REPORT ON THE VISIT TO THE NERDC IN ABUJA

NAB visited the National Education Research and Development Council (NERDC) on the 19th of March, 2021 at the NERDC liaison office in Abuja. The delegation was led by Mr. David Okon, the Chair of the committee on Education of the Nigeria Association of the Blind. While expressing his delight on the occasion, he also highlighted the challenges faced by blind and visually impaired persons in Nigeria who wish to access educational material in alternative formats such as Braille, EPUB, and DAISY etc. He noted that the association is up and doing to combat the challenge, by amplifying the domestication of the Marrakesh Treaty which allows for blind and other print disabled individuals to access print materials in alternative formats. As Nigeria is a member state of the Treaty.

He added that there are few or no Braille production facilities that can enhance the beauty of Braille literacy and digital reading owned by the Nigerian government, which further saddens visually impaired persons who wish to independently access print materials. To this, NAB is willing to collaborate with the council to achieve inclusive education.

The Executive Secretary Prof. Ismail Junaidu appreciated the delegation, even at the shortest notice.

He placed forward the challenges of constructing a Braille press which is long overdue and requested NAB’s partnership to actualize the rebranding of the Braille press. Although the challenges are many, with a step in the right direction the end result will be massive. He noted that there need be few steps such as curriculum adaptation to fit into the inclusive education we desire. He added that the association is the best platform to examine the process, as the education curriculum will be reviewed and tested by visually impaired persons, after which further agreement will be entered into.

The E.S addressed the new normal and assured delegates that the council is up and ready to adapt to the digital space, which requires procurement of state of the art equipment and other instructional devices. According to him, “NAB is a critical stakeholder in actualizing this project and that was why we have reached out to you to sort best ways we can collaborate to implement the rebranding of the Braille press with state of the art equipment, not doubting the fact that some equipment might be analogue but as much as we embrace the digital space, we should also bear in mind that some analogue equipment might just be good for some activities.”

To buttress his point, he assured the delegates that finance is not an issue but readiness of the project is most important at this time.

The E.S noted the relationship the council had in the past with associations, and expressed the openness of the NERDC to collaborate with NAB on this project. He said, the offices used by the
albino foundation in Lagos and Abuja were requested for by the foundation. This shows that the council is open to support the development of disabled persons in Nigeria, especially now that with advocacy for a paperless society.

In addition, the E.S recalled the request sent in by NAB to attest some textbooks for the WIPO project. He assures that the request will be treated and put through quality assurance to ensure that the textbooks are assessed and good for consumption by students. If there be any publisher who is not yet accredited, this will be made known at the earliest time to enable the association seek an accredited publisher who has the same material.

In conclusion, the NERDC assured that the council is ready to work hand in hand with the association for the educational development of blind and visually impaired persons in Nigeria. This will be done by producing inclusive and accessible educational materials that will enhance the reading culture of blind and print disabled persons in Nigeria. He hoped that state of the art equipment will be procured to deliver standardize accessible educational material.