

# CHAPTER ONE

## INCLUSIVE EDUCATION AND SUSTAINABLE LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES (PWDs) IN AKWA IBOM STATE UNIVERSITY, OBIO AKPA CAMPUS, NIGERIA

**Umo Umoh Effiong**  
**Anne Ekerete Ekanem**  
**Inimfon-Abasi Joseph Ottong**  
*Department of Sociology and Anthropology*  
*Akwa Ibom State University, P.M.B. 1167, Uyo*  
*E-mail: [umoumoh@aksu.edu.ng](mailto:umoumoh@aksu.edu.ng)*

### INTRODUCTION

Inclusive education offers global citizens with disabilities sustainable life-long learning opportunities for self-actualization on equal basis with others (Hale, 1990). Regrettably, 90% of children with disabilities in low income countries do not go to school, and of which about 30% of the world's street children live with a disability (UNESCO, 2014). In Nigeria, children with disabilities are systematically turned away from educational establishments by social barriers, compelling many to remain either uneducated or educated at home or, later on, sent to special schools (Iheanacho, 2009). However, education founded on wrong philosophy of destroying the traditional skill cannot drive sustainable development goals (Agha *et al.* 2020).

In spite of policies by development agencies to guarantee the education for all, people with disabilities consistently experienced less education (Effiong and Ekpenyong 2018), lower levels of employment and higher poverty rates (Effiong, 2019). Scholars on disability studies such as, Axelsson *et al.* (2009) viewed disability as neglected from being viewed as a vital issue in global poverty disconnected from mainstream development theories and practices. Evidence and experience in Nigeria, according to Effiong (2018a), shows that despite existence of institutional policy frameworks and legal instruments, such as the United Nations Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2007); National Policy on Education (2014) and the Discrimination Against Persons with Disabilities (Prohibition) Act (2018) which clearly spelt out that inclusive education is a universal and fundamental human rights for all persons with disabilities. Yet, fewer children with disabilities have access to education and are most times, completely excluded or have to face constant battles to prove their abilities in rural schools in most communities.

Disability, according to the Agenda 4 of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), should not be a reason for unequal access to educational opportunities, and hence, had nonetheless, proven to be more disability oriented framework targeted at an inclusive and equitable qualitative education and promotion of lifelong learning and opportunity for all by 2030 (SDGs, 2016). The situation in Nigeria, as noted by Effiong and Ekpenyong (2018), had attracted serious academic debates from scholars on disability studies, especially as previous disability programmes appear far too objective than practical both in terms of the nature and its operation. Given this scenario, there is need for researchers or the affected persons to show the extent of accessibility gaps hitherto existed, which this study is, at least very apt, to pervade into by adopting a suitable research approach to ascertain its aim.

## METHOD

The method adopted for this study is Content Analysis. It is an approach whereby salient ideas, which are articulated or postulated in a given text or theory are evaluated and synthesized to draw parallels, contrasts, comparisons and extrapolations (Wordu, 2010). Content analysis requires high octane reading skills and logical thinking to locate the Author's main-points which must be supported with specific details and fitting quotations from main text and form related texts and commentaries. Terry Eagleton (2006) describes content analysis as a "method whereby structures (ideas, theories, statements) are rigorously specified and their precise articulation (meanings and interpretation) are critically and systematically examined. By this definition, criticism is the major objective of content analysis. Criticism as an epistemological doctrine stands as a process of acquiring scientific knowledge through a method of dialectical thinking which goes beyond literary criticism to a more sophisticated analytical synthesis (sociological criticism).

To recapitulate this position, it is safe to state categorically that the epistemology of criticism is a valid method or approach in the social sciences. The methodological validity to the use of content analysis in social sciences criticism lie in its epistemic pertinence which emphasized the rejection of simplistic assumptions about social processes to critically scrutinize dominant ideas and the application of dialectics as a method which identifies irreconcilable contrasts and contradictions. Claude Ake (1981) described dialectical criticism as "the approach which has the potential for discovering and advancing the laws of motion of society and explaining it". It is necessary at this juncture to state firmly that the analysis of content is both a conceptual and theoretical exercise where empirical analysis goes beyond ad-hoc observations. This approach has enabled the study to capture salient ideas necessary to interpret contemporary exclusionary development policies and programmes that directly concern people with disabilities.

### Study Area

This study was conducted in the Obio Akpa campus of Akwa Ibom State University in Oruk Anam Local Government Area. The University (which is dual campus with Ikot Akpaden in Mkpato Enin and Oruk Anam Local Government Areas) was established by an Act of Akwa Ibom State House of Assembly and signed into law on 29<sup>th</sup> June, 2009 under the administration of the then Executive Governor, His Excellency Chief (Dr.) Godswill O. Akpabio and incorporated for its administration. The Obio Akpa Campus (defunct Akwa Ibom State College of Agriculture) housed Faculties of Agriculture (comprising Departments of Agricultural Economics & Extension, Animal Science, Crop Science, Fisheries & Aquaculture and Soil Science), Arts (with Departments of English & Literary Studies, History, Performing Arts, Philosophy, Religious & Cultural Studies), Management Sciences (with Departments of Accounting, Banking & Finance, Business Administration, Marketing and Public Administration) and Social Sciences (with Departments of Economics, Sociology & Anthropology, Political Science and Mass Communication).



Fig. 1: The University's Main Gate, Obio Akpa Campus, Oruk Anam Local Government Area, Akwa Ibom State

**Source:** Authors' Fieldwork, 2023; Daniel, 2019

### ***Inclusive Education Explained***

According to UNICEF (2014) it is a process of addressing and responding to the diversity of needs of all learners through increasing participation in learning, cultures and communities, and reducing exclusion within and from education. It involves changes and modifications in content, approaches, structures and strategies, with a common vision which covers all children of the appropriate age range and a conviction that it is the responsibility of the State to educate all children. This refers to the situation of providing person with disabilities an unimpeded access to education to strengthen their self-confidence and dignity (UNESCO, 2014). Children with disabilities are guaranteed the opportunities to learn based on their capacities according to what they need and want in their life, (SDGs, 2016). The development of their full potential in inclusive development reflects the participation and commitment of all. Inclusive Education is a concept that has gained the attention of socially excluded groups and/or organizations working to reduce poverty and inequalities (UN, 2005; Effiong, 2018a).

Despite the fact that education is free and open to all (including people with disabilities), Bowles and Gintis (1976) cited in Haralambos *et al.* (2008) observed that some people have much greater opportunities than others. This, according to Effiong (2018b) is because children of the wealthy and powerful tend to have advantage over that of the poor irrespective of their disabilities (physical, sensory or intellectual). The education system disguises this, with its myth of meritocracy, laying credence to its provision of common curriculum opened to all children who qualify on the basis of their abilities. The principle here seems unsatisfactory when pushed to extremes. The rigid application of the principle of sameness here implies that individuals would be stunted and crushed to fit the common mould. Haralambos *et al.*, (2008) rightly observed here that, those who are denied success always blamed themselves, and not the system which most times condemned them to failure.

### ***Sustainable Development Goals Explained***

Education remains a critical goal that is of strategic importance to persons with disabilities as they require training for knowledge and skills to facilitate poverty reduction and empowerment (Effiong, 2019). Many schools are more concerned about meeting the needs of education system rather than the needs of the persons/children with disabilities (Coleridge and Hartley, 2010). The goals are clearly defined based on the analysis of the situation. Again, the lead role of the people in defining their own development goals assures a “fit” or relevance to their actual situation and needs (education). Defining development *with* the people stands out against the common practice of defining *for* the people what they need. People’s capacities must be built, if they are to genuinely participate in all aspects of inclusive community development. World Bank (2013) at this point considered sustainable development to be growth which is inclusive to reduce poverty and blind shared prosperity for today’s population and to continue meeting the needs of future generations. This new thinking of SDGs requires participation of all people (including people with disabilities), in production activities, (Effiong, Udousung and Udoh, 2018).

### ***Life-long training Explained***

The International Development Agencies, such as UNDP after observing stark realities of human development gaps within and between countries reflected by unequal opportunities, noted that greater equity is a powerful catalyst for poverty reduction. Such inequalities are unjust economically, wasteful and socially destabilizing (UNDP, 2005). Afterwards, a global initiative of “Education for All” was undertaken with considerable progress recorded in recent years. But however, while progress has been made, it was observed that 1/3 of children with disabilities are not in school (UNESCO, 2014). Environmental barriers, bias and stigma-based attitudes and behaviours are factors responsible for setting apart children with disabilities and excluded from education (UNICEF, 2014). To recapitulate this position, it is safe to argue here that this is contrary to United Nation Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD, 2007) and Community Based Rehabilitation’s (CBR, 2010)

advocacy which promote inclusive education as a right and as a way to ensure all children are included and learning in schools.

### ***Persons with Disabilities Explained***

People with disabilities are part of oppressed people in the world. They are rarely recognised as a group with distinct needs and rights, because their status is not esteemed and their lack of physical strength and mental maturity exposes them to frequent human rights violation by their care-givers (Effiong, 2017a). These are people with long-term physical impairments which hinder their participation or opportunities on equal basis with others in society (Effiong and Ekpenyong, 2018). UNICEF (2014) shows that children with disabilities are more vulnerable to abuse and neglect than their peers without disabilities. This observation aligns with studies from CBM (2010), Effiong and Agha (2020) that persons with disabilities in most rural communities in Nigeria are excluded and deprived of choices and opportunities for livelihood enhancement (including education and life-long learning). Lang and Upah (2008) noted that PWDs in many parts of Nigeria receive little support; suffer various forms of discrimination and often times, and face significant barriers to participate in several livelihood activities in most rural communities in the country. They are often excluded from social, economic and political matters that concern them. According to Effiong (2017), the common perception of disability intervention is often in terms of charity and welfare. Consequently, this viewpoint is a significant factor that inhibits the social inclusion of PWDs to enhance their livelihood in society.

### **Theoretical Illuminations**

The twin-track approach is preferred and used as a model for this study. This approach was initiated by Department for International Development, and applied to the disability sector in 2000 to ensure equal opportunities and full inclusion of persons with disabilities in the daily life of their respective communities. This model, to disability and development focuses on “addressing inequalities between disabled and non-disabled persons in all strategic areas of (its) works” and “supporting specific initiatives to enhance the empowerment of persons with disabilities”. Twin-track approach is where efforts are made to prepare individuals and the environment at the same time, so that by the time the people are ready to engage in activities, the environment is favourable to enable them to participate accordingly. Both persons with disabilities and the system or environment in which they live are worked upon concurrently to ensure inclusion.

Working towards the realization of an inclusive environment with the twin-track approach entails two things: ensuring inclusive services (such as education) and mainstreaming disability in overall policy making while simultaneously supporting targeted disability actions and services to promote the empowerment of persons with disabilities. In the process of developing and making services accessible for persons with disabilities, measures and efforts are undertaken to empower users and address existing and urgent requirements of persons with disabilities. The twin-track approach proves to be very useful for persons with disabilities to be accepted as equal partners in development and included as full participants in all development activities. This is because the approach allows for the establishment of a wide network of community-based ‘rehabilitation’ services that complement one another, thus ensuring a so-called “continuity of care in special schools rehabilitation centers” and effectively shifting towards social inclusion of persons with disabilities. The Approach supports further, equal rights and suitable opportunities to both the disabled and the non-disabled in society. Thus, an integrated disability-inclusive approach through Community-based rehabilitation programmes, with best practice social and developmental terms is more likely ensured.

### ***Accessibility and Inclusive Education Policy Frameworks***

Over the years, important initiatives have been undertaken towards the development of a number of policy statements, with the quest to addressing the demands and rights of people with disabilities. This

was based on observation that persons with disabilities were missing out in education. Highlights of these initiatives are encapsulated based on Sustainable Development Goals (2016),

*“The Global Development Agenda 4 of Sustainable Development Goal aimed at ensuring inclusive and equitable quality of education and promotion of lifelong learning and opportunity for all in the 2030”.*

The critical assessment of Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) policy document reveals that disability issue was explicitly left out of the MDGs without any specific attention given to persons with disabilities before the targeted period in 2015 (Effiong 2018). To this end, the Washington Post in 2006, hitherto, had noted that the MDGs can never achieve universal primary education target of 2015 by global citizens, if development programmes are not made inclusive with any specific attention given to persons with disabilities. In a corroborative study, the UNDP (2005) affirms that the Goal 2 of achieving universal primary education will not be reached if children with disabilities are not enrolled in schools in most developing countries. And by 2015, however, several countries in the world, including Nigeria could not achieve the MDG’s target, (UN, 2015). To this end, Akpan and Effiong (2020) rhetorically bothered about how to sustain (SDGs) what, *abinitio*, had not been achieved in the MDGs.

United Nation Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD 2007) is the first comprehensive human rights treaty of the 21st century and the first human rights convention to be opened for signature by regional integration organizations (UNICEF, 2014). The Article 24 of UNCRPD calls upon State parties to ensure an inclusive education system at all levels and life-long learning directed to the full development of human potential and sense of dignity and self-worth.

*“...with a view to realizing the right of persons with disabilities to education without discrimination and on the basis of equal opportunity, State Parties shall ensure an inclusive education system at all levels and lifelong learning”* (UNCRPD Article 24:1).

The UNCRPD is a legally-binding instrument within international law which re-affirms existing human rights in the context of disability and directed Countries that sign up to the Convention to ratify and to implement the promotion and protection of the rights of PWDs at the National level. Implemented properly, the Convention can bring about a real change for the better in the daily experiences of the millions of PWDs around the globe. Government and communities were urged to take effective and appropriate measures to facilitate their full inclusion and participation in the community (UN, 2007). Nigeria ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities (CRPD) in 2007 and Optional Protocol in 2010. The ratification of CRPD emphasized on the need to mainstream disability into development policies and social services. In this wise, it can be seen as a shift from classical development work to inclusive development.

In 2011 and 2015, the National Assembly passed the Discrimination Against Persons with Disabilities (Prohibition) Bill 2009, but declined accent by former President Goodluck Jonathan, and was re-presented to the National Assembly, which was passed by the House of Representatives and the Senate Joint Committee in November 2016, but was not sent to Buhari for his signature until December 2018. According to the National Policy on Education (NPE 2014),

*“Every Nigerian child shall have a right to equal educational opportunities irrespective of any real or imagined disabilities each according to his or her ability”.*

This, according to Effiong (2018a), may have been one of the reasons for the introduction of inclusive education in Nigeria where all persons (with and without disabilities or difficulties), can learn together to acquire knowledge and skills on equal basis with others, for self-empowerment. But the equality of opportunity within the context of education is far from clear, (Hale, 1990). This, as observed by Haramlambos, Holborn and Heald, (2008), is because the idea that everyone competes on equal terms, is an illusion. The critical evaluations by scholars on disability studies in Nigeria reveals that education reproduces inequality, by justifying the privileged and attributing poverty to personal failure of families of people with disabilities who could not cater for educational needs, (Effiong, 2018b). Here, it can be deduced that these evaluations had efficiently disguised the narratives that the

educational system in Nigeria provided equality of opportunity for PWDs to access appropriate different education to develop their individual life-long skills for self-reliance and sustainability.

In this way, the myth that education provided equal opportunity for all in all societies, by UN (2015), is grossly undermined in Nigeria. This is thus, a sharp contrast of the National Policy on Education which lay claims on giving Nigerian children opportunity for developing manipulative skills that will enable the child function effectively in society within the limits of the child's capacity. The National Policy on Rehabilitation (2007) states:

*“...shall provide for persons with disabilities an equitable national distribution services to aid the learning or improvement of persons with disabilities”.*

In the past, disability was viewed as a cause, which evokes pity and public sympathy. This resulted in unjust dependency, segregation, isolation exclusion from society. Over the past decade, changing ethos has taken place within an international context which finally gave rise in 1993, to the UN Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities. The principle of equal rights implies that the needs of each and every individual are of equal importance and that planning and policy-making, should be based on those needs.

Furthermore, all resources must be employed in such a way as to ensure that every individual has an equal opportunity to participate. The Government of the Federal Republic of Nigeria accepts the principles of participation, integration and equalization of opportunities as defined by the United Nations in the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons and by the Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for persons with disabilities. The Federal Government of Nigeria further accepts the principles incorporated in the following declarations proclaiming the necessity of protecting the rights and assuring the welfare and rehabilitation of the physically and mentally disadvantaged; the Universal Declaration of Human rights; the International convention of human rights; the United Nations Development Decade for Women, the Declaration on the rights of mentally retarded persons; and the Declaration on Social Progress and Development.

The Discrimination against Persons with Disabilities (Prohibition) Act, 2018:

*“...establishes a National Commission for Persons with Disabilities, responsible for ensuring that people with disabilities have access to education, and prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability and imposes sanctions including fines and prison sentences on those who contravene it....”*

Succinctly, rights of persons with disabilities have over the time unimplemented and unenforced. Their wrong perception and idealism is not unconnected with their knowledge of the term disability; hence the need for advocacy to re-orientate Nigeria government, policy makers and society at large about persons with disabilities, their capacity and limitations. The journey to achieving disability-inclusive development in Nigeria has not been without challenges as government, policy makers and society perceived issues relating to persons with disabilities as charity and never as responsibility, the resultant effect which is non-implementation of international treaties which engenders deprivations of the right to education, employment, health, social live, and all sorts of discrimination. After ratifying the UNCRPD in 2007 and the Optional Protocols in 2011, it took 12 years of relentless advocacy for Nigeria to get a Disability Act. During those 12 years, the Disability Bill (as it was called before being passed into law) failed to receive Presidential assent three times. The Bill acquired the unenviable record of the longest and most protracted in Nigeria's history. Martinez and Vemuru (2020) attributed the delay to the financial implications of establishing the National Commission for Persons with Disabilities (an institution whose presence should be in every one of the 36 states in Nigeria).

Over the years, advocates considered trying to get the bill passed even without the Commission, and advocacy for disability-inclusive development gradually intensified. World Health Organization (WHO, 2011) shows that many of PWDs face a number of human rights abuses including lack of access to education. The principles and articles have not been translated into legal reality and embedded in various relevant National and specific-disability legislations and policies (WHO, 2011). According to Akpan and Effiong (2021), one can rightly agree here that the enactment of the Disability Act (2018) is only a first step in the fulfillment of Nigeria's obligations under the

Convention on Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPDs). Again, this study had keenly observed that the ratification of CRPD emphasized on the need to mainstream disability into development policies and social services. In this wise, it can be seen as a shift from classical development work to inclusive development. This is because PWDs are often times been excluded from development policies and programmes that directly concern them, (Effiong, 2018). CBR programme supports equal rights and suitable opportunities to both the disabled and the non-disabled in society. This programme is, therefore, an intervention strategy to empower all persons with disabilities in Nigeria.

### **Impediments of Inclusive Education**

Empirical evidence shows existence of specific barriers in some African countries which constraint inclusive education of people with disabilities. Inclusive education in Uganda was adopted in 1997 along with universal primary education. According UBOS (2012) and AYDU (2014) the unfriendly physical and learning facilities in both universities and tertiary institutions in the country restrict active participation of students with disabilities, largely attributed to ignorance of the needs of PWDs, the barriers they experience and the need for them to participate in education at all levels. Kochung (2011) reported that most buildings and infrastructural facilities in Kenya do not favour inclusion in higher education, as they are discriminatory and excludes vulnerable members of society especially those with disabilities. Aletheia (2015) confirmed that the problem stems from secondary education, which is out of reach of many, due to its cost, remains a barrier for many students, particularly the most marginalized segment (people with disabilities).



**Fig. 2:** A Disability-unfriendly Storey-building Classroom Block for Social Sciences & Postgraduate Students at Obio Akpa Campus. *Source:* Authors' Fieldwork, 2023

ROCARE/ENRWACA (2008) indicated the difficulties faced in the education of children with disabilities in Cameroun are as numerous as the causes of disabilities. The study further shows students with disability is despised and denied opportunities for completion even when they are well qualified. Also, parents discriminate children with disabilities considering them to be “useless” to the family and society and therefore, not worth the investment. In Togo, Abi and Buan (2014) reveal that most schools having learners with disabilities are not equipped with accessible facilities, which are basic requirement for learners with movement challenges. Facilities are not adapted to suit individuals with different types of disability. The study confirms similar scenario in the Tertiary Education Trust Fund's (TETFUND) lecture theatre of Obio Akpa campus in Akwa Ibom State University where the large numbers students in the lecture hall make it difficult for students with disabilities to access seats even when they struggle to access school.



Side view



Main Entrance

Fig. 3: An Ultra-modern TETFUND Lecture Theatre with long and high staircase access

*Source:* Authors' Fieldwork, 2023

It has been observed that in spite of the broad range of development with the view to addressing the infrastructural deficit and demands for enabling working environment by staff and students alike, about 80% of buildings in the campus, still, are not disability friendly to enhance equal learning opportunities to persons with disabilities. Incidences of high level positioning of whiteboards in lecture halls posed serious challenge to lecturers with disabilities, especially those on wheelchairs who wish to use it. Also, the provision of an unfettered access for wheelchair users to the premises of Faculty of Agriculture, is impeded by nonchalant attitude of the Engineer of the newly constructed road who fails to provide access to link the newly created road to the hitherto pedestrian walkway/ramp for wheelchair users as shown on the slate below:



Fig. 4: Recommended for provision of slab to link the road with the ramp for a seamless access by wheelchair users on the campus to the Faculty building. *Source:* Authors' Fieldwork, 2023



Side view



Entrance/Access

Fig. 5: Faculty of Management Sciences. *Source:* Authors' Fieldwork, 2023

The above buildings housed Departments of Accounting, Banking and Finance, Business Administration, Marketing and Public Administration to service both students with disabilities as well as those with non-disabilities in the faculty. While provision of services is considered to be a central



activity in the University, services offered should be accessible, of good quality, sustainable and available to users.



Fig 6: Faculty of Arts



Fig 7: Faculty of Agricultural Sciences

*Source:* Authors' Fieldwork, 2023



Fig. 8: Faculty of Social Sciences.

*Source:* Authors' Fieldwork, 2023

Fig. 6 shows Faculty of Arts building which accommodates Departments of English and Literary Studies, History, Philosophy, Religious and Cultural Studies, etc, while Fig. 7 accommodates Departments of Agricultural Economics & Extension, Animal Science, Crop Science, Fisheries & Aqua-culture and Soil Science. Faculty of Social Sciences which comprises Departments of Economics, Political Sciences, Sociology & Anthropology and Mass Communication is housed by the above building happened to be the only Faculty in the Campus that has a disability friendly environment. No wonder, it is branded “social”.



**Fig. 9:** Rabbitry Section of the Department of Animal Science for Practical Students

*Source:* Authors' Fieldwork, 2023

Again, accessibility to this facility poses challenge to students with mobility challenges due to the non-compliance to wheelchair and other users of assistive devices. Until an understanding of the link between the kinds of services and their interrelationship has been reached, it is anticipated that inclusion and service development would be ineffective for majority of persons with disabilities. The development of professional standards and ethics may have a direct impact on opportunities for career advancement and high value placed on students with disabilities. The scenario in the Rabbitry Unit of Animal Science Department of the Akwa Ibom State University is similar to the state of inclusive education in Burkina Faso. Afrik Consulting (2013) revealed that many children with disabilities are locked up far from school and deprived of opportunities to build their future. It revealed that several factors can limit the access of students with disabilities to inclusive education. Thus, the complicated situation may stem from the negative attitude of architectural managers, building consultants, engineers, even the university managers could contribute to infrastructural barriers that further limit access to the inclusive education for persons with disabilities in the Department. Little wonder why Effiong (2019) opined that education in Nigeria is beyond the realm of many, and students with disabilities are completely excluded or have to face a constant battle to prove their abilities.



**Fig. 10:** The Head of Campus' Office Block calls for concern as the terrain is not users-friendly to people with mobility challenged. *Source:* Authors' Fieldwork, 2023

### Efforts by the University's Management in Promoting Disability Inclusion

As rightly observed by Sserunkuma (2017), Kyambogo University in Uganda is a center piece of excellence in inclusive education through its Faculty of Special Needs and Rehabilitation by actualization of effective learning, ownership and sustainability at family and community levels. In Nigeria, Akwa Ibom State University as a citadel of learning has in recent times, made concerted efforts to put in place several infrastructural facilities to enhance an inclusive education for students with disabilities. An important starting point in promoting inclusive education is to create an inclusive learning environment. The University has involved the building of ramps, and widening doorways for wheelchair users and accessible toilets which demonstrate the University's commitment to developing inclusive environments. This is evidenced by the fantastic disability-compliance infrastructural facilities shown below:



**Fig. 11:** Mass Communication Studio Block



**Fig. 12:** Pinnacle Theatre Block

*Source:* Authors' Fieldwork, 2023

However, unforeseen difficulties with shortages of paths which are frequently washed away by the rain are some examples of the on-going challenges in the University. Erosion incidence further created a situation, which seriously impeded the inclusive education.



**Fig. 13:** Access to Centre for General Studies and Students' Affaires seriously threatened by erosion  
*Source:* Authors' Fieldwork, 2023

In quest to keeping with tenets of sustainable development goals, this requires a quick response from the stakeholders in charge of remedial work on the campus in order to avert major damage, as would help in sustaining the hitherto existing infrastructure in the University.



**Fig. 14:** Access to the Campus State-of- the- Art Pinnacle Theatre recommended for prompt intervention  
*Source:* Authors' Fieldwork, 2023

It is also observed that Obio Akpa Campus is currently undergoing a serious intervention in the quest to making it accessible to all; including people with disabilities by the Professor Nse Essien led management team.



**Fig. 15:** A Section of the Study Area after Erosion intervention  
*Source:* Authors' Fieldwork, 2023

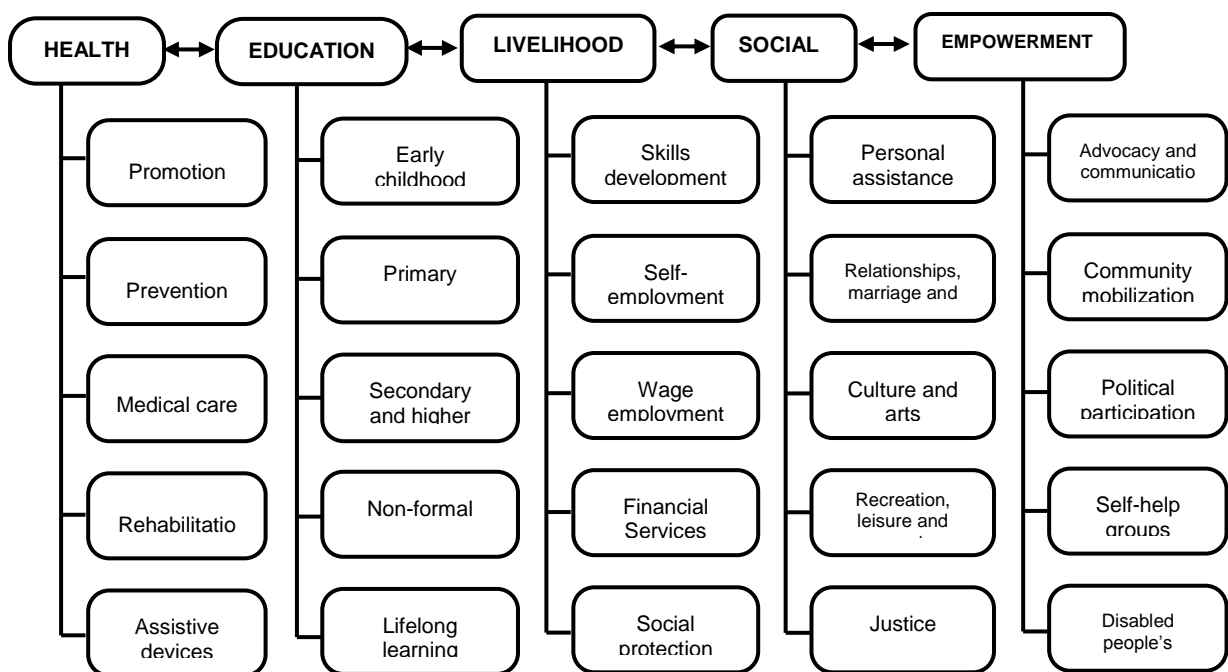
## Community Based Rehabilitation and Strategy for Inclusive Education

WHO-CBR (2010) Guidelines and Effiong (2019) suggested that CBR programmes should collaborate with students, their families, community members and schools in order to ensure that positive ties are created and sustained all through the transition periods. Recommended by the UN Convention as a comprehensive rehabilitation services devoid of isolated interventions to enable effective participation of persons with disabilities in all aspects of life (UN 2008), and endorsed by World Health Organisation as the best strategy for the equalization of opportunities and social inclusion of all persons with disabilities (WHO 2010a). CBR is providing disability-inclusive services to most rural community schools (WHO, 2010; CBR Policy, 2010). In this wise, provision of CBR programmes in both urban and rural societies can help mitigates some consequences of impairment, by facilitating participation in the domains, such as education and empowerment (Effiong and Ekpenyong, 2018). This position corroborates the views of some scholars who saw CBR as antidote to the poor coverage of disability support services in developing countries (CBR Guidelines, 2010; Effiong and Agha, 2020). This strategy is the most cost-effective approach when compared to hospital or centre-based rehabilitation services.

Interestingly, Nigeria, in the aftermath of its civil war, adopted this global disability-intervention strategy (i.e. CBR) to adequately respond to the needs of the war- induced citizens with disability in the country, and since then, the programme have contributed meaningfully to the nation’s socio-economic development and persons with disabilities are re-integrated into the social spheres via the removal of all forms of attitudinal and environmental barriers to participation in life (Effiong, Wordu and Mboho, 2018). Eighty percent (80%) of rehabilitation needs of persons with disabilities are met under certain conditions through community based rehabilitation strategy which focused principally on inclusive education and accepted globally as a development framework for realization of the SDGs in 2030, (Effiong, 2019). Community based rehabilitation ensures “*education for all*” by creating inclusive and accessible environment within the mainstream classroom.

The five basic components of CBR according to WHO (2010), of which education is considered as a top most priority amongst others are briefly explained below.

### CBR Matrix



**Source:** WHO (2010) culled from Effiong and Ekpenyong (2017).

## **Principles of CBR**

The matrix is underpinned by the principles of inclusion and sustainability. By embedding CBR in these principles, the strategy aims to achieve the rights of persons with disabilities, inclusive development and long-term sustainability. To ensure sustainability, CBR Policy Paper (2010) advocated for coordination among Organizations of and for persons with disabilities, professional bodies, academe, community leaders, civil society, faith based groups and the business sector. The Organizations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs) within and outside the University plays a central role to mobilize the resources (human, technical, material, environmental etc.) to meet the needs of citizens with disabilities. Effiong and Ekpenyong (2017) see community-based rehabilitation as a combination of a number of activities or intervention that can be included in the CBR matrix and are targeted at rights, needs, or inclusion of people with disabilities. Its position further places emphasis on social inclusion and opportunity equalization for people with disabilities (Effiong, 2019).

## **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Persons with disabilities are an important human resource that should be utilized to promote inclusive development. Accessible education is instrumental for disability inclusion. It however requires collaboration to ensure appropriate provision of accessible education. Attainment of Sustainable Development Goals will be realized when all people take part in the development process. This chapter therefore dwells on the approach by which advocacy can be made with useful recommendations. CBR strategy is advocated for adoption by governments at all levels, to help move policy and practice towards inclusive education and sustainable life-long learning opportunities for persons with disabilities (PWDs) in Africa, in the quest to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG's) Agenda of "leaving no one behind" beyond 2030. Conclusively, despite the broad range of development to address infrastructural deficits and demands of students and staff alike, facilities such as medical center, libraries, halls, office blocks, and laboratories in the campus are not adapted to suit individuals with different types of disabilities to enhance inclusivity. Therefore, it is recommended as follows:

- i. The University management committee should put in place a mechanism to ensure that public buildings are made accessible through provisions of ramps and low steps on staircases to lecture venues for use by persons with disabilities on the campus.
- ii. The University management should establish Directorate of Disability Services manned with an expert on disability inclusion drawn from amongst the staff who is already in the university's payroll as adviser to the Vice Chancellor in line with the Sustainable Development Goals 2030 mandate.
- iii. There is need also for the University management to provide support for community based rehabilitation programmes for people with disability.
- iv. There must be coordination among professional bodies, academics; campus students' fellowship/associations with the view to making the university system inclusive.

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