ELECTION OBSERVATION REPORT
ON THE INCLUSION OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITY
IN THE EKITI STATE GUBERNATORIAL ELECTION
HELD ON THE 14TH OF JULY, 2018
DISCLAIMER

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Albino Foundation wishes to acknowledge the efforts of the various organizations which made this report a success. We sincerely thank the European Union who provided the financial resources for the Albino foundation to carry out this commemorative project on the inclusion of persons with disability in electoral and political processes.

We also thank the Joint Association of Persons with disability (JONAPWD) especially its Ekiti state chapter on their immense support for the EU-SDGN project. The successful activities such as the baseline survey and other engagements in the state leading to the election would not have been successful without their backing and active participation. We acknowledge the contribution of the various clusters that make up the association and their leadership.

We wish to thank INEC for taking up disability matters and showing a commitment toward the inclusion of PWDs in their processes. We are grateful to the INEC Chairman, Prof. Mahmood Yakubu for facilitating our accreditation at the very last minute as Election observers in the just concluded Ekiti state gubernatorial elections. We thank the INEC Commissioners who have attended to us right from the inception of this project and all through our Town Hall meetings on election matters with the PWD community.

Our sincere appreciation goes to First Whitestone Resources, the research firm which was responsible for the gathering of data on persons with disability. Their ability to analyze and produce a comprehensive report at such a short time for the effective distribution of election materials for persons with disability in Ekiti state on election day; is highly commendable.

Jake Epelle
CEO/Founder
Albino Foundation
**LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

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INTRODUCTION

The Albino Foundation being a non-governmental and a special focus organization, advocates for the recognition, respect for the rights and socio-economic inclusion of people living with albinism, disability and other vulnerable groups. On the 17th of April, 2018, the foundation signed the EU-SDGN project for the inclusion of persons with disability in electoral and political processes. Prior to this election, persons with disability have suffered neglect and exclusion from electoral processes on the basis of unavailability of access that can enhance their various forms of disability. A major challenge to this has been the unavailability of data on the over an estimated figure of 16.2 million persons with disability of voting age as well as their types of disability.

The need for the inclusion of persons with disability cannot be over emphasized as initial efforts to encourage PWDs to run for elections were made by disability activists in the last general elections, but were ultimately unsuccessful due to inability to overcome attitudinal barriers, often grounded in cultural and traditional setup of the society. The long queues that forced citizens to stand for hours to vote has further made it difficult for many disabled voters in the past (particularly people with physical disabilities and albinism) to cope with such conditions, forcing them to leave the polling station before they had the opportunity to cast a ballot. Civic education campaigns by election stakeholders in previous times did not include persons with disabilities, both in urban and rural areas and hence the few DPOs attempts to implement civic education did not reach enough persons with disabilities to participate fully in elections. Inadequate knowledge of disability types and their specific needs has also been a reason why all forms of disability are not captured during preparations for inclusion in electoral and political processes by electoral management bodies.

The EU-SDGN project involves several activities which will enhance the civic and political participation of Persons with disabilities in the electoral process in Ekiti and Osun States and FCT-Abuja. A baseline survey on persons with disability was conducted to identify the various disability types in Ekiti, Osun states and FCT and their polling units in order to aid INEC in the deployment of electoral materials for easy access for PWDs on election day.

The interventions of the EU-SDGN will not only bring attitudinal change and perceptions about persons with disability in Nigeria, but will also give them an equal platform to participate in electoral and political processes.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The intervention of the EU-SDGN project for persons with disability will directly contribute to building the capacities of both primary and secondary stakeholders in the electoral and political system to fulfil their obligations towards equal access to political and electoral processes for persons with disabilities. The project, since its implementation has made huge impact on PWDs and also brings to the fore issues affecting persons with disability.

Persons with disability over the years have faced several discriminations which stems from their immediate families and the society at large. Institutional barriers have also hindered their active participation in their various fields of endeavour. On electoral participation, there is no mention of, and/or support for, capacity development on how to provide reasonable accommodation measures for equal participation in elections for the over 16.2 million persons with disability of voting age in Nigeria. The Ramps, Sign Language interpreters, Braille or layover ballot paper for visually impaired persons, magnifying glasses nor the tactile voting systems as well as outreach for registration and voting by those people with mental health problems has not been provided and deployed effectively. Organization of community and family support for those who have physical difficulties to reach registration and polling unit has been another factor that has led to the exclusion of PWDs in electoral processes.

The usual intrigues of politics are not convenient for persons with disability and there is little or no legislation encouraging them to do so. The code of conduct for political parties mentions persons with disability in passing with no concrete provisions for their inclusion in political matters be it as party officials or as candidates for their elections.

In Ekiti state, though the population of persons with disability is not known but several DPOs within the state suggest that there are over 22,000 persons with disability in the state. This number cannot be overlooked by both the political and electoral Management bodies. The baseline survey which was organised by the Albino foundation under the EU-SDGN project was commissioned to obtain relevant information to be presented to INEC on the number and charateristics of disabilities of PWDs registered in poling units across the 16 local Government Areas of the state. A research firm was hired to carry out this activity in the two states of Ekiti, Osun and FCT.

At the end of the survey exercise in Ekiti state, over 4,634 respondents were captured with 30% being physically challenged, 27% having hearing impairment and 19% with visual impairment. This analysis was further detailed to aid in the
The distribution of election materials for PWDs in the gubernatorial election. Due to time constraints and in view of Ekiti state elections of July 14th, 2018, the outcome of the data mined for Ekiti state during the survey was immediately extracted and transmitted to INEC to aid their final preparations for the exercise. This document contained all the polling units in Ekiti state as well as the disability type in that area. This was to allow the EMB provide necessary materials for PWDS in the elections.

The final report of the baseline survey was further scrutinized by stakeholders during a validation exercise after which it was presented to a larger community of persons with disability and other stakeholders at a town hall meeting in Ekiti state. The town hall meeting which held few days to the election involved a robust discussion session between the PWD community and a panel of Major stakeholders such as INEC, Inter-Party Advisory Council, CSOs and International Organizations. PWDS were highly motivated to participate in the elections as well as in political activities in their communities.

Election observation was another activity that became necessary for the Albino Foundation as it will enable the foundation ascertain the level of inclusion for persons with disability taking into consideration the availability of Ramps, braille, Magnifying glasses and other assistive aids. The observations and recommendations for further improvement on processes of inclusion are made available in this report.

The baseline report is an informative material, not just for the Election Management body INEC, but for all stakeholders involved in enhancing the electoral and political participation of PWDS. It is worth stating also that the baseline survey questionnaire which produced the report was designed to provide demographic information as well as other indicators on the level of political awareness, participation and intentions of PWDS towards a political career. The information of this report will also enable Persons with disability to develop and explore opportunities that can encourage active participation of its members in the political sphere of their state.

Finally, the information of this survey will also be beneficial to the government of Ekiti state as it will help them in planning the health, social and economic development of their community for PWDS.
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OVERVIEW OF ACTIVITIES
CARRIED OUT BEFORE
THE EKITI STATE
GUBERNATORIAL ELECTION
BACKGROUND

At the onset of the EU-SDGN project, a Baseline Disability Survey was carried out in Osun and Ekiti states and FCT to better understand the situation of PWDs in the election process. To effectively carry out this survey with modern tools in data gathering, a research firm was hired to facilitate the process. This baseline survey on the participation of PWDs of voting age in political and electoral processes was necessary as information gathered will be used in part to inform planning, legal and policy reform on the mainstreaming of PWDs in all civic and political rights.

Due to financial constraints, the survey focused on over 5,000 persons with disability in each state. The data capturing and mining was well organized with most persons with disability participating in the survey as field enumerators. It can be said that the efficacy of this survey was based on the methodology adopted as well as the efficiency and commitment of the JONAPWD who were part of the field enumerators.

In view of the above and with particular focus on the elections in Ekiti, it became pertinent to extract data gathered on PWDs in Ekiti and present it to the relevant stakeholders for the purpose of inclusion in the July 14th gubernatorial election in the state. Several activities such as the validation of the project by stakeholders and the presentation of the document became necessary. The validation of the baseline survey was a prerequisite to the formal presentation of the survey report as it will give Stakeholders the opportunity to critic the outcome of the survey and make their own inputs.
A guest speaking at the workshop.

In attendance were the
- **Permanent Secretary**
- **Directors from Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development**
- **Members of the Joint National Association of Persons with Disabilities (JONAPWD)**
- **PWAs**
- **IPAC Chairman**
- **Parents of Persons with Disability**
- **Coalition of Civil Society Organization groups**

**OPENING SESSION**

The baseline survey validation workshop on aggregated data of persons with disability in Ekiti State commenced with an opening prayer, said by Mr Dahunsi Adeyemi from Gbonyin Local Government a person with albinism after which there was individual introduction and introduction of invited guest.

A welcome address by the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Women Affairs, Social Development and Gender Empowerment marked the beginning of the workshop. She charged persons with disabilities to involve themselves in civic, political participation and electoral process to address electoral issues especially in the coming elections. In his opening remarks, the Founder/CEO, The Albino Foundation, Mr Jake Epelle said the success of the baseline survey is attributed to the partnership between the Albino Foundation, the European Union and the Joint Association of Persons with Disability (JONAPWD), Ekiti State Chapter. He also reinstated that this joint effort is to enhance the civic and political participation of persons with disabilities in the electoral process in Ekiti state in the upcoming elections. Mr Jake encouraged all stakeholders to positively scrutinize and criticize the outcome of the survey and make their own input.

Goodwill messages were presented by the Secretary to the State Government and the Chairman of JONAPWD. They charged the various PWDS cluster groups to come out to vote and be voted for in the upcoming Ekiti State governorship election and in the general elections.

The state Chairman Inter-Party Advisory Council (IPAC) Ekiti State chapter and a Civil society group were also present.

**TECHNICAL SESSION**

The technical session involved a PowerPoint presentation by the Ekiti State EU-SDGN Project Lead of the Albino Foundation on the significance of the survey, its overall and specific objectives, the target groups and final beneficiaries; with expected outputs and outcomes of the survey.

**PRESENTATION OF THE FINDINGS OF THE BASELINE SURVEY**

During this session, the consultant made the participants to understand the findings of the baseline survey on aggregated and disaggregated...
data of persons with disabilities (PWDs) of voting age in Ekiti State. The survey outcome revealed that most of the persons with disabilities interviewed have completed their registration for the coming election. The consultant itemized the specific objectives of the baseline survey as:

1. To produce disaggregated data of the PWDs groups of voting age and how to enhance their participation in the political and electoral processes in the target states.

2. To produce and present to INEC an operational document to assist the commission deploy the needed materials, devices/care givers etc to cater for the persons with disabilities based on the expected number registered at each polling unit.

QUESTIONS, ANSWERS AND DISCUSSIONS

Many participants were satisfied with the outcome of the detailed presentation made by the consultant however; one pertinent question arose. The participant wanted to know the difference between cognitive and mental disability since this reflected in the survey instrument that was used in collecting the data on persons with disability. This question raised was extensively explained by other participants who explained that cognitive disability can be found in persons with Down syndrome, autism and the likes while mental disability is found in persons who are mentally deranged. Another participant opined that adequate media visibility be given subsequently to baseline surveys to enable respondents understand the purpose of the survey.

At the end of these discussions, a committee was set up to issue a communiqué on the outcome of the baseline survey. The workshop closed at about 2pm.

Group picture of all participants at the workshop.

Cross section of civil society at the workshop.
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TOWN HALL MEETING AND
PRESENTATION OF
THE BASELINE SURVEY
BACKGROUND

Town hall meeting in Ekiti state was held as an outreach medium to mobilise and sensitize PWDs/PWAs to register and vote in the upcoming gubernatorial election. It also served as a platform for the Election Management Body, INEC to interact with persons with disability and give them first-hand information on Election Day processes. The Albino foundation also intended to use this meeting to present the validated copy of the survey report to its stakeholders. During the discussion session, persons with disability had the opportunity of asking the panellist questions which may enhance their participation in Electoral and political processes. The panellist consisted of the INEC representatives, IPAC representative, the American Embassy team and the representative from the European Union delegation.

The meeting was largely attended by over 250 persons with disability comprising of the various cluster groups in Ekiti state. The meeting was equally aimed at ensuring that PWDs/PWAs are registered and participate actively on political processes at their various communities on Election Day and beyond. The meeting had in attendance local and International organizations including the representatives of the following organisations:

- Commissioners from the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC)
- Coalition of civil society organisations
- Inter-party advisory council (IPAC) Ekiti state
- Members of the Joint National Association of People with disability (JONAPWD) Ekiti state chapter
- The clerk of Ekiti state house of assembly
- Ekiti state ministry of education
- Members of the American embassy
- EU representative
- Representative from the European Union Support for Electoral Support (ECES)
OPENING SESSION
The town hall meeting was facilitated by the founder/CEO of the Albino Foundation, Mr Jake Epelle. In his welcome address, Mr Jake said that the town hall meeting with INEC, CSOs, International community and the Persons with Disabilities is to create a platform to assess the level of preparedness of INEC in mainstreaming Persons with Disabilities in the July 14th, 2018 Ekiti State Gubernatorial election and to ensure that all necessary materials for the election are made available to enhance inclusiveness for the overall participation of persons with disabilities in the election.

GOODWILL MESSAGES
The first goodwill message came from the chairman of Joint National Association of Persons with Disabilities (JONAPWD) Ekiti state chapter, Mr. Omotola Omotunla. He commended the Albino Foundation, CSO, EU, IPAC, and the American election observers team and all the participants for this town hall meeting which is the first of its kind to be organised for PWDs in Ekiti state.

In her speech, an INEC Commissioner Prof. Okosi Simbini spoke to participants present and assured PWDs on equal participation on the electoral process with adequate provision of election materials for Persons with disabilities to improve their access on election day. She said drastic efforts have been made by the commission for persons with disabilities to fully participate in the upcoming election in Ekiti State. She encouraged the PWD community to exercise their franchise without fear of discrimination and electoral exclusion during the July 14, 2018 Ekiti State gubernatorial election.

The Chairman of the Inter-Party Advisory Council, (IPAC) Ekiti State Chapter, Mr Ilesanmi Omolayo encouraged PWDs to always participate in political activities at the Federal, State and Local levels. He emphasized that persons with disabilities have fundamental human rights to vote and be voted for in the electoral and political processes. Other stakeholders at the meeting such as the Chairman Coalition of Civil Society Organisations, Ekiti State Chapter represented by Dr (Mrs)A. Adeyanju appreciated the Albino Foundation for organizing this meeting, and other stakeholders on their preparedness in mainstreaming the PWDs in the July 14th, 2018 governorship election in Ekiti State.

Finally, the international organizations present also lend in their voice in encouraging the PWD community to stand for elections and participate in electoral processes.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS
After the goodwill messages from the representatives of various organisations, questions and answers were entertained by the panellists from the PWDs community participants.

The Chairman, National Association of the Blind, Ekiti State Chapter, Mr. Owolabi Kayode asked a question on the accessibility of polling unit to PWDs during the upcoming election. In her response, INEC representative said adequate preparation had been made by the commission to give special attention to PWDs in order to enable them exercise their civic responsibilities in the electoral processes. She charged the Albino Foundation to have a dedicated call line to enable PWDs to lodge complaint, report progress and to provide information before, during and after the upcoming Ekiti State governorship election.

Cross section of persons with disabilities at the town hall meeting
The INEC commissioner in charge of Ekiti state Dr. Deji Adesoyebo encouraged PWDs to feel free to participate in elections and call him if they encounter any hitches on Election Day. Dr. Deji expressed his happiness towards the town hall meeting organised by the Albino Foundation for PWDs in Ekiti State. He said this was necessary in order to engage INEC to ascertain their level of preparedness in mainstreaming PWDs in the governorship election. He promised that all necessary provisions have been made for PWDs to participate effectively in the process. The town hall meeting was very interactive and PWDs asked questions and received clarifications on the elections as well as their participation in political processes. The meeting came to an end at about 6.30pm with over 250 PWDs participants in attendance excluding other local and International stakeholders.
On Wednesday, 11th July, 2018; the Albino Foundation team visited the paramount ruler of Ado Ekiti - The Ewi of Ado Ekiti, who is also the Chairman of the Council of traditional rulers Oba Dr. Rufus Adejugbe Adesanmi (III) in his palace. In attendance were the High Chiefs in Ado Ekiti and press men from various media houses such as: NTA Ado Ekiti, Progress FM, Voice FM, Ekiti Television, Ekiti FM and Authority Newspaper. In attendance too were the JONAPWD Chairman, Ekiti state chapter and his Secretary, Mr Funso Olajide, Cluster associations under JONAPWD and Persons with Albinism (PWA).

The purpose of this advocacy visit by the Albino foundation, was to intimate the monarch on the need to promote the inclusion of persons with disability in electoral and political processes especially as the elections draw near in the state.

The foundation believed that the Ewi being one the highly acknowledged chiefs in the state and enjoying high acceptability and reverence by their subjects will positively influence his subjects on the need to promote the inclusion of PWDs in electoral and political processes in Ekiti state. It is a well-known fact that persons with disability face
discrimination right from their families up to the society at large. Cultural practices further hinder PWDs from participating in these processes as these persons are either discriminated upon based on their disability or are seen as aliens within their culture. The foundation believes that the Ewi and his chiefs can be engaged to propagate the need to give people with disability a chance in the electoral and political processes in Ekiti state. The monarch in his remark welcomed the team and gave words of encouragement. He promised to relate the message to all concerned within his domain and the state at large.

Cross section of civil society at the workshop.
Advocacy visit by TAF to Aare Afe Babalola, SAN founder Afebabalola University.

The Albino Foundation team and some members of JONAPWD left for Afe Babalola University to see the founder, Aare Afe Babalola, a legal luminary and a man of great influence in the state and the education sector. Afe Babalola University is located about 12 kilometres away from city centre along Ijan Road, Ado Ekiti. It is the only Private University in Ekiti State and it is known to be one of the leading private universities in Nigeria with both local and international students. It has a well-equipped college of Medicine and a teaching hospital within the school premises.

The visit to the university by the Albino foundation team was three fold.

- Firstly, the foundation planned to partner with the school in setting up a disability Centre to promote access for persons with disability in Education and other fields of endeavour which will invariably enhance their self-worth.
- Secondly, the foundation used this medium to seek for access for skin cancer treatment for persons with Albinism in the school’s teaching hospital.
- Thirdly, the Foundation sought to engage the authority of the school on the engagement of Mr. Shola, a person with disability who passed the school’s interview and screening for the position of a Mass communication lecturer in the school, but was denied appointment as a result of his disability.

The founder Aare Afe Babalola welcomed the team and spoke passionately on his desire to keep a lasting legacy in the education sector. He thanked the foundation for further helping him to achieve this dream by widening his views on inclusivity for persons with disability. He immediately referred the team to his Vice Chancellor who would attend to all the request of the foundation.

The Vice-Chancellor Professor Oluwafemi Ajisafe welcomed the team and after being briefed on the intentions of the foundation, he gave his commitment on behalf of the school towards the establishment of the disability centre, being that such facilities are not available in the West African region. He was pleased that the centre will take specific care of persons with disabilities and albinism. Also, Prof. Ajisafe promised to discuss further with relevant authorities on the skin cancer centre for persons with Albinism and to facilitate the appointment of Mr Shola, the PWD as a lecturer in the school. Since then, the foundation has followed up with these request with the School and have received positive response on the establishment of the disability centre.
The role of the media as an advocacy tool is of great essence. The various types of media if properly engaged can disseminate information to a target audience faster and widely than any other form of communication. Preceding the Ekiti state gubernatorial election, the Albino foundation engaged vigorously most media houses in the state on the need for the inclusion of PWDs in the election. The message was that persons with disability who are of voting age should participate in the forth-coming election. The foundation also intimated the PWD community on the provisions made by INEC for their inclusion. The media stations engaged during the activities of the foundation include the following: NTA Ado Ekiti, Progress FM, Voice FM, Ekiti Television, Ekiti FM and Authority Newspaper.

The Founder/CEO of the Albino Foundation, Mr Jake Epelle had a television interview on NTA network from Ado Ekiti on issues bothering the PWD community in the light of the upcoming election in Ekiti state. He spoke on general issues stemming from the need to have a peaceful election and the role of the security agencies, the availability of election materials for PWDs on Election Day and the need for persons with disability to participate effectively in the July 14th election. This interview was aired nationally and received immediate positive reaction by INEC. Consequent upon this, there was a follow up live interview by the Founder/CEO by FRCN on the outcome of the election. This created an opportunity for further expression of the Foundation’s displeasure on the exclusion of PWDs in the just concluded election.
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ELECTION OBSERVATION REPORT

OUTLINE
• Pre-Election Observations
• Election Day Observations
• Post-Election Observations
No incidences of violence were recorded within town other than the out-burst between certain political parties and the security agencies. The day before the election, distribution of materials to observers commenced. This activity was well carried out and members of the Albino foundation received accreditation materials with ease from the INEC office in Ekiti.

EU Ambassador's visit to the Albino Foundation office in Ekiti

Mr EPELLE doing a tour around EKITI TAF office with EU ambassador.
The European Union Ambassador to Nigeria and the ECOWAS, Amb. Ketil Kersen and his team from the delegation visited the foundation to access the state of the office and the preparedness of the foundation in mainstreaming persons with disability in the electoral and political processes in the state. The ambassador and his team were pleased with the foundation for securing such a large office space from the Government of Ekiti and promised to work with the foundation in putting up a fence round the building to make it more secured for the staff and other users.

International observers at a polling centre.

ELECTION DAY OBSERVATIONS

The Albino foundation observed election in the 3 senatorial districts of Ekiti state. The team commenced observation from Ikere local government. The turnout of voters was largely impressive. Election observers both local and international were also present at most polling units. Voting and accreditation was jointly done with voters going through accreditation and actual voting simultaneously.

There was presence of security agencies at the poling units mostly unarmed while their armed counterparts stayed aloof.

At Are Ekiti, about fifteen (15) kilometres from Ado Ekiti, the capital of Ekiti State, the first polling unit we visited was Ilawemo House polling Unit with code number 010 and Registration Area Code 13. Here persons with disability were present but the location of the ballot box was too high for the physically challenged. In Ireponun/Ileodun Local Government Area of Ekiti State, it was observed that there was no Person with other forms of Disability (PWD) in the polling unit except one Person with Albinism (PWA). Close observation revealed that there were no magnifying glasses provided. Though, there was no other PWD, the polling unit was designed such that a physically challenged person on wheel chair will find it difficult to scale the gutter leading to the voting area. Besides, there was no provision of trained persons to assist PWDs that might need help. One more polling unit was visited in Are Ekiti but there was no PWD or PWA there. The polling unit was fairly accessible but no braille, no magnifying glasses, no handrails etc to support PWDs and PWAs.

In Afao Ekiti few distance from Are Ekiti, there was large turnout of voters as they were seen in long queue trying to vote. So far, election was orderly there. The first polling unit we observed was Polling Unit 005 near Adeosun compound with Registration Area Code 13. No PWDs or PWAs was present in the polling unit. Election materials for PWDs were not provided and the polling unit was not accessible as well.

A cross section of visually impaired persons queuing up to vote.
In summary, on Disability Voters:
The Albino foundation observed that persons with disability turned out in large number for voting at poling units. On the issue of disability voters, the following observations were noted:

- Priority was given to elderly voters, pregnant women and women with babies.
- Persons with disability were attended to on separate lines.
- Persons with visual impairment voted with assistance by their relatives.
- The following observations on the numbers of disabled voters was evident in:

1. In PU 6, Unit 5 (Unity secondary school, Oke Osun), 2 persons with visual impairment voted with the assistance of their family relative.
2. In PU 003, 002 and 001 - Unit 6, there was also assistive voting for the visually impaired done by their personal assistant. Other forms of disability present in this unit was the hearing impaired. In general, over 50 persons with disability were recorded in this center by the Albino foundation.
3. In Irepondu/Ifelodun registration area, poling unit 10, a woman with Albinism voted with no magnifying glasses. Similarly, as at the time of our visit, 2 persons with disability voted with no braille.
4. In ward 2, unit 1 Are registration area, persons with physical disability were found and poling unit were partially accessible for them.
5. In Unit 7, Ward 6 Garage bus stop, Ikere, 1 person with Albinism was identified and voted without a
Positive outcomes of the elections

The albino foundation team visited several polling units and observed that INEC officials displayed professionalism during the elections. Priority was given to elderly persons and persons with disability. In places where braille was not provided, officials intimated persons with disability ahead of the voting exercise on the approach to be used (assistive voting).

In general, the number of persons with disability who took part in the Ekiti state gubernatorial election was quite impressive. It is believed that this turnout was made possible by the interventions of the Albino foundation, DPOs, Civil society groups and international and local organizations working on persons with disability. The Albino foundation within this shortest time prior to the Ekiti elections had several engagements with disability clusters under JONAPWD to discuss electoral participation for the various disability groups. The baseline survey of persons with disability (which was carried out by the foundation under the EU-SDGN project) also gave PWDs the intuition that the elections will be inclusive for them.

Salient challenges of the election

As it concerns the Albino foundation, persons with disability were not properly mainstreamed in the electoral process by the non-provision of braille for the blind, ramps for the physically challenged, Sign language interpreters or pictorials for the hearing impaired and hand-held magnifier for persons with albinism and other forms of visual impairment. For example, in PU 003 unit 6, some deaf persons had to interpret the procedures of voting to their colleagues who were not literate. Similarly, in PU 002 unit 6, over 30 blind persons had
someone (maybe their teacher) who assisted them during voting thereby infringing on their privacy in the electoral process. The woman with Albinism, who was identified in Irepondu/Ifeolodun registration area, had no magnifying glass to aid her sight. Some polling units were either too high or too steep making election venues difficult for persons with disability.

The Albino foundation team observed that during the counting and collation of results at about 3 pm, there was heavy presence of military trucks parading the voting areas. The sound of sirens was also heard. This created a very intimidating atmosphere within the voting areas. We observed also some youths of a political party took to the street in Ado –Ekiti in celebration of their party’s victory in their polling unit.

CONCLUSION

The Albino foundation with the support of European Union is committed to enhancing the participation of persons with disability under the European Union Support for Democratic Governance in Nigeria (EU-SDGN). The baseline survey report is one of such tools believed to aid this objective. The town hall meeting organized by the Foundation further enabled persons with disability to interact with the major stakeholders responsible for their inclusion in electoral and political processes. The Ekiti state gubernatorial elections also gave the foundation an opportunity to view the challenges faced by persons with disability and also make recommendations that can enhance the participation of PWDs in electoral and political processes. 

GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS

To remove the barriers that hinder effective participation of PWDs in participating in the political and electoral processes in Nigeria, The Albino foundation makes the following recommendations for action by the under listed stakeholders.

INEC

- INEC should train its election day officials including the returning officers on respect for the different persons with disability that are identified by the commission
- The commission should ensure the distribution of election materials for persons with disability at the various Polling units
Available data on persons with disability should be used for the effective deployment of election materials for persons with disability. Such information can be also used in the creation of new PU in areas where PWDs are mostly dominated.

Access should be created at polling units for PWDs who are physically challenged to enable them to reach the ballot boxes.

INEC should consult with Disabled Persons Organizations to obtain information that can assist the commission in the design, procurement and distribution of election materials for persons with disability on Election Day.

INEC should endeavor to brief the DPOs and other civil society on the availability of election materials for PWDS prior to elections.

Assistive voting for PWDs should be discouraged as much as possible.

INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

- Election observation by International organizations should continue as this will reduce the dubious activities of the politicians.
- International organizations should support INEC in the procurement of Election materials for persons with disability such as the Ramps, braille and the magnifying glasses etc.
- In a bid to assist INEC on its inclusiveness drive, International organizations should sponsor a baseline survey in states where there is no availability of such data. This information will enable INEC make provision for easy access for persons with disability during elections in those states.

THE ALBINO FOUNDATION

- The foundation will engage frequently with the community to encourage the participation of PWDs in electoral and political processes. This will be done through town hall meetings and other outreach medium.
- The foundation will engage INEC in the preparation towards upcoming elections to ensure the distribution of materials for PWDs.