

THE GODMOTHER OF NIGERIA'S 21ST CENTURY'S DISABILITY CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT

"Lady Omotunde Ellen Thompson"



WHO CHAMPIONED THE DIABILITY LAWS OF NIGERIA BUT MARGINALIZED & EXCLUDED FROM THERE IMPLEMENTATIONS.

Because she is a woman with disability



Lady Omotunde Ellen Thompson, the Godmother of Nigeria's Disability Civil Rights Movement who is the BoT Life-Chairperson JONAPWD-NATIONAL, a foundational figure in Nigeria's Disability Civil Rights Movement

This brochure is more than a collection of facts; it is a memorial, a manifesto, and a movement. It celebrates the legacy of Lady Omotunde Ellen Thompson, a foundational figure in Nigeria's Disabilities Civil Rights Movement, while amplifying the urgent need for justice, policy reform, and true inclusion of persons with disabilities.

With a target to educate, inspire, and mobilize, this publication lays bare the hidden history to Nigeria's Disability Policy Changes, including the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities signed and ratified by Nigeria with its Accompanying Optional Protocol, the Discrimination Against Persons with Disabilities (Prohibition) ACT, 2018 and its Independent National Commission for Persons with Disabilities (NCPD)

JUSTICE FOR LADY OMOTUNDE, JUSTICE FOR EVERY WOMAN

The story of Lady Omotunde is not isolated. It represents a much broader reality: the structural invisibility of persons with disabilities in national conversations, legislative processes, and development agendas. If a national icon who devoted her entire life to advocacy, education, and policy can be marginalized, what hope exists for the unnamed, unheard millions of women living with disabilities in Nigeria?

This brochure therefore issues a call: Justice for Lady Omotunde is justice for every woman with a disability. It demands recognition, redress, and respect.



Alignment with UN CRPD, UN CRC SDGs 2030, 2025 Global Disability Summit Amman-Berlin Declaration, Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women --- Beijing Declaration and Platform of Action, UN Pact for the Future, Protocol to the African Charter on Human Rights

This publication is deeply rooted in international human rights commitments that Nigeria has ratified:

- The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) which recognizes the right of every child to be heard, protected, and fully included.
- The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) which mandates the active involvement of persons with disabilities in all decision making processes that affect them, summarized by the global slogan: “Nothing About Us Without Us.”
- The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 2030 Agenda which prioritizes inclusivity under the banner of “Leave No One Behind”.

Yet, despite these commitments, Nigeria’s implementation has been inadequate, plagued by exclusion, underfunding, and political neglect. Lady Omotunde’s lived experience along with the lived realities of 35.5 million Nigerians with disabilities reveals these failures in painful detail. Through the brochure, as one of our commitments, we echo the call from National, regional and global forums in painful details.



Table of Contents

Chapter One: Introduction	02
Chapter Two: Lady Omotunde Ellen Thompson at a glance	05
Chapter Three: Birthing the Disabilities Civil Rights Movement	09
Chapter Four: The Pioneers	13
Chapter Five: International Networks and Movements	17
Chapter Six: National Associations	21
Chapter Seven: African Pioneer Women with Disabilities	24
Chapter Eight: The Legal Journey	27
Chapter Nine: Global Commitments	29
Chapter Ten: Our Collective Prayer and Gratitude	31
Chapter Eleven: Appendices & Photo Gallery	35

Lady Omotunde Ellen Thompson at a Glance

Chapter 2



Born on September 29, 1959, in the bustling city of Kaduna, Lady Omotunde Ellen Thompson emerged from the heart of Mopa Amuro Local Government Area in Kogi State with a spirit marked by resilience and determination. Raised in a richly diverse environment, she mastered four languages Yoruba, Hausa, English, and Yagbaa rare gift that enabled her to communicate across Nigeria's cultural divides and advocate on behalf of many marginalized communities.

Her academic journey is a testimony to her unyielding belief in the power of education. She earned the First School Leaving Certificate (1973) and West African Examination Certificate (1979). Determined to build her life around service and learning, she obtained:

- Grade II Teachers' Certificate (1989)
- Diploma in Special Education – Upper Credit (1986, Kaduna Polytechnic)
- Bachelor of Education in Special Education (1996)
- Postgraduate Diploma in Project Management Development (2011, Abuja)
- Currently pursuing a Master's in Educational Administration and Planning at the National Open University of Nigeria



Career Milestones

Lady Omotunde's career is as groundbreaking as it is inspiring. Living with a physical disability, she confronted and overcame systemic barriers to ascend as one of Nigeria's foremost disability rights leaders. Among her historic accomplishments:

- First Nigerian with Disabilities to be appointed as a Disability Desk Officer at the Presidency (Office of the Head of the Civil Service of the Federation)

- Founder and President/CEO of the Centre for Advocacy for Persons with Disabilities

- Cofounder and BoT Chairperson of the Federal Civil Service Staff with Disabilities Multipurpose Society

- First Female National Leader and LifeChairperson of the Board of Trustees for the Joint National Association of Persons with Disabilities (JONAPWDNational)

Leadership Highlights



01 Architect of Legislative Change

Led historical High-level advocacy mission to the national Assembly working closely with champions like the Distinguished Senator Barr Ostia Izunaso, Founder and Mrs. Patricia Ovuoke Oseh, Director General and Equal Rights for Persons with Disabilities International Inc (ERPWDI) led by Chief Eric Ndubueze Ufom and the Late Mrs. Ngozi Pauline Ikebuaku



02 Champion of Institutional Reform

Played a key role in the establishment of the National Commission for Persons with Disabilities (NCPD) in 2020



03 Global Connector for Disability Rights

Instrumental in linking Nigeria's disability movement with global forums and frameworks, such as the UNCRPD, UNCRC, UN CEDAW, and the SDGs 2030 Agenda



04 Voice at the Global Table

Directly engaged with United Nations bodies and participated in global summits, including the 2025 Global Disability Summit (AmmanBerlin Declaration)

Birthing of Disability Organizations in Nigeria and the Diaspora

Chapter 3



The Genesis of a Movement

The emergence of disability organizations in Nigeria and the diaspora was not by chance it was born out of necessity, courage, and a fierce demand for dignity. In a society where over 35.5 million persons with disabilities remained unseen and unheard, a coalition of bold pioneers stood up to create structures for representation, advocacy, and change.

At the heart of this movement was Lady Omotunde Ellen Thompson, affectionately known as Mama General. Her role as a founding voice, strategic leader, and enduring activist cemented her place as the Godmother of Nigeria's National and Global Disability Civil Rights Movement.

The Founding of JONAPWD (1992)

In 1992, at the University of Jos, the Joint National Association of Persons with Disabilities of Nigeria (JONAPWD) was established. This marked a revolutionary step forward it became the first and only umbrella body representing all categories of persons with disabilities in Nigeria, including the most overlooked: Almajiris, Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), wounded military veterans, and law enforcement officers suffering from PostTraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).

In 2008, JONAPWD gained formal recognition through registration with the Corporate Affairs Commission (CAC). It evolved into a nonpolitical, nonprofit Civil Society Organization (CSO) with a mandate to protect and promote the rights of persons with disabilities through institutional engagement and policy reform.

Lady Omotunde's role was central. She was not just a founding trustee she was the first female national leader of JONAPWD and the only remaining original trustee, having kept the torch burning through decades of adversity, marginalization, and exclusion.

CERTIFICATE OF INCORPORATION

RC 28709 # 2 2

CORPORATE AFFAIRS COMMISSION
PLOT 565, NDOLA SQUARE WUSE, ZONE 5, ABUJA

Cash received 24 OCT 2018

0032497 3)

COMPANIES AND ALLIED MATTERS ACT 1, 1990, PART C

CHANGE OF NAME, TRUSTEES, AND OR OBJECTS/ALTERATION OF CONSTITUTION

NAME OF ORGANISATION	SOUDAN NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES
CERTIFICATE NO	CAC/IT/NO28709
FILE NO	

PRESENTED FOR FILING BY

CHIEF EXECUTIVE CHIEF OF NOUN

213 0964621 of 264113 for ₦10,000

REQUIREMENT FOR CHANGE OF NAME AND/OR OBJECTS

When a registered organisation desires to change its name or objects, it should adopt the following procedures:-

- The organisation must publish in two national daily newspapers, the new name that it wants to adopt.
- The organisation must display for at least 28 days, a notice conspicuously mounted at the organisation's headquarters and if any at branch offices, or any such places where majority of the members are likely to see it.
- The publications and notices must call for objections which if any must be forwarded to the Registrar General, Corporate Affairs Commission, P.M.B. 106, Abuja, within 28 days of such publication.
- Thereafter the organisation will formally apply to the Commission for the change of name and/or objects by forwarding a copy each of the publications and notices. The certificate issued to the organisation in the name to be changed must be surrendered to the Commission.

355

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4. REASONS FOR CHANGE OF NAMES, TRUSTEES AND/OR OBJECTS

SN	REASONS
1	THE TRUSTEES ARE RESIGNING AS MEMBERS OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES BECAUSE THEY CANNOT SERVE AS EXECUTIVE MEMBERS AND AT THE SAME TIME, MEMBERS OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES.
2	
3	
4	
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9	
10	

5. COPY OF THE RELEVANT MINUTES OF THE MEETING WHEREAT IT WAS AGREED TO EFFECT THE CHANGE IN TRUSTEES, NAME OR OBJECTS:

YES

27 JUL 2018

6737

6. EVIDENCE OF FILED ANNUAL RETURNS UP TO DATE

YES

NOTE:

- APPLICATION SHOULD BE ACCOMPANIED WITH EVIDENCE OF FILING OF ANNUAL RETURN UP TO DATE AND COPY OF MINUTES OF MEETING WHERE THE CHANGE IS WISHERS RECEIVED.
- MINUTES OF MEETING FOR AMENDMENTS/ALTERATION OF CONSTITUTION SHOULD ALSO CONTAIN RELEVANT SECTION ALTERED IN THE OLD CONSTITUTION

A. OLD TRUSTEES

SN	TRUSTEES
1	CHINCY PAUL ATABALL ABU LASHI - RESIGNED
2	EMOTIONDE ELLEN TROMBON - RESIGNED
3	BALU DAMLARI TRACY BARRAKU - RESIGNED
4	HON. DAMAZON MAMUKA HADI - RESIGNED
5	
6	
7	
8	
9	
10	

B. NEW TRUSTEES

SN	NAME AND ADDRESS	OCCUPATION	SIGNATURE	PASSPORT-SIZE
1	ENE EDE NO.4 BUKA FLAT, GRADE CLASS, MITE BUILDING, CUMBERA STREET, ABAJI, KARI ABAJI	CIVIL RIGHTS		
2	ISAAC ANAND NAHULITE NO.1 G.R.A ROAD, OPPOSITE RESIDENCE LADGE, GUSAU, ZAMFARA STATE	CIVIL SERVANT		
3				



The Role of the Diaspora Networks

As Nigeria pushed for disability rights at home, key voices in the diaspora were making waves on the global stage. Chief Eric Ndubueze Ufom and Lady Dorothy (Doi) Mbanefo stood out as Nigeria's only official delegates to the United Nations during the drafting of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD). Representing over 1.3 billion persons with disabilities worldwide – including 35.5 million Nigerians and 70 million Americans – they played leading roles as members of the Rehabilitation International, DPI, IDA, and the UN Disability Caucus. Both were active in the UN's 8th Ad Hoc Committee session that finalized the Convention. From the U.S., Chief Ufom led ERPWDI and co-founded the Joint National Association of Persons with Disabilities of Nigeria in the Diaspora, which helped drive UNCRPD advocacy. These efforts were critical to Nigeria's signing and ratification of the treaty.

A Movement Anchored in Inclusion

The founding of JONAPWD and the contributions of diaspora allies established a united front for disability rights in Nigeria. This alliance of grassroots mobilizers and international advocates challenged systemic silence and insisted that no one be left behind. The early years were marked by resilience, sorrow, and sacrifice. Many pioneers, colleagues, and comrades passed on due to the toxic, traumatic, and repressive environments they faced. Yet, through it all, Lady Omotunde remained a living pillar of a movement that continues to shape disability policy in Nigeria and across Africa.

The Pioneers

Chapter 4



Torchbearers of Nigeria's Disabilities Civil Rights Movement

The fight for disability rights in Nigeria was not built in comfort it was forged in struggle. At the center of this transformative journey stood a group of brave, persistent, and visionary pioneers, who dared to challenge a system that ignored over 35.5 million Nigerians with disabilities. These individuals laid the foundation for a national and international Disabilities Civil Rights Movement, often at great personal cost.

Among them, one name stands tallest Lady Omotunde Ellen Thompson, the enduring symbol of leadership, sacrifice, and impact. But she was never alone.

Founding Leaders of JONAPWD

The Joint National Association of Persons with Disabilities (JONAPWD), founded in 1992, was the first structured and unified body representing the rights and interests of persons with disabilities in Nigeria. Its original Board of Trustees (BoT), appointed upon formal incorporation in 2008, included:

- Lady Omotunde Ellen Thompson
- Danlami Usma Bashiru, Esq.
- Prince Paul Ayodele Adelabu
- Hon. Dandeson Nwankpa Hart

These four figures were instrumental in shaping national disability discourse. However, as the years passed, Lady Omotunde and Prince Adelabu remained the only retained trustees. Today, Lady Omotunde is the sole surviving founding trustee, bearing the legacy of those who started the movement with her.



Tribute to Those We Lost

The disability movement in Nigeria has not been without deep loss. Many pioneers died due to institutional neglect, trauma, and systemic repression. Among those mourned are unsung heroes men and women who worked behind the scenes, who sacrificed silently, and who never saw the fruits of their struggle.

- Mrs. Ngozi Pauline Ikebuaku, an intellectual and tireless advocate
- Other unnamed grassroots leaders, many of them women, who suffered persecution and poverty while fighting for inclusion.

Their stories may never be fully told, but their impact echoes through every legal reform, policy shift, and awareness campaign that continues today.

Lady Omotunde's Unbroken Leadership

Despite years of exclusion, Lady Omotunde has never wavered. She has held on to her role as:

- LifeChairperson of JONAPWD's Board of Trustees
- First Nigerian Woman with Disabilities in such a position
- First Disability Desk Officer at the Nigerian Presidency
- Founder of multiple advocacy platforms, including the Centre for Advocacy for Persons with Disabilities

Through her leadership, she helped shape critical institutions such as the National Commission for Persons with Disabilities (NCPD) and influenced Nigeria's integration into global disability networks and treaties.

She has stood her ground when many fell. Her resilience is the spine of the movement.



The Spirit of the Pioneers Lives On

What began as a marginalized cry for inclusion has become a national and international call for justice. The pioneers led, sustained, and immortalized through Lady Omotunde's legacy remind us that rights are not granted freely; they are fought for, earned, and defended.

Their lives continue to inspire a new generation of disability rights advocates, determined to break barriers, amend defective laws, and build an inclusive Nigeria for all.

International Networks and Movements

Chapter 5

Nigeria's Integration into Global Disability Advocacy

The disability rights struggle in Nigeria did not exist in isolation. It was part of a broader, global movement for equality, inclusion, and human rights. Thanks to the courage and vision of Nigerian advocates particularly Lady Omotunde Ellen Thompson Nigeria found its voice in international platforms, aligning its policies with global norms and establishing strong networks with international disability organizations.

This global integration was fueled by consistent advocacy that positioned Nigeria not just as a participant, but as a policy influencer in the international disability community.

The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD)

One of the most significant milestones in Nigeria's international advocacy journey was its signing and ratification of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) a legally binding treaty that demands the full inclusion of persons with disabilities in every aspect of life.

Nigeria signed the Convention on March 30, 2007, and ratified it on September 24, 2010, committing to principles like:

- Respect for dignity and individual autonomy
- Non-discrimination
- Full and effective participation
- Accessibility and equality of opportunity

Lady Omotunde, along with diaspora allies like Chief Eric Ndubueze Ufom and Mrs. Ngozi Pauline Ikebuaku, played key roles in the lobbying, negotiation, and diplomatic engagement that led to this historic achievement.

"Nothing About Us Without Us"

Central to all international disability advocacy is the mantra:

"Nothing About Us Without Us."

This phrase enshrined in Article 4.3 of the UNCRPD calls for the active involvement of persons with disabilities in all decision-making processes that affect their lives.

Despite Nigeria's formal adoption of this principle, founding advocates like Lady Omotunde were later excluded from critical policy platforms. Such exclusion represents not only a personal injustice but a violation of global agreements that Nigeria pledged to uphold.





Global Disability Summits and the Amman-Berlin Declaration (2025)

Nigeria's presence in Global Disability Summits further amplified its role in international advocacy. In April 2025, the Amman-Berlin Declaration reinforced global commitments to disability inclusion, especially within the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

At that summit, UN Special Rapporteur Heba Hagrass boldly stated:

“More than 1 billion persons with disabilities continue to face discrimination, exclusion and barriers every day... It is to the most marginalized that we are first and foremost accountable.”

Nigeria, as Africa's most populous nation, was called to lead but internal challenges, exclusions, and policy gaps have hindered its full realization of these goals.

Support from Diaspora-Based Organizations

International momentum was sustained by Nigerian-led organizations abroad.

- Equal Rights for Persons with Disabilities International, Inc. (ERPWDI)
- A U.S.-based NGO that partnered with Nigerian advocates to influence legislation, organize high-level UN meetings, and push for national accountability.

These networks were not mere supporters they were strategic partners in the fight for legal reforms and global visibility.

Building a Bridge Between Local and Global

Thanks to this powerful synergy between grassroots advocates in Nigeria and diaspora-based allies, the country has made significant strides in disability rights awareness. However, the journey is not complete.

Exclusion from implementation, tokenism, and weak political will continue to threaten progress. The voices of pioneers like Lady Omotunde must not only be celebrated they must be restored to the center of Nigeria's engagement with the world.



National Associations

Chapter 6



JONAPWD – The Voice of 35.5 Million Nigerians with Disabilities

At the core of Nigeria’s Disabilities Civil Rights Movement is the Joint National Association of Persons with Disabilities (JONAPWD-National) the only nationally recognized umbrella organization representing over 35.5 million Nigerians with disabilities and their affiliated Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and Organizations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs).

Founded in 1992 at the University of Jos, JONAPWD was birthed from a vision to unify and empower diverse disability groups under one coordinated platform. Its mandate: to ensure the inclusion, protection, and promotion of the rights of persons with disabilities across all spheres of society.

Board of Trustees: Evolution and Leadership

The founding Board of Trustees (BoT) of JONAPWD included:

- Lady Omotunde Ellen Thompson
- Danlami Usma Bashiru, Esq.
- Prince Paul Ayodele Adelabu
- Hon. Dandeson Nwankpa Hart

After a trustee review in 2013, Lady Omotunde and Prince Adelabu were retained, while new members Ene Ede and Usman Ahmad joined the leadership structure.

To date, Lady Omotunde Ellen Thompson remains the only woman and the last surviving founding trustee, underscoring her unbroken commitment and foundational role in building JONAPWD from the ground up.

Foundational Mission and Scope JONAPWD was built on four pillars:

- Advocacy for Rights and Inclusion
- Representation at National and International Levels
- Institutional Engagement and Legal Reform
- Support for Grassroots and Marginalized Communities, including:
 - Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs)
 - Almajiris
 - Military Veterans
 - Law enforcement officers with PTSD

Officially registered with the Corporate Affairs Commission (CAC) in 2008, JONAPWD operates as a nonprofit, nonpolitical civil society organization, committed to human rights and social justice.



A National Network of Change

JONAPWD's strength lies in its national reach and intersectional structure. It functions through:

- Six Geopolitical Zonal Chapters
- State and Local Government Affiliates
- Networks of CSOs and OPDs
- Professional Disability Advocacy Groups

A Symbol of Unity and Justice

Today, JONAPWD remains the central institutional platform for Nigeria's Disabilities Civil Rights Movement. It is a recognized actor both nationally and internationally, aligned with:

- The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD)
- The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 2030 Agenda
- Regional policy bodies and international advocacy networks

Through the leadership of pioneers like Lady Omotunde, JONAPWD continues to fight for a Nigeria where persons with disabilities are not just included but are leading, thriving, and shaping the future.

Policy Impact and Institutional Legacy

JONAPWD has been pivotal in the creation of the National Commission for Persons with Disabilities (NCPD) a landmark achievement that resulted from years of sustained advocacy led by its BoT Life-Chairperson, Lady Omotunde, in partnership with diaspora allies and legislative champions.

This advocacy coalition engaged directly with key institutions including:

- The Presidency
- The National Assembly
- The Office of the Secretary to the Government of the Federation (SGF)
- The Head of the Civil Service of the Federation

Their coordinated efforts helped push the Discrimination Against Persons with Disabilities (Prohibition) Act, 2018 from proposal to presidential assent, and laid the foundation for institutional enforcement through the NCPD in 2020.

African Pioneer Women with Disabilities

Chapter 7



A National Network of Change

Across the African continent, the Disabilities Civil Rights Movement has been profoundly shaped by the courage, advocacy, and leadership of women with disabilities who rose above societal and structural barriers. Among these iconic figures, Lady Omotunde Ellen Thompson of Nigeria stands tall as a beacon of change and a foundational pillar in both national and continental disability movements.

Often celebrated as the Godmother of Nigeria's National and Global Disability Civil Rights Movement, Lady Thompson's legacy is marked by over four decades of relentless service in education, policy reform, grassroots mobilization, and the fight for dignity and inclusion. Her voice, once silenced by systemic exclusion, became the voice of over 35.5 million Nigerians with disabilities.

A Trailblazer in Leadership

Lady Thompson is recognized for several historic firsts:

- The first woman with disabilities to serve as a Disability Desk Officer at the Presidency.
- The only female founding trustee and the first woman leader of the Joint National Association of Persons with Disabilities of Nigeria (JONAPWD-National).
- The founder and president of the Center for Advocacy for Persons with Disabilities.
- A key policy negotiator and frontline advocate in the establishment of the National Commission for Persons with Disabilities (NCPD).

A Continental Impact

Beyond Nigeria, Lady Thompson's influence reached continental and global platforms. She contributed to high-level diplomatic negotiations aligned with the:

- UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)
- 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)
- Amman-Berlin Declaration of 2025
- UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW69 – Beijing+30)



Despite facing exclusion, persecution, and the tragic loss of fellow pioneers to institutional neglect, Lady Thompson has remained unshaken. Her sacrifices, and those of unnamed sisters-in-struggle across Africa, carved pathways for younger generations of African women with disabilities to step into leadership, advocacy, and innovation.

A Living Legacy

Lady Omotunde's story is not just one of personal achievement it is the collective narrative of African women with disabilities who refused to be left behind. Her tireless efforts continue to inspire and guide future disability advocates, echoing the global mandates of "Nothing About Us Without Us" and "Leave No One Behind."

The Legal Journey

Chapter 8



The road to disability legislation in Nigeria is paved with decades of tireless advocacy, painful exclusions, and monumental breakthroughs. At the heart of this journey was the persistent voice of Lady Omotunde Ellen Thompson and her coalition of national and diaspora-based pioneers.

The Dream: Legal Protection for the Marginalized

For years, persons with disabilities in Nigeria lived without any formal legal shield. The need for a comprehensive anti-discrimination law was urgent. Lady Thompson, alongside Equal Rights for Persons with Disabilities International (ERPWDI), Kpakpando Foundation, and other critical allies, began sustained high-level engagements with federal lawmakers, culminating in a historic moment.

On January 23, 2019, President Muhammadu Buhari signed into law the Discrimination Against Persons with Disabilities (Prohibition) Act, 2018. This law was Nigeria's boldest legislative step yet toward aligning with the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD).

Global Commitments

Chapter 9



National Commission and Global Commitments

The journey did not end with the Act. Advocacy efforts continued until the National Commission for Persons with Disabilities (NCPD) was officially established on August 20, 2020. This victory was a direct result of formal petitions, meetings with the National Assembly, and persistent pressure from Nigeria's pioneering disability leaders.

Pitfalls and the Unspoken Truths

However, the triumph was bittersweet.

Despite playing central roles, many of the true pioneers—particularly women—were sidelined during the final processes. The law, although historic, was rushed through harmonization without consulting the very persons it was meant to protect. Lady Thompson and Chief Eric Ndubueze Ufom publicly condemned this exclusion as a violation of Article 4.3 of the UN CRPD:

“Nothing About Us, Without Us.”

The implementation of the Act also faced pitfalls:

- Lack of adequate funding and awareness within MDAs.
- Failure to mainstream disability rights in national development plans.
- Underrepresentation of women and grassroots voices in key decision-making bodies.

A Continuing Struggle

For Lady Thompson and her allies, the legal journey is not just about legislation—it is about dignity. They continue to advocate for amendments, implementation frameworks, and grassroots education to make the law meaningful in practice, not just in print.

Our Collective Prayer and Gratitude

Chapter 10



From the corridors of the United Nations to the streets of Abuja, the Disabilities Civil Rights Movement in Nigeria has mirrored global efforts to establish equality, dignity, and accessibility for all. Yet, even with signed declarations and international applause, the journey of Nigeria's compliance with these commitments reveals both bold strides and sobering gaps.

Nigeria's International Commitments

Nigeria is a signatory to some of the world's most impactful disability-related instruments, including:

- The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) – signed March 30, 2007; ratified September 24, 2010.
- The Optional Protocol to the CRPD – allowing individuals to bring complaints directly to the UN.
- The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 2030 Agenda, promising to “Leave No One Behind.”
- The Amman-Berlin Declaration (2025) from the Global Disability Summit, which emphasized "Nothing About Us Without Us."

These commitments require not just legal frameworks, but actual inclusive governance. They demand that persons with disabilities especially women be consulted, empowered, and included at every step.

Commitments vs. Reality

While these global instruments were celebrated, implementation at home has lagged. Key issues include:

- Exclusion of pioneers like Lady Omotunde Ellen Thompson from final decision-making processes.
- Top-down policy decisions that ignored grassroots realities.
- Delayed or nonexistent action plans for enforcing the CRPD and SDGs within Nigerian agencies and institutions.

International mandates such as Article 4.3 of the CRPD which calls for close consultation with persons with disabilities were violated in practice, leaving many disability leaders disillusioned despite their years of service.



Lessons Learned

Legal victories must be matched by inclusion. No law is complete without the people it protects at the center of its development.

- Legal victories must be matched by inclusion. No law is complete without the people it protects at the center of its development.
- Representation matters. When women with disabilities are pushed aside, policies lose their gendered perspective and critical solutions go unheard.
- Global recognition is meaningless without local implementation. Signing treaties is only the beginning. Building systems that honor those treaties is the real test.



Our Collective Prayer and Gratitude

In a nation where disability is still misunderstood, and advocacy often comes at a steep cost, gratitude becomes an act of both memory and resistance. This section honors those who stood, those who fell, and those who continue to rise for dignity, equality, and justice.

A Prayer for the Forgotten

We remember the unnamed heroines with disabilities whose courage built the foundation of Nigeria's disability movement, but whose lives were cut short by trauma, exclusion, and neglect.

We pray for the children born into systems that still do not see them.

We ask for strength for our leaders like Lady Omotunde Ellen Thompson who carry the weight of over 35 million lives on their shoulders.

At that summit, UN Special Rapporteur Heba Hagrass boldly stated:

“More than 1 billion persons with disabilities continue to face discrimination, exclusion and barriers every day... It is to the most marginalized that we are first and foremost accountable.”

Nigeria, as Africa's most populous nation, was called to lead but internal challenges, exclusions, and policy gaps have hindered its full realization of these goals.

A Million Thanks

To the brave pioneers who carried placards when there was no crowd to cheer.

To the allies in government, civil society, and international networks who stood with us when it mattered most.

To the mothers, sisters, daughters, and activists who turned pain into purpose.

To the women with disabilities who said, “We will not wait for permission to lead” we say thank you.



Photo Gallery



Lady Omotunde Ellen Thompson and Late Mrs. Ngozi Pauline Ikebuaku, as **Pioneers** members of Nigeria's National and International Disability Civil Rights Movement and Policy Changers/Advocates/Activists and Educators Ad Hoc Committee Members, were at the Office of the Head of the Civil Service of the Federation of Nigeria after one of their very successful advocacy and negotiations with the Mr. Welebe I. Lawrence, who is the Director Occupational Health Safety and Environment, Office of the Head of the Civil Service of the Federation of Nigeria, which successfully resulted to the establishment of the National Commission for Persons with Disabilities (NCPD)



Pioneers members of Nigeria's National and International Disability Civil Rights Movement and Policy Changers/Advocates/Activists and Educators Ad Hoc Committee Members of successfully working to establish the National commission for Persons with Disabilities in the Spirit of, 2025 Global Disability Summit, Amaan-Berlin Declaration, "Nothing About us, without Us," & "No one Left Behind."



MIDDLE PHOTO: Lady Omotunde Ellen Thompson. L-R PHOTOS: Lady Omotunde Ellen Thompson and Late Mrs. Ngozi Pauline Ikebuaku at the National Assembly Senate Building



Lady Omotunde Ellen Thompson, **BoT** Life Chairperson of the Joint National Association of Persons with Disabilities of Nigeria (JONAPWD-National), who is Nigeria's Pacesetter Woman of Distinction and a Disability Civil rights Activist/Advocate/Educator, Godmother of national/global Disability Policy Changes and her team of Persons with Disabilities Foot Soldiers at the Nigerian National Assembly and the Presidency's Aso Villa and Office of the Secretary of the Federation of Nigeria



Lady Omotunde Ellen Thompson, **BoT** Life Chairperson of the Joint National Association of Persons with Disabilities of Nigeria (JONAPWD-National), who is Nigeria's Pacesetter Woman of Distinction and a Disability Civil rights Activist/Advocate/Educator, Godmother of national/global Disability Policy Changes

LADY OMOTUNDE ELLEN THOMPSON



Since more than four decades, MAMA GENERAL continued to lead Disability-Inclusive Positive Actions and in championing the entire advocacy and negotiations for Nigeria's National/Global Disability Policy Changes

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Because Every Step Forward Begins with the Ones Who Spoke Up First

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10th June, 2025

Born to Rise. Built to Lead.

Thank You.

To every advocate, ally, and silent hero

Thank you for standing with us.

Your voice, your presence, and your belief in
justice

have helped light the path for millions.

Together, we rise. Together, we remember.

Together, we build a more inclusive Nigeria.

With heartfelt gratitude,

Lady Omotunde Ellen Thompson

Life Chairperson, JONAPWD-National

***Godmother of Nigeria's Disability Civil Rights
Movement***