ADVOCACY BRIEF: MITIGATING THE IMPACT OF FUEL SUBSIDY REMOVAL ON PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES IN EDO STATE.

Introduction:

The recent removal of Fuel subsidy by the Federal Government, has triggered an unprecedented surge in the cost of living, affecting the lives and livelihoods of Nigerians. The adverse impact of this policy on Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) is particularly severe, as they grapple with heightened vulnerability in the absence of adequate social protection mechanisms. This advocacy brief aims to recommend immediate and sustainable solutions to the government to mitigate the impact of subsidy removal on PWDs in Edo State.

KEY MESSAGES.

- PWDs are 3 times more disadvantaged, and disproportionately affected by the fuel subsidy removal.

- The removal of fuel subsidy is fostering inequality and inequity against PWDs and is further limiting their inclusivity and opportunities.

- Ensuring the well-being of PWDs post subsidy removal, is a matter of legal and social responsibility and should be a strategic investment in a diverse and resilient society.

EVIDENCE.

Recently, NAPVID, under the “ResilientNet: Empowering Inclusivity and Adaptability in Emergency” Project, conducted surveys among disability clusters across the three senatorial Districts of Edo State, to ascertain first hand, the impact of the fuel subsidy removal on the lives and livelihood of Persons with Disabilities.

Statistics from the survey, reveal that 100% of persons with disabilities have encountered increased financial strain post-subsidy removal. Personal stories underline the daily struggles faced, from inaccessible and unaffordable transportation, social exclusion to compromised healthcare. PWDs describe the current economic situation occasioned by the fuel subsidy removal, as alarming, unbearable, suffocating and frustrating, with increased feeling of loneliness, depression and even suicidal thoughts.

Findings from the surveys, has made it imperative for leading organisations of Persons with Disabilities, under the aegis of ‘Edo Disability Forum’ (EDF), after due assessment of the Situation, to recommend immediate and sustainable measures that should be put in place to ameliorate the plights of PWDs and guarantee their survival in the aftermath of the subsidy removal.

Recommendations for Addressing the Impact of Fuel Subsidy Removal on Persons with Disabilities in Edo State

Immediate Implementation Measures:

1. Financial Support:

Launch targeted financial assistance programs focusing on basic needs and disability-related expenses.

Establish a coordinated and decentralized subsidy or grant system to provide relief through food palliatives and monthly stipends tailored to the specific needs of Persons with Disabilities (PWDs).

2. Healthcare Access:

Develop a comprehensive healthcare support system to ensure affordability of medical supplements and services.

Conduct awareness programs to encourage regular medical check-ups and ensure the availability of accessible healthcare facilities.

Introduce specialized Health Insurance Plans tailored to the needs of PWDs, along with easily accessible health centers.

3. Empowerment/Employment Opportunities:

Establish vocational training programs specifically designed to enhance the skills and employability of PWDs.

Provide interest-free business grants through vocational training programs to encourage entrepreneurship among PWDs.

Facilitate immediate employment opportunities for qualified unemployed PWDs and introduce special transport and housing allowances for PWDs in public services.

4. Transportation Accessibility:

Enforce strict regulations against discrimination and extra charges by transport workers towards PWDs.

Provide free or discounted disability-friendly public transportation equipped with necessary facilities for enhanced mobility.

5. Education Support:

Develop inclusive educational facilities with residential accommodations to ensure equal access for PWDs.

Implement school feeding programs specifically tailored to meet the needs of children with disabilities.

6. Sustainable Solutions:

Establish the Edo State Commission for Persons with Disabilities to oversee the implementation of the Edo State Persons with Disabilities Law.

Take necessary steps to amend the Edo State Disability Law to ensure the employment of PWDs and guarantee at least 5% job placement for PWDs in the civil and public service.

Ensure representation of PWDs in committees addressing their concerns during emergencies.

Facilitate regular feedback mechanisms from PWDs and stakeholders to ensure the relevance and effectiveness of implemented programs.

CALL TO ACTION:

We call upon the Edo State Government to prioritize the well-being and inclusion of persons with disabilities by endorsing and implementing these recommendations. Through concerted efforts and collaboration between the government and the disability community, we can significantly improve the lives of PWDs in Edo State in the aftermath of fuel subsidy removal. The Edo Disability Forum stands ready to work hand in hand with the government to ensure the successful implementation of these measures for the benefit of all PWDs in the state.