign language, pictorial guides, etc.
- \* Intersectionality Focus: Incorporate gender-based violence prevention and response into all SRHR programs for PWDs.
- \* Partnership Support: Civil society organizations, including VDI, are ready to offer technical support for drafting relevant legislation, building stakeholder consensus, and enhancing public awareness on disability inclusion. Post-establishment, these groups can support capacity development for agency staff and implement joint programs.



### CALL TO ACTION VOICE OF DISABILITY INITIATIVE (VDI) STRONGLY CALLS FOR:

- Immediate passage and enforcement of amendments to the Kwara State disability law, ensuring an inclusive and representative Agency for Persons with Disability.
- Investment in disability-inclusive SRHR services statewide—making sure every woman, man, and youth with a disability can realize their right to reproductive health, dignity, and participation.
- Prioritization of disability inclusion in all ongoing and new health sector reforms at state and local levels.
- Establishing the Agency now presents a legacy-defining opportunity to institutionalize inclusion, equity, and human rights as key pillars of development in Kwara State.



### Select References (inline citations only)

- \* Nigeria National Policy on SRHR for Persons with Disabilities
- \* DRAC Research Brief on SRHR Knowledge and Utilization
- \* The Guardian (VDI advocacy in Kwara State)
- \* KWAHA Bill Tracker
- \* Hivos: Empowering Nigerian Women with Disabilities
- \* World Bank: Disability Inclusion in Nigeria



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