

**RREPORT FOR**

**CHANGING THE DIALOGUE PROJECT**

**BY**

**HOPE INSPIRED FOUNDATION IN PARTNERSHIP WITH THE US MISSION NIGERIA**

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**MARCH TO SEPTEMBER 2016.**

**Introduction:**

The Hope Inspired Foundation for Women and Youth (HIFWY) implemented the Changing the Dialogue Project with funding from the US Department of States through the US Mission in Nigeria and the Mandela Washington Fellowship Young Africa Leaders Initiative (MWF/YALI) programme. For a successful project implementation, the Foundation partnered with the Mobility and Accessibility Aids Resource Development Centre (MAARDEC), Verdanzeal Marketting and Communications LTD and Fellows of the MWF/YALI programme to foster Fellow collaboration. This report covers the activities and the successful outcomes recorded as a result of the project and the impact on the lives of youths with Disabilities in Nigeria.

Changing the Dialogue project is aimed at redefining Disability by showing life stories of the day to day functioning of a Person with Disability in the work environment, and general navigation in society. Promoting their inclusion in Nigeria’s workforce and engendering positive attitudinal change through practical enlightenment of how Youths With Disabilities can be effectively integrated in to the workplace and other aspects of society.

The target stakeholders are employers of labour, business executives, ministries or department of employment and youth development, human resource managers/chief executive officers (CEO) etc.

**Project Activities:**

The activities for the project included:

1. Production of a Documentary: Between March to June 2016, a script was developed, casts sourced and the documentary was produced by the Verdanzeal Marketing and Communication LTD. The documentary featured casts such as, Mrs. Grace Jerry, a 2015 Mandela Washington Fellow and Executive Director of Inclusive Friends, Dr. Adebumkola Adebayo, Executive Director, Human and Organisational Resource Development Centre (HORDEC), Mr. Michael Fadeyi, Journalist with the Voice of Nigeria, Mr. Cobhams Azukwo, Music Producer and Mr. Temitope a Welder.

All the casts discussed how they functioned in their various work places and measures to improve the employment of youths with Disabilities in Nigeria.

1. Official Launch: The documentary was officially launched in Abuja and Lagos respectively with a Stakeholders Forum and Employment Advocacy. The Abuja edition took place on the 10th of August, 2016, at the US Embassy, and the Lagos edition took place on the 8th of September, 2016, at the US Consulate.

The Documentary launch in Abuja was attended by Mr. Robert Kerr, the Head Public Affairs Section (PAS), Hajiya Fatima Malumfashi, Special Adviser to the Senate President on Gender, the Honourable Minister of Ministry of Employment, Labour and Productivity represented,Ms. Ekaete Umoh, National President of the Joint National association of Persons with Disabilities (JONAPWD), Director National Directorate of Employment (NDE) represented, Director General of the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) represented, Civil Society Organisations, the Media as well as Youths with Disabilities and members of staff of the Public Affairs Section.

Similarly, the Lagos edition of the documentary launch was attended by her Excellency; the Deputy Governor of Lagos state represented by Mrs. Yewande Odejaye, Permanent Secretary to the Deputy Governor, Dacy Head Public Affairs Section, representatives from Civil Society Organisations, Staff of the Public Affairs section Lagos, the Media as well as youths with Disabilities.

There were paper presentations on the following topics: “Demystifying Disability: Adopting an Inclusive Approach to Development”, “Harnessing the Potentials of Youths with Disabilities in Nigeria’s Work Force” and Legal Implication for the Exclusion of Youths with Disabilities in Nigeria by seasoned Disability experts. Several media Organisations (Print and electronic ) covered both events, in Abuja organizations like, Armed Forces radio, Voice of Nigeria, the Nigerian Telegraph Newspaper and in Lagos, Media organizations such as, Radio Nigeria, Television Continental, Vangard Newspaper, the Miror Newspaper amongst others adequately publicized the project and helped to heighten public awareness on the employment advocacy for YWDs.

1. Creation of a Job Portal Web Site: The job portal site was created to address the information gap and difficulties in locating qualified unemployed Youths with Disabilities by prospective employers, which we believe contributed to the low employment of youths with Disabilities particularly in the Private sector, the Job portal web site was created As part of the innovations of the project and to address a major problem identified.

The link to the site is: <http://jobs.hopeinspiredfoundation.com/>. Youths with Disabilities can create their professional profiles and upload their Curriculum Vitae or Resumes and the site would be used to engage with employers of labour who may be willing to make their work environments inclusive for Youths with Disabilities. We hope to also build this as a data base of unemployed youths with Disabilities in Nigeria which can be used not only as a resource but also for further research and advocacies.

**Project Outcomes:**

1. There is an increased willingness of key Federal Ministries particularly Ministry of Employment, Labour and Productivity, National Directorate of Employment, as well as the good Office of the Special Adviser of the Senate President to mainstream Youths with Disabilities in employment and entrepreneurial programmes ongoing in those ministries as a means of economic empowerment and to collaborate more closely with Organisations of Persons with
Disabilities in the ongoing Advocacy for the enactment of a National Disability Act.
2. Through our collaborations with Sesewa Organization, youths with Disabilities are been granted Internship placement and 2 of such qualified youths with Disabilities are undergoing the recruitment processes presently.
3. The job portal provides a quick resource for identifying qualified unemployed youths with Disabilities, helping to bridge that information gap experienced by employers who are interested in employing them.
4. A data base will also be generated from the job portal site which we can use to deepen our advocacies and also to generate statistics needed for evidence based research and engagement.
5. Strengthened collaboration amongst Fellows with an increased awareness of Disability issues by Fellows and a heightened involvement of Persons with Disabilities in their individual programmes.

**Recommendation:**

Following the discoveries and outcomes of the project during the implementation process, I recommend that there is need for more advocacies and awareness/sensitization of members of society particularly the public and private sector employers on the importance of inclusive development which will contribute to a sustainable growth in Nigeria.

**Conclusion:**

In achieving the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and in creating the future we want, through inclusive developmental societal structures that encourages equal participation, we hope for a country, where Youths with Disabilities are able to maximize their potentials and achieve their dreams with dignity in an enabling environment to make their own meaningful contributions to Nigeria’s economy.

Finally, Our deepest gratitude goes to the US Department of States and the US Mission in Nigeria particularly the Mandela Washington Fellowship Young Africa Leaders Initiative (MWF/YALI) programme for not only providing the funding for this project but also providing a platform that promotes collaboration and synergy of efforts towards the actualization of a socially inclusive society where everyone regardless of their circumstances can trive in an enabling environment and most importantly, make their contributions to the growth of Nigeria’s economy.

Gratitude also goes to all the staff of the Public Affairs Section especially the MWF/YALI Coordinators for their support through out the implementation of the project and Fellows of the 2015 cohort as well as other Organisations such as the Mobilioty and Accessibility Aid Resource Development Centre (MAARDEC), Verdanzeal Marketing and Communications LTD, Sesewa Internship, Tender Hearts Foundation, staffs and volunteers of the Hope Inspired Foundation for their unwaving support and effort towards the successful implementation ofthis lofty project.