

**ECUMENICAL DISABILITY ADVOCATES NETWORK (EDAN) IN
COLLABORATION WITH THE CHRISTIAN COUNCIL OF NIGERIA (CCN)
CONSULTATIVE WORKSHOP ON THEOLOGICAL AND DISABILITY FOR
THE CCN MEMBERS CHURCHES AFFILIATED THEOLOGICAL
INSTITUTIONS**

COMMUNIQUE

PREAMBLE

Representatives and leaders of some Christian Council of Nigeria affiliated theological colleges, church leaders, government officials and some non-governmental organizations (NGOs) met under the auspices of Ecumenical Disability Advocates Network (EDAN) and the Christian Council of Nigeria in a consultative workshop to reflect on Theology and Disability. The consultation which was held at the Institute of Churches and Society, Samonda, Ibadan, Oyo State came out with this communique.

After deep consultations, reflections, deliberations and discussions, participants re-emphasized that the theological views on disability include the following categories:

- God is the sovereign and loving Creator of all people including persons with disabilities.
- The challenges of PWD do not reduce the image of God in them. At the same time, the restoration of their abilities does not make better the image of God. They are in God's true image as they are.
- God is the God of all life and all life's situations and, therefore, cannot be excluded from any aspect of life.
- God uses every disability to accomplish God's divine purpose and for God's own glory.
- God identifies with, and gives grace to, cope with and overcome disabilities (2 Cor. 12).
- God calls His people, the Church and the entire creation to identify with PWD.
- The reality of the brokenness of the world is such that human beings are living in the world of the survival of the strongest and that as Christians we should emulate Paul example of selflessness.
- God calls everyone, including persons with disabilities to the fullness of life in Christ.
- God calls all believers and all Christians to anticipate the eschaton when there would be no more death, sickness, sorrow or suffering (Rev. 21; 4).

Based on the above affirmations, the conference resolves/suggests that:

- 1) It is important to the life and ministry of the church to hold regular consultations and trainings on disability issues. There should be follow-up workshops of this Consultation in which church leaders should be involved to discuss the concerns of PWD in the Church and society. These workshops could also involve more political leaders so that there will be a synergy between the Church and the government (society).
- 2) The Consultative Workshop resolved not to depart without the determination to be advocates at various and different fora for considerations of PWD in the churches and the society.
- 3) Churches and theological institutions should involve qualified people with disability at the leadership of bodies and groups. Such people should also be in Boards where decisions are taken as such decisions might concern them either directly or indirectly.
- 4) Theologians, theological institutions and secular institutions should engage in more research work to broaden knowledge in disability studies and also produce more pedagogic and practical materials for the schools and churches.
- 5) Pastors and ministers should be properly trained in disability study and learn to be sensitive to their needs and feelings in their preaching, pronouncements and actions.
- 6) The curriculum of theology institutions and related institutions should be reviewed to accommodate courses and subjects on disability and ministering to persons with disability.
- 7) Churches and their members should be conscientized to see disability matters as affecting not only the PWD and their families but also the entire church and the society. Therefore everybody should be involved in responding to the needs of such members.
- 8) Churches as a matter of policy should effect structural changes in their facilities and worship centers to be PWD-compliant.
- 9) Trained facilitators should be engaged to make the worship of PWD more meaningful and involving.
- 10) Churches should be at the fore-front of the advocacy for the re-structuring of public buildings and facilities to conform with the needs of PWD. There should be legislative policies which should be enforced.
- 11) It is noted that the Nigerian press does not give enough and appropriate coverage to disability matters. The media should therefore be engaged in an effort to orientate members of the public on the subject matter.

- 12) Churches and Christian ministries should set aside adequate resources for social welfare to meet the needs of members in special conditions as integral of her Christian witness.
- 13) PWD should enjoy certain privileges in the social structure. They should be entitled to free education, free health services, scholarship and employment slots should be assigned them in both public and private sectors.
- 14) We acknowledge the efforts of the government at various levels in trying to incorporate the PWD into the systems of the society. We particularly applaud the employment policies of Oyo State in which the present government has employed about 1000 PWD. However, knowing the fact that there are about 20 million PWD in Nigeria, we view these efforts as grossly inadequate. We therefore call on the governments copy the pacesetting efforts of Oyo State and possibly improve on them with the view putting in more efforts in improving the lives of such citizens as they are factor more into social policies.