REPORT ON VISIT TO THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY OF THE NATIONAL DISABILITY COMMISSION

The delegation from the Nigeria Association of the Blind led by the Chair committee on education (Mr. David Okon) visited the Executive Secretary of the National disability commission, Mr. James Lalu, on the 19th of March, 2020, at the commission office in Abuja.

The delegation was received and some burning issues were presented by NAB.

Mr. David Okon explained the issue surrounding the domestication of the Marrakesh Treaty and the challenges blind and low vision individuals in Nigeria face to get print materials in alternative format. He further explained that the association received a grant from the Disability Right Fund (DRF) to lobby for the domestication of the Treaty. However, the problem is that the position of the Nigeria copyright bill is yet unknown, which makes it cumbersome to pursue the advocacy to the legislature on the domestication of the Treaty.

He urged the commission through the capable hands of the E.S to partner with NAB to actualize this for the 5% of blind and reading disabled persons in Nigeria.

Secondly, the issue of accessibility was raised, and he pleaded with the commission to partner with NAB to implement the article on accessibility in the National disability prohibition act 2018.

He added that the association will be glad to partner with the commission to celebrate this year’s international white cane safety day. NAB hopes to bring together the minister of works and other relevant stakeholder to sensitize them on the need for an accessible path way to enhance the productivity and independence of blind persons in Nigeria. It is hoped that the day will also sensitize the community to the importance of the mobility cane to blind and visually impaired user.

The Administrative Officer of NAB, Ms. Oluwakemi Odusanya requested that the commission prioritize female inclusion in several programs and raise the profile of gender based violence, especially in this covid-19 period.

The E.S appreciated the delegation for the visit and observed that NAB is the first Organisation of Persons with Disability (OPD) to pay the commission a visit since its inception.

He urged NAB not to be far away from the commission, as the commission is part of the struggle to end discrimination of persons with disabilities. He stated that all hands must be on deck to achieve this aim, for according to him, “we are bounded by one thing, disability”.

He assured that the commission will spring into action with the legal department to seek the position of the copyright bill. If possible; the commission will push for a meeting, along with delegates from NAB with the Attorney General, to discuss the domestication of the Treaty.
In addition, the commission is ready to tackle the needs of persons with disability. The commission has a budget for Accessibility this year and hopes to expand the budget next year to accommodate the needs of everyone. According to him, “When we conclude the employment process, I assure you that every cluster will get its own quota, to enable us express our various needs”.

As for inclusion of women and girls with disabilities, there is a program in the pipeline which is hopes would bring women and girls with disabilities together to discuss their needs. The commission is abreast of the challenges faced by women and girls and open to addressing these needs.

In conclusion, the E.S advised that the NAB Secretariat should not be far from the office of the commission in order that the dialogue be strengthened.

He added that the points raised by NAB should be put into writing and sent to the office of the commission so that it can be addressed as soon as possible.

He concluded with the words “once again, thank you! Thank you!! For this visit, I assure you that all these points are well noted and we will spring to action”.
