

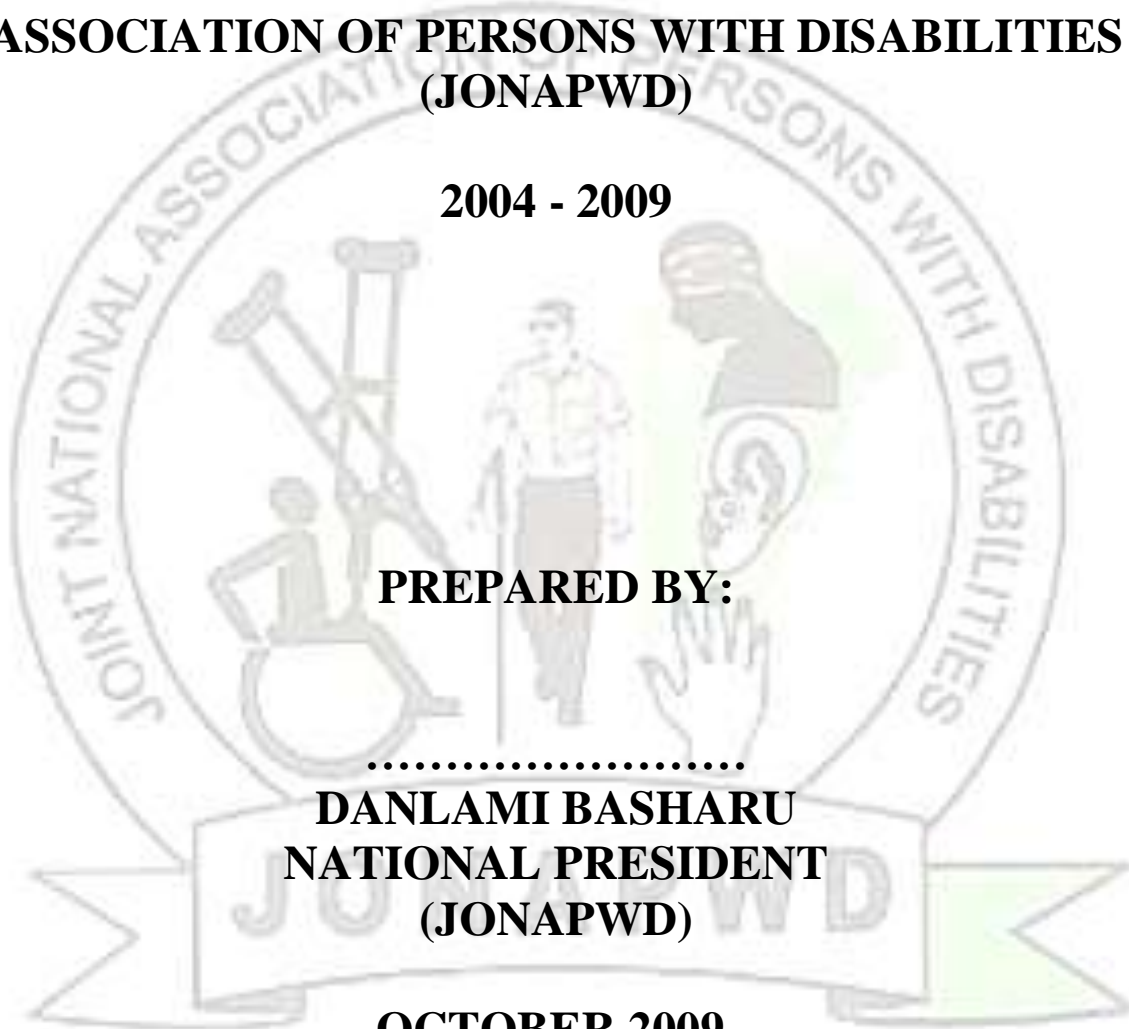
**REPORT OF ACTIVITIES OF THE JOINT NATIONAL
ASSOCIATION OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES
(JONAPWD)**

2004 - 2009

PREPARED BY:

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2004

In June 2004, the Joint National Association of Persons with Disabilities was ushered in as a rejuvenated body at a national convention sponsored by the then Federal Ministry of Sports and Social development in Minna, Niger State. The Convention brought together delegates from over 30 states of the federation and Abuja FCT.

During the three-day convention, the constitution of the Association was reviewed and approved by the delegates after which the care-taker committee which had been set up prior to the Convention by the Ministry to look into the way forward for persons with disabilities in Nigeria was dissolved. Elections for a new Executive Committee was then organised from which emerged a new authority under the leadership of Danlami Basharu, Esq., as National President, to run the affairs of the Association for four years, 2004-2008. The Convention recognised and approved, for the first time, membership of the national association of persons affected by leprosy. In effect, six disability groups were recognised, i.e., the blind, under the Nigeria Association of the Blind (NAB), the deaf, under the Nigerian National Association of the Deaf (NNAD), persons with physical disabilities, persons with spinal cord injuries, persons with intellectual disabilities and persons affected by leprosy as well as all organisations or associations of and for persons with disabilities in Nigeria.

It must be admitted here that although the Federal Government was instrumental in revamping the association, as the umbrella body of and for people with disabilities, government did not make any funding available to the association to run its affairs. The dogged determination of concerned members of the Executive Committee and other members ensured that the association lived up to its responsibility to its members. The last six months of 2004 were spent on sensitising the public to the fact that JONAPWD had been rejuvenated and needed the support of the public and authorities to survive and sustain itself. Certainly, the first few years were fraught with difficulties due to the serious constraint of lack of finance. In 2004, even the Ministry could not afford funds to organise the International Day of the Disabled (IDD), but the National President was able to organise a press conference in Lagos in collaboration with one of its affiliate members, the Spinal Cord Injuries Association of Nigeria (SCIAN) at its centre in Amuwo Odofin, Lagos. This conference saw the beginning of serious campaign on disability issues in the country as the media gave it full coverage.

2005

The watershed for JONAPWD came in 2005 when the then President, Olusegun Obasanjo, allocated slots for persons with disabilities to be represented at the National Political Reform Conference (NPRC) which took place between February and June 2005. The participation of JONAPWD at the NPRC was fortuitous in that for the first time the civil society community in Nigeria began to recognize the need to include disability as a major issue in all its discourse. Following upon our participation such organisations like Actionaid became major partners with JONAPWD and sponsored two programmes, one a press conference during the NPRC to publicise JONAPWD's progress at the NPRC and a press conference during the International Day of the Disabled in December 2005 when the Ministry once again could not find the funds to organise any activity. The position of persons with disabilities was prominently placed in the front burner during the NPRC. The issue of sign language interpretation for the 3 million of our members was pressed home so that as the conference progressed, space was allocated for interpretation to take place and for the first time on a national level sign language interpretation was beamed to the sitting rooms of millions of Nigerians thereby giving it a significant place in

the nation. Following a formal appeal from the association, the NTA was prepared to grant two places for sign language interpreters to commence network interpretation.

A month before the NPRC, in January 2005, several members of the association were invited to a seminar/workshop organised by the International Federation for Electoral Systems (IFES), a USAID agency, to discuss the content of the Electoral Reform Act which was being debated nationally. The idea was to revise the section dealing with persons with disabilities that had been included in the 2002 Electoral Act with a view to strengthening the section. The end result of the workshop was a new Section 57 of the Electoral Act 2006 which gave INEC the duty of ensuring the full participation of persons with disabilities in the electoral process of 2007 through a conducive environment.

In May 2005, the Executive of JONAPWD was warmly welcomed to Gusau in Zamfara State for a meeting. A courtesy visit was also paid to the governor, Alhaji Sani Ahmed Yerima. In October of the same year, the National Executive Committee was inaugurated by the Hon. Minister of Women and Social Affairs.

2006

2006 did not witness much activity within the association, suffice it to say that the President and some members of the association were invited to represent the disability community at some seminars and workshops. What was very significant about 2006 was that for the first time, after several years, the Ministry, in conjunction with the Association, organised the International Day of the Disabled, even though not on the exact day of the celebration. This was significant considering the concerted pressure put on the Ministry to recognise the International Day as an integral part of its agenda. It was also at the end of 2006 that JONAPWD firmed up its partnership with PACT Nigeria, a USAID agency which was concerned about promoting advocacy on disability issues in the country, especially around the issues of inclusion and participation in the electoral process.

2007

The year 2007 commenced on a very hopeful note considering the fact that a month before then JONAPWD had been accepted as a significant partner of PACT/USAID, a major international development organisation. This is, in addition, to our being partners already with ActionAid Nigeria and IFES.

Our engagement with these partners has enabled JONAPWD to be well and truly entrenched within the civil society community in Nigeria which was, hitherto, not the case. The case has, therefore, been strongly made that persons with disabilities have important issues that must be addressed by the civil society, government and the general public. Several workshops and seminars were organised by our partners during the course of the year, where the president or his representatives, was required to attend. These included seminars and workshops on pre- and post-election activities.

One notable activity was the interactive forum with politicians sponsored by PACT/USAID which took place in Ilorin, Kwara State, in March at which about fifty persons with disabilities were present to interact with some political parties. A follow-up and similar activity was organized by the Kaduna State chapter of JONAPWD which turned out to be highly successful with more than ten political parties in attendance. Prior to the Ilorin meeting, a successful

advocacy visit was paid to the Chairman of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) and his officials, also sponsored by PACT Nigeria. This enabled INEC to get a better understanding of the problems faced by persons with disabilities in the electoral process. Suffice it to say that several persons with disabilities attempted standing under different parties during the 2007 elections but the lack of finance precluded many who were competent to represent their people from getting in.

The coming in of the Yar'adua administration appears to give a ray of hope to persons with disabilities because for the first time in the history of Nigeria, the organised assembly of persons with disabilities was invited to audience in September with a sitting minister, i.e., the Minister of Women Affairs and Social Development, Hajia Saudat Usman Bungudu who warmly received persons with disabilities. Several requests were, of course, made to her. These included the provision of office accommodation for JONAPWD in Abuja, the need for the Ministry to pursue, through the National Assembly, the bill on the rights of persons with disabilities and other international agreements on disability entered into by Nigeria, upward review of the N100,000 annual subvention granted to NGOs on disability registered with the Ministry, etc.

It is reassuring to note that the Minister fulfilled the promise of office accommodation as JONAPWD now has an office space in the Women Development Centre, Suite 104, Gambo Sawaba Block. Furthermore, the Policy Management Unit of the Rehabilitation Department of the Ministry was charged with monitoring the progress of the bill at the National Assembly. JONAPWD's office is currently being manned by volunteers who are persons with disability but we are in discussion with the Ministry to employ at least five persons with disability to be seconded to the office.

Our engagement with the civil society was further bolstered also in September by our invitation to the launching of a national development organisation, COALITIONS FOR CHANGE, which aims to give a voice to the voiceless in the Nigerian society with a view to becoming partners. With C4C, JONAPWD undertook some media visits and more importantly participated in an advocacy visit to the Senate President, David Mark who received a copy of the bill on the rights of persons with disabilities.

Two very significant interventions in November took place between ActionAid and the civil society, including JONAPWD. The first was the civil society interactive forum with the House of Representatives on 21st November at the conference hall of the House presided over by the Speaker, Hon. Dimeji Bankole. The aim was to commence a process of dialogue with elected members to make them understand the feelings of the general public as they prepare legislation, particularly the reform of the 1999 constitution. JONAPWD decried the continued marginalisation and exploitation of persons with disabilities and their lack of inclusion in the national polity. More importantly, we deplored the absence of a Senate and House committee on disability and called for the civil society and House of Representatives to support the need for the creation of a separate ministry for persons with disabilities. At the end of the session a communiqué was prepared in which the House of Representatives clearly supported the need for a separate ministry for persons with disabilities and the establishment of a Senate and House committee on disability. It was a very fulfilling forum for persons with disabilities and Mr. Emeka Betran was nominated to represent the disabled on a committee of the House and

Civil Society to deliberate on follow-up activities. The bill on the rights of persons with disabilities was distributed to several honourable members for their active support.

The second was a TWO-DAY CIVIL SOCIETY SUMMIT ON the 2008 BUDGET, NOVEMBER 27-28, 2007. The workshop was held to get Civil Society input into the 2008 budget.

The International Day of the Disabled, 2007, was successfully held, in conjunction with JONAPWD and the Ministry, on the 3rd of December with the minister's representative presiding. Also from 3rd to 7th December, ActionAid organised a one-week capacity training programme (PARTNERSHIP ASSESSMENT AND DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK, PADEF) for about fifteen officers and members of JONAPWD. The one-week programme enabled JONAPWD to take stock of itself and develop a better vision, mission and values for itself. It afforded members to understand clearly the need to be together as a body and speak with one voice. Members implored ActionAid to make the training programme a periodic affair in order to help improve the association.

On the international front, as is well-known to many of us, Nigeria, under the umbrella of JONAPWD, was admitted as the 144th member of Disabled Peoples' International (DPI). This will afford Nigeria a more significant and respected voice and status in the international disability community, along with other respected African countries.

2008

2008 began in January with Pact Nigeria engaging persons with disabilities on the issue of mainstreaming into the electoral process. This was sequel to the announcement by the President setting up an Electoral reforms Committee. At a meeting in Abeokuta, Ogun State, a memorandum was drafted by a cross section of JONAPWD members stating the position of persons with disabilities. In March, 2008, the International Republican Institute (IRI), another USAID agency, that had embraced JONAPWD at the end of 2007, took this a step further to involve politicians at the National Assembly by organising a forum to bring together such politicians to understand the need to mainstream persons with disabilities into the electoral process. The event was attended by such personalities as Retired Supreme Court Justice Bola Babalakin, a patron of JONAPWD and several National Assembly members. Following this successful programme by IRI, the organisation also sponsored JONAPWD members to participate at all the 12 centres of the Electoral Reforms Committee public hearing. This was also supported by the Electoral Reforms Network, another partner of JONAPWD. This exercise resulted in a tremendous awareness boost for the association and persons with disabilities generally.

Friday, 29th February, 2008, witnessed the inauguration of the Special Advisers forum comprised of all special advisers to state governors on disability matters in the country. This meeting was held in Ibadan, Oyo State, with the special advisers concerned and JONAPWD. Mr. Ayodele Adekanmbi, Special Adviser to the Governor of Oyo State on Disability Matters, was elected as the representative of the Forum on the JONAPWD Executive Committee.

Between the months of April and July, 2008, the Executive Committee met to deliberate on a number of issues facing the association. Crucially, a Convention committee, under the

chairmanship of Prince Paul Adelabu, former National President, was set up to prepare for the national convention of JONAPWD.

In the same period, Coalitions for Change intensified its support for JONAPWD in several ways. JONAPWD, as a member of the Constitutional Review Dialogue Mechanism (CRDM), an affiliate of C4C, organized its own constitutional review meeting in Enugu in August. With the help of C4C, JONAPWD was able to organize several meetings around reform of the association including giving a stamp of approval to the bill and critically reviewing the association's organisation. A committee on the latter prepared certain amendments to the constitution which were put to the National Congress at the National Convention in November 2008 for adoption and ratification. Suffice it to say that the National Convention of JONAPWD, 2008, was solely sponsored by Coalitions for Change. Apart from this, C4C also sponsored members to attend several House of Representatives technical committee meetings to discuss and fine-tune the bill to be placed before the public hearing. Danlami Basharu, Esq. and Barr. Daniel Onwe represented persons with disabilities on the House of Representatives Technical Committee looking at the National Disability Bill.

Between 19th and 22nd May 2008, Nigeria was represented at the LEONARD CHESHIRE DISABILITY/UNECA CONFERENCE IN ETHIOPIA by three members of JONAPWD: Danlami Basharu, Ekaete Umoh Davis and David Anyaele, who had all sourced for private sponsorship to attend. The delegation was led by the Director of Rehabilitation of the federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development, Alhaji Mohammed Kalgo. The conference brought together about seventy countries from round the world to discuss essentially the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) which came into force after ratification by twenty countries on the 3rd May 2008.

An important activity took place in August 2008 at the Shehu Musa Yaradua Centre which brought together many persons with disabilities from all over the country. This was the fund raising event for the building of a welfare centre for persons with disabilities in Abuja organised by Senator Anthony Agbo, a trustee of JONAPWD. The occasion was graced by Her Excellency, the First Lady, who was represented by the Youth Affairs Minister.

Miss Lucy Upah of the NNAD represented JONAPWD at the AFRICA REGIONAL CONFERENCE ON MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS AND DISABILITY, held in NAIROBI, KENYA, from 14TH TO 19TH SEPTEMBER 2008. She was sponsored by the Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development.

A SIGNIFICANT activity took place on the 30th October where JONAPWD in conjunction with the International Republican Institute and the Peoples Democratic Party, came together to find a way forward for the full participation of persons with disabilities in the political life of the nation. In his address, the Chairman of the party promised to create a disability desk for persons with disabilities at the party's headquarters. However, there is also a need for the creation, by all political parties, of disability wings in their parties. Further interactions with other political parties in the country are expected to take place.

The International Day of Persons with Disabilities was celebrated once again by the Ministry, in conjunction with JONAPWD on the 3rd of December. One unique aspect of the celebration in 2008 was the contribution made by the Association for the Comprehensive Empowerment

of Nigerians with Disabilities (ASCEND), an affiliate of JONAPWD, which engaged Senators and other public figures to participate in an empathy simulation exercise tagged “a day with disability” where these persons were made to simulate different forms of disability for a day.

Besides these major programmes, JONAPWD interacted with several other civil society groups such as Alliance for Credible Elections and OSIWA (Open Society in West Africa), amongst others.

It is unfortunate to report that JONAPWD closed the year 2008 with two terrible disasters. First was the crisis in Jos, Plateau State, which claimed the lives of four deaf students and two persons with physical disabilities at the University of Jos and others unaccounted for according to reports received by the Special Adviser on Disability Matters to the Governor, Mr. James Lalu, and secondly, the fire disaster at the sheltered home for persons with disabilities in Kaduna, Kaduna State, which gutted the home and resulted in the deaths of about six members and hospitalisation of several others. We want to use this opportunity to wish them a peaceful repose of their souls and the ability for their families to bear the immense loss. May their souls rest in perfect peace.

2009

The year 2009 commenced with a joint meeting of the Joint National Association of Persons with Disabilities (JONAPWD) and the International Republican Institute (IRI) on Wednesday 21st and Thursday, 22nd January 2009 in Abuja. The meeting was to discuss forthcoming activities of JONAPWD for the year with IRI and other international developmental partners. It was concluded with a press conference. An invitation was extended to JONAPWD to pay a courtesy visit to the Hon. Minister of Information and Communication on 3rd February 2009. The delegation was headed by the National President. The Hon. Minister expressed her delight at receiving the delegation and promised to do all that was necessary to advance the cause of persons with disabilities. She further promised that sign language interpretation on NTA network news would become a reality in no time.

JONAPWD paid a very successful courtesy visit to the Chairman of INEC, Prof. Maurice Iwu on the 18th of February. The Chairman promised to make the electoral process inclusive of persons with disabilities particularly in the area of engaging persons with disabilities at INEC offices and providing for sign language interpretation. He also promised to provide equipment to furnish the office of JONAPWD. The promise to furnish the office of JONAPWD was redeemed on 13th October this year with a presentation ceremony at the INEC headquarters with the Chairman presiding. Danlami Basharu, on behalf of JONAPWD, thanked the Chairman and INEC for the magnanimous generosity of INEC and assured him of JONAPWD's continued support for his work particularly its new policy to include people with disabilities in the electoral process. Items donated for the office included a computer unit, a printer, scanner and photocopier.

On the 2nd of March, 2009, the newly elected Executive Committee of JONAPWD was inaugurated and sworn in by the Attorney-general and Commissioner for Justice of Oyo State in Ibadan. The ceremony was sponsored by the Oyo State Government with the help of the Special Adviser on Disability Matters, Mr. Ayodele ADeKanmbi.

On the 12th of March, Coalitions for Change launched a new coalition to take care of the Affirmation of rights of persons with disabilities. The coalition referred to as the AFFIRMATION OF RIGHTS OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES (ARPWD) brings together the six national disability organisations as well as representatives of government, including the legislature and the executive and civil society partners. With support from ARPWD, the National Association for Persons with Physical Disabilities has been properly rejuvenated and a National Association for Persons with Intellectual Disabilities has been put in place. Similarly, with support from ARPWD, JONAPWD presented a position paper to the National Bureau for Public Service Reforms (NBPSR).

On 18th March, 2009, the Action Congress/IRI/JONAPWD Round Table Conference took place in Benin City, Edo State. This meeting was similar to that held between JONAPWD, IRI and PDP in October 2008. The aim was to mainstream persons with disabilities into the Action Congress for which promises were received from the leadership of the Action Congress.

In April this year, Nigeria was appointed as an Ambassadorial Country for the AU African Decade of Persons with Disabilities. Following the failure of the Continent to implement activities of the African Decade on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the African Decade Secretariat, in conjunction with other national umbrella bodies of persons with disabilities on the continent, including Nigeria, lobbied the African Union to consider extending the decade for another ten years. This request was granted last year. Nigeria's nomination was spearheaded by JONAPWD's National Women Co-ordinator Ekaete Umoh Davis after a training workshop in Sweden. Suffice it to say that Ekaete Umoh Davis is now also the Secretary of the Panel of Experts on Resource Mobilisation of the African Decade of Persons with Disabilities. This portfolio covers North, West and Central Africa.

From 19th to 22nd May, JONAPWD members participated in a programme organised by the Christofel Blindenmission (CBM) in conjunction with several international disability organisations. Present at the programme which was to present the importance of Community-based Rehabilitation, were representatives of the Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development.

On Tuesday, 26th May, the National president represented JONAPWD at the revision of the National Action Plan of the Human rights Commission, a document to be presented at Geneva on behalf of Nigeria. Suffice it to say that a disability desk has been established at the National Human Rights Commission as well as a rapporteur on disability matters.

The National President was invited to present a paper on ACCOMMODATING PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES IN EMPLOYMENT AND DEVELOPMENT, a UNDP/ACTION AID PROGRAMME from 8-9 JUNE 2009 and on the 8th of July, JONAPWD, in conjunction with the IRI, held a press conference to acknowledge the passage of the national disability bill by the National Assembly. A statement released at the press conference called on the Assembly to hastily harmonise the bill for its assent by the President. Two members of JONAPWD, the Secretary-General and National Women Co-ordinator took part in a training programme on Resource mobilization organised by Pact Nigeria on the 29th to 3rd of July 2009.

JONAPWD was also a significant participant at the Vision 20-2020 programme to draft a position paper for the Special Interest Group of persons with disabilities in Nigeria. This event took place in the month of July 2009.

On the 12th of September 2009, the National Executive Committee meeting of JONAPWD took place in Ibadan, Oyo State. This meeting brought together several members of the Executive Committee where far-reaching decisions were taken. The meeting was sponsored by the Affirmation of Rights of Persons with Disabilities (ARPWD) under Coalitions for Change.

On the 9th of October, some members of JONAPWD, supported by the Affirmation of Rights of Persons with Disabilities (C4C), took part in the Senate Retreat on Constitutional reform that took place in Kaduna. On Wednesday, 14th October, JONAPWD presented its position paper on Electoral and Constitutional Reforms before the Senate Committee in Abuja. Finally, on the 29th October, JONAPWD members took part in the Nigerian Labour Congress rally over the issue of petrol deregulation.

On the 11th of November, a member of JONAPWD, Christian Agbo, successfully launched his maiden magazine “Qualitative magazine” which was attended by all disability groups of the umbrella body. The following day, 12th November, JONAPWD was represented by Hon. Dandeson N. Hart (Secretary-General), Prince Paul Adelabu (Immediate Past President) and the staff of JONAPWD at an event organised by “Building HOPE for special learners”, a new organisation for children with disabilities.

The Senate organised public hearings on electoral reforms in Kaduna and Abuja respectively at which JONAPWD was represented. In Kaduna, several Executive Committee members represented the Association, while in Abuja, at the International Conference Centre, JONAPWD was led by the National President to present a position paper on behalf of persons with disabilities. He was accompanied by the Secretary-General and the Immediate Past President, as well as the Senior Project Officer for the Affirmation of Rights of Persons with Disabilities of Coalitions For Change. The paper was well-received by the Senators present, including the Deputy Senate President and Senator Dr. Bode Olajumoke.

As is the custom, 3rd December, the International Day of Persons with Disabilities was well celebrated. Three members of JONAPWD: the President, the Secretary-General and Chief Cosmas Okoli were on the national television’s breakfast programme to talk about the day. A grand programme was held at the Banquet hall, National centre for Women Development, Abuja. It was chaired by the Honourable Minister for Women Affairs and Social Development.

A retreat was organised under the Affirmation of Rights of Persons with Disabilities for the National Executive of the Joint National Association of Persons with Disabilities (JONAPWD) and other stakeholders in Lokoja, Kogi State from the 9th to the 12th of December. The retreat was to roundoff the year and help the Association to take stock of the past year and the way forward.

Action Aid Nigeria also held a training session for Accountants at which the Account Officer for JONAPWD participated in the training held in Ebonyi State from the 9th to the 13th of December. The Association’s office closed on 22nd of December for the end of year.

APPOINTMENTS

We cannot conclude this report without reporting that over the past years, about eleven special advisers on disability matters have been appointed to various state governors. These include: Kano, Kebbi, Plateau, Adamawa, Bauchi, Oyo, Ogun, Edo, Kaduna, Kogi and Yobe states. More are expected to follow.

These humble achievements could not have been realised without the full co-operation and support of concerned and well-meaning persons with disabilities in our country. We have to extend tremendous gratitude to our partners who believe in our ability and credibility. These partners include international partners such as Action Aid, the International Republican Institute, Pact Nigeria, DFID through Coalitions for Change, etc. Others include civil society organisations like ElectoralReform Network (ERN), Alliance for Credible Elections (ACE), the Nigerian Labour Congress the media, members of the National Assembly, the Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development and the general public that has slowly begun to be aware of our issues.

