



RESEARCH ON THE COST OF INCLUSIVE ELECTIONS TO IMPROVE ACCESS FOR NIGERIANS WITH DISABILITIES

AUGUST 2020



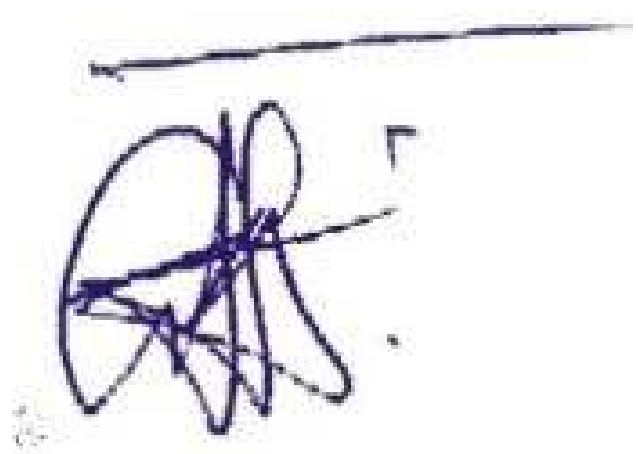
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Grace Jerry,
Executive Director, Inclusive Friends Association

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DEFINITION OF TERMS

Abbreviation	Meaning
EMBs	Electoral Management Bodies
FRN	Federal Republic of Nigeria
IFA	Inclusive Friends Association
IFES	International Foundation for Electoral Systems
INEC	Independent National Electoral Commission
KII	Key Informant Interview
NOA	National Orientation Agency
OPDs	Organization of Persons with Disability
PWDs	Persons With Disabilities
UDHR	Universal Declaration of Human Rights
UNCRPD	United Nations Convention for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
WHO	World Health Organization

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) are undoubtedly among the most marginalized and excluded groups in Nigeria. The World Bank says about 1 billion or 15% of the world have one form of disability or another, and this accounts to about 27,300,000 Nigerians with disabilities based on the National Population Commission. In the electoral process, PWDs face numerous challenges in exercising their right to vote and be voted for.

The 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria provides that every citizen has the right to freedom from discrimination, yet PWDs are systematically discriminated due to their inability to register as voters, access information on voter registration or voter education, difficulty in accessing polling units, the ballot box and using electoral materials unaided among others, which inadequate data have been identified as major challenges that hinder inclusion plans by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) and some other relevant institutions of government to ensure the full inclusion of PWDs in elections and other socio-economic processes.

The Inclusive Friends Association (IFA) has over the years adopted evidence-based advocacy in partnership with some other OPDs to improve access to the election for PWDs in Nigeria.

Notable among these is the success of the intervention by IFA in advocating INEC to provide the Braille ballot guide and Election Day written instructions for the 2019 general election and retaining the same for the off-circle governorship elections in Kogi and Bayelsa states.

This complies with section 30 (2) of the Disability Act. To drive it evidence-based advocacy on access to the election for PWDs in Nigeria, IFA embarked on the research on the cost of inclusive elections for improved access for Nigerians with disabilities.

Objectives of the research

The study aims to provide the cost outline and thresholds to support the National Assembly and INEC in properly making allocations/appropriation for the provision of election materials in usable formats for PWDs in Nigeria.





Approach and Methodology

Data for the study was collected using two instruments; Desk-Based research and Key Informant Interview (KII).

The sampling technique was non-probability because the subject matter is a specialized subject. Respondents for the KII included INEC, National Orientation Agency (NOA), National Assembly, OPDs, International Civil Society Organizations/Donor Agency, and the Media.

Summary of Findings

The study made numerous findings in critical areas like; good practices on inclusive election for PWDs, Nigeria's experience on an inclusive election for PWDs, Budgetary Allocations for the provision of election materials in accessible/usable format, Costing of electoral materials in accessible format among others.

Some of the findings include:

- Gaps in legislation, non-inclusive voters' registration, inaccessible voters' education, infrastructural barriers, inadequate assistive aids, non-inclusive Election Administration, etc.
- Budgetary Allocation to make Nigeria's elections more accessible for PWDs are inadequate.
- Inadequate funding, lack of political will, inadequate data, gaps in legislation and inadequate advocacy on the path of OPDs are identified as possible limitations to adequate budgetary allocation for election materials in an accessible format for PWDs.
- The costs of the election material are not fixed due to variation in type and brand. Thus, pricing depends on the specification of customers.
- The pricing of the election material is ranged from lowest cost to highest cost.

Summary of Recommendations

Given the nature of barriers and limitations identified, several recommendations were made to be implemented by INEC, NOA, National Assembly and OPDs as follows;





Partnership and Advocacy

- a.** The coalition of OPDs should deepen its advocacy to the National Assembly for the amendment of extant laws to support inclusive elections for PWDs in Nigeria.
- b.** OPDs should advocate INEC for full compliance to Federal Character guideline/disability Act provision of 5% PWDs in INEC recruitment to ensure inclusiveness in election administration, monitoring and observation.
- c.** OPDs should continually advocate INEC for proper planning and deployment of assistive aids for both general and off-cycle elections.
- d.** INEC in collaboration with OPDs should commence advocacy for support to relocate inaccessible polling units to accessible locations.
- e.** INEC in partnership with OPDs should commence strategic advocacy to the governors' forum to make all public schools within their respective jurisdiction accessible for PWDs to address the challenge of inaccessible polling units.

Training

- a.** INEC should ensure intensive and regular disability-inclusive training for polling staffs on accessible elections for PWDs in the electoral process.
- b.** OPDs should intensify efforts to build the capacity of PWDs to empower them as advocates, trainers, and observers of accessible elections in Nigeria.
- c.** INEC should deepen its collaboration with OPDs to train PWDs on the electoral process including voters' registration and usage of assistive aids during elections.



Awareness

- a.** INEC, NOA and the coalition of OPDs should develop a strategic communication plan to disseminate electoral information in accessible formats for PWDs.
- b.** OPDs should improve collaboration with the media to promote actions and programmes aimed at actualizing accessible elections for PWDs in Nigeria.
- c.** OPDs should create awareness on the specific rights of PWDs stipulated in extant laws frequently to improve the consciousness and awareness of PWDs.





The barriers and limitations identified in the course of the study are numerous.

However, effective and holistic implementation of these recommendations will improve access to elections for PWDs in Nigeria.



INTRODUCTION

This section presents a general background to the study including the rationale, objectives, and scope of the study;

BACKGROUND

The coalition of OPDs should deepen its advocacy to the National Assembly for the amendment of extant laws to support inclusive elections for PWDs in Nigeria.

Around the world, ideal democratic development involves the inclusion of the disadvantaged and marginalized population in the decision-making process that affects their welfare. PWDs have often been excluded in various processes especially political participation, thus, struggle to be part of the decision-making processes and contribute to any meaningful legislation or policy implementation is short-lived.

This exclusion is a breach of Article 29 (a) of the United Nations Convention for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) that mandates state parties to ensure that PWDs can effectively and fully participate in political and public life on an equal basis with others, directly or through freely chosen representatives, including the right and opportunity for persons with disabilities to vote and be elected.

PWDs represent wide and diverse ethnic, religious, socio-economic, and gender groups. Sadly, the non-participation of this large and socially important part of the society in elections affects our democratic development and citizen participation in governance.

Since election is an essential pillar of democracy that serves as a platform where citizens' choice and power can be exercised and strengthened, PWDs also are provided the opportunity to express their political preferences to shape political outcomes.

Studies and observations by Inclusive Friends and other observer groups have shown that during elections, PWDs encounter difficulty in accessing polling units, the ballot box, and using electoral materials. In some cases, electoral officials lack requisite training to support voters with disabilities, or provide specialized equipment and material needed by PWDs may not be available at polling units, and this contributes significantly to the disenfranchisement of PWDs.

Although disenfranchisement is not limited to voting alone, PWDs' inability to register as voters, access information on voter registration or voter education before the election is a major hitch to inclusive elections.

The aforementioned barriers can affect the knowledge of PWDs on how to cast their votes or choices available to them as voters. Access to elections for PWDs includes but is not limited to all the above issues, it is a criterion to a just social system.





Although consistent advocacy by OPDs in Nigeria has birthed the Discrimination Against Persons with Disabilities Prohibition Act, 2019, the establishment of the National Commission for Persons with Disabilities, amongst other, there is a huge opportunity for OPDs to continue advocacy in this regard to ensure that all these are fully functional and inclusion initiatives are fast track. In a similar vein, the intervention of IFA after the 2019 elections in organizing the network of PWDs to demand from the INEC to comply with section 30 (2) of the disability Act by retaining the Braille ballot guide and Election Day written instructions for the 2019 off-circle governorship elections in Kogi and Bayelsa states is a successful initiative that OPDs can further in their various spheres/ thematic areas of work.

However, studies have shown that accessibility barriers for PWDs are multidimensional, manifesting in the inability of the visually impaired person(s) to access government websites to search for opportunities, independently crossroads. Those with hearing impairments have no or limited access to sign language interpretation services in the government media to follow government functions and announcements on opportunities that would improve their livelihood.

Persons with albinism, persons with intellectual disabilities, persons with leprosy among others experience barriers that hinder them to participate actively in all aspects of the Nigerian society, which affects the realization of their human rights negatively.

Despite the progress that has been recorded, access to elections for PWDs is still hindered by numerous challenges including but not limited to physical access to polling units, materials, absence or inconsistent use of the Braille ballot guide, attitudinal barriers, and poor information on costing to support deliberate and proper budgeting as observed in different election audit reports by IFA.

Additionally, lack of or inadequate data has been identified as a major challenge to INEC's planning for inclusion.

This study is conducted to provide the cost outline and thresholds for various equipment, architecture, and materials needed for the full inclusion of PWDs in elections to support the national assembly and INEC in properly making allocations/appropriation and provision of election materials in usable formats for PWDs in Nigeria as well as empower OPDs with useful information to continue various advocacy efforts strategically to achieve greater gains for PWDs in Nigeria.



RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The main objective of this study is to provide the cost outline and thresholds to support the national assembly and INEC in properly making allocations/appropriation and provision of election materials in usable formats for PWDs in Nigeria.

The following are specific objectives:

1. To ascertain the cost (unit and wholesale) of providing election materials in accessible formats for PWDs to ensure inclusive elections in Nigeria.
2. To ascertain the cost implications of new electoral processes recommended in various Reports by IFA to target election stakeholders.
3. To review the budgetary allocations (percentages) made by INEC and other electoral stakeholders in their annual budgets to help make Nigeria's elections more accessible for PWDs in three consecutive electoral circles (2010 and 2011 budgets, 2014, and 2015 budgets and 2018 and 2019 budgets).
4. To identify possible limitations, causes, and remedies for inadequate budget allocations for the provision of election materials in accessible formats for PWDs to help make Nigeria's elections more inclusive.

DISABILITY EXPLAINED

The concept of disability has been defined, understood, and addressed differently over time. Its evolution can be traced to three (3) epochs, namely: the period where disability is an attribute of the person, the period where disability is related to the environment, and a period where disability is linked to the combination of person and environment relationship.

Previously, PWDs were treated as patients with medical needs and beneficiaries of social services until the UNCRPD changed the narrative to a human rights-based phenomenon by promoting the process of enabling PWDs.

The following are the approaches to disability:

Medical Approach:

This approach perceived disability from the lens of an individual's physical or mental impairments.



Disability is seen as the result of disease, trauma, or other health conditions that can be treated medically.

Thus, the World Health Organization (WHO) in its Classification of impairments, disabilities, and handicaps, defined disability as any restriction or lack of ability as a result of impairment to perform an activity in the manner or within the range considered normal for a human being.

This definition stigmatizes PWDs as abnormal or fundamentally lacking where all disabled-focused interventions were aimed at normalizing PWDs.

Charity-based Approach:

This approach viewed disability from the vantage point of beneficiaries of donations.

Seeing PWDs as persons that cannot cater for themselves or/and the capacity to live independently, hence, the perception of dependency.

As such, they are the recipients of the generosity of others.

To make it worse, they are hindered in so many ways to take part in decision-making through the ballot.

Human Rights-based Approach:

The human rights-based approach by the UNCRPD is founded on the idea that the inability of PWDs to participate in the life of their communities is not to be attributed solely to the deflection of function resulting from their impairment, but rather an outcome of societal barriers.

The inspiration of this approach is from the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) that conspicuously states “all human beings are born free

and equal in dignity and rights” and, entitled to all rights of freedoms. As such, it emphasized the responsibility of the government to ensure the fulfillment of the human rights of PWDs.

Specifically, it states that parties to the UNCRPD are responsible for ensuring full participation in political and public life either directly or through chosen representatives by PWDs.

They must also have accessible voting procedures and facilities, and the right to vote by secret ballot and guarantee free expression for PWDs as electors among other obligations.



ELECTION ACCESS

Election is an essential pillar of democracy. Its positioning can be likened to a check and balance mechanism because it constrains elective officers to respond to the yearnings and aspirations of the citizens since they elect the decision-makers and can get rid of them if the social contract is not complied with.

Thus, any evaluation of democracy must include a careful examination of its electoral system and how it works.

As such the significance of accessible elections cannot be overstated. Around the world, elections are overseen by Electoral Management Bodies (EMBs) responsible for the administration and management of inclusive, free, and fair elections that promotes trust in the electoral process and improves the prospects of democratic consolidation.

This study frequently employed the term 'election access', a term not yet in common parlance and without a standard operational definition.

This study has adopted a definition for election access based on implicit reference to the UNCRPD. Hence, the operational definition of an accessible election in this study is "a process that provides facilities, materials, and equipment for PWDs to eliminate any physical or non-physical barriers that may hinder their full participation.



RESEARCH APPROACH AND METHODOLOGY

RESEARCH APPROACH

This Research is a qualitative study that adopted two (2) data collection approach to elicit relevant and adequate information, afterward made use of data triangulation to verify data. This technique is commonly used to check and establish validity in studies by analysing a problem from multiple perspectives.

The research approach is outlined as thus:

- a. Desk-based Research.
- b. Qualitative Research based on Key Informant Interviews (KII).

Desk-based Research

This approach was used to gather the information that has been documented by others. It entails the review of secondary data in form of document, news publication, reports, articles, budgets relevant to the subject matter to obtain information on budgetary allocation, legal frameworks, challenges, barriers, and best standards in promoting election access for PWDs.

The research inventory for desk-based research is contained in the table below:

	Topics	Sub-Topics
A.	Legal Frameworks	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• International Protocol and Agreement• National constitution• National disability law• National electoral law
B.	Challenges of access to elections for PWDs in Nigeria	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Legal barriers• Physical barriers• Social barriers• Institutional barriers• Information barriers• Logistical barriers
C.	Best practices for promoting access to elections for PWDs	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The legal framework of election access• Voter registration• Voter education• Election observation• Polling units accessibility• Participation of PWDs in election
D.	Budgetary Allocation to INEC	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• INEC annual budgets to help make Nigeria’s elections more accessible for PWDs.• Percentile analysis of INEC annual budgets to help make Nigeria’s elections more accessible for PWDs.
E.	Cost of election materials in accessible formats for PWDs	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Election materials for PWDs• The local and international market for electoral materials for PWDs• Local and International cost for electoral materials for PWDs





Qualitative Research

This approach adopted KII to validate information elicited from the desk-based research.

The KIIs were conducted with identified respondents' expected to have adequate knowledge, information, ideas, and suggestions relevant to the research topic, in no particular order.

The identified and interviewed respondents are represented as shown in the table below:

Respondents		Number
GOVERNMENT	Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC)	2
	National Orientation Agency (NOA)	1
	National Assembly	1
MEDIA	Print Media	2
	TV Station	1
	Radio	-
CSOs	Organization of Persons' with Disabilities (OPDs)	4
PARTNERS	Donor Agencies	3
Total		14



RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The methodology adopted for this research can be categorized into nine (9) phases as depicted in the figure below:



Kick-Off meeting with IFA

To have a better understanding of the assignment including, background, objectives, scope, deliverables, as well as to agree on approach, methodology, and timeline for effective implementation of the assignment.

A kick-off meeting otherwise known as a planning meeting was held virtually with the focal person(s) of IFA on this project.

Desk Review

To have a grasp of knowledge on the different accessibility challenges faced by PWDs as well as design a holistic interview guide, extant works of literature in form of official documents and news publications were sourced and reviewed. Such information includes; IFA reports, United Nations Protocol document, Nigeria Budget 2010, 2011, 2014, 2015, 2018 and 2018, 2019, etc.



Kick-Off meeting with IFA

These documents were obtained from the appropriate authorities such as the Nigeria Ministry of Budget and National Planning, IFA, and the official website of the United Nations and INEC.

Stakeholders' Mapping

To identify the target population and determine a reasonable sample size, a stakeholders' mapping was carried out on organizations, establishments, bodies, and individuals with electoral mandates or relevant to the electoral system and processes in the country.

Non-probability sampling was adopted with a purposive approach. This is because this area of study is a specialized one.

As a result, respondents were mapped out of key organizations and establishments based on their knowledge and expertise of elections and/or disability.

Respondents were eventually identified from INEC, NOA, National Assembly alongside groups like Media, OPDs, and relevant Donor Agencies.



Market Research

To get accurate and prevailing market prices of election materials in accessible formats for PWDs, market research was conducted on the materials to guide the subsequent engagement with stakeholders and inform IFA advocacy engagement on increased budgetary allocation to INEC going forward.

Development of Interview Guide

To elicit the relevant opinion of the identified sample, an interview guide was developed covering areas such as funding and allocation, communication and awareness, interventions, accessibility challenges, and remedial processes.

Also, respondents focused areas were carefully considered, thus, different questions were drafted for different categories of respondents to exert response peculiar to the respondents' role on/to the electoral system.

Conduct Key Informant Interview (KII)

The importance of critical stakeholder's input cannot be overemphasized in this kind of assignment. Therefore, informant interviews were conducted to elicit relevant information from key stakeholders like INEC officers, National Assembly, OPDs, Printers (security materials), NOA, etc.

Aside from the information gathering purpose, the harvested inputs from stakeholders were adopted as a means of validating some information that was gathered from the desk review.

Data Analysis

The objective of this exercise was to make a logical and well-informed deduction from data and information gathered through Market Research and Key Informant Interview with the objective of the assignment.

A descriptive analysis approach and data triangulation were adopted to analyze data.

This was achieved by numerical data presented in tables and charts drawn from budget review.

Preparation of Report

The overall deliverable for this project is an account of the process and outcome of the assignment in the form of a report.

This report contains the methodology, aggregated information, data analysis and interpretation, challenges, conclusion, and recommendation for onward intervention by IFA.

Review and Submission of Report

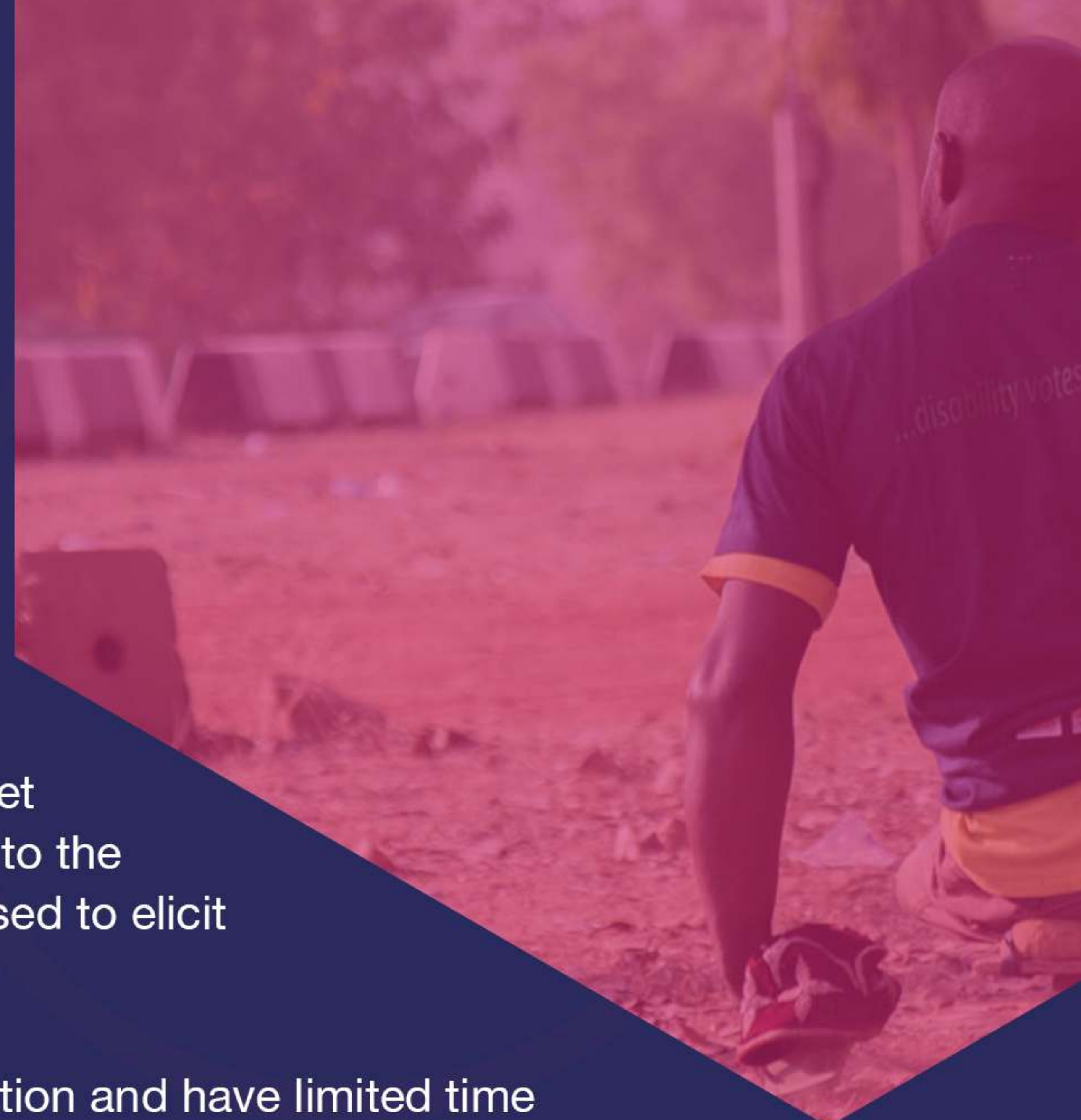
To assure the quality of the deliverables, the report was critically reviewed to avoid defects in approach and methodology, data presentation, typography, vocabulary, and the use of English. After that, the report is transmitted for the observations and comments of IFA.



LIMITATIONS TO THE STUDY

However, the study was challenged by both predictable and unpredictable limitations, thus, the identified limitations are outlined as follows:

- a) The dearth of comprehensive information on the INEC budget for 2014, 2015, 2018, and 2019 posed as a major challenge to the review of the budget, yet, the key informant interview was used to elicit some information to bridge the gap.
- b) Many of the respondents are top managers of their organization and have limited time to participate in physical key informant interviews, this posed as a challenge in obtaining information, therefore virtual platform was adopted to get some stakeholder's opinion on the subject matter.
- c) Bureaucratic procedures to reach some respondents also proved time-consuming. At the same time, some key informants were unwilling to be interviewed for personal reasons, in this situation alternative respondents were found.
- d) Non-responsiveness of some key stakeholders to emails and phone-calls was also a major challenge that was faced by this study, however, the management of IFA was informed and follow-up actions were taken to eventually get them interviewed.



GOOD PRACTICES ON INCLUSIVE ELECTION FOR PWDs

Studies have revealed numerous challenges and barriers that PWDs experience in the process of exercising their political rights. But there are good practices that have worked elsewhere, and these form the baseline for assessing the level of inclusiveness of Nigeria electoral process.

Inclusive Legislation

Inclusive legislation is highly essential for the promotion and protection of the political rights of PWDs around the world. It establishes a clear legal framework and directly makes allocations for the provision of voting materials and other election infrastructure in accessible formats.

The UNCRPD is a fundamental global instrument for protecting the rights of PWDs through the reinforcement of the commitments of various governments. Meanwhile, to provide equal access to elections for all, national laws should explicitly include universal suffrage for all citizens.

The provision on universal suffrage in the national law will work in conjunction with the Disability Act, and other legal instruments. Due to the difference in legislative processes from country to country, the ratification of the UNCRPD is a giant stride in addressing issues of disability.

The enforcement of the discrimination against persons with disabilities prohibition Act 2019 and the INEC framework on access and participation of PWDs in the electoral process would address the accessibility challenges faced by PWDs.

Comprehensive and Continuous Voter Registration

Due to the dearth of data of PWDs, comprehensive and continuous voter registration is a good electoral practice. Mining data of PWDs disaggregated into disability types, and the location is highly essential for planning and preparation for elections. As though the most fundamental form of political participation is voting in free, fair, and regular elections, this can only be realized if there is an established, comprehensive voters' register.

Thus, the voyage of inclusive election for PWDs starts from registering to vote in elections, which should be regularly updated and carefully maintained to ensure that all eligible citizens have access to elections.

In essence, the analysed data from voters' registration is necessary to assess the special needs of voters ahead of elections and could also guide the voters' education strategy.

Therefore, continuous voters' registration should be made comprehensive by including disability types, location, and in the case of biometric capturing the leper community should be catered for appropriately.



Creative, Inclusive and Accessible Voters' Education

Voters' education programmes or campaigns are fundamental platforms for EMBs and other key stakeholders to promote and protect the political rights of PWDs. Its inclusivity, creativity, and accessibility would encourage all citizens including the PWDs to participate in the electoral process. In this case, voters' education in different forms like; training, sensitization, awareness, jingles, drama, etc. considers the peculiarity of the different group of people in the country including PWDs in its planning, implementation, model, and means of disseminating information, manuals for training among other things, it is required at every stage of the election cycles. In essence, a touch of innovation, full participation of all categories of people, and the provision of information in accessible formats for PWDs are good practices that could enhance access to elections for PWDs.



Accessible Polling Units

Accessible polling Units is another good electoral practice that enhances the participation of PWDs in elections. The polling Unit should make the voting process accessible to all citizens including PWDs. An accessible polling unit should have the following; signage to the polling unit, car park, level access to polling unit, and entrances to the polling unit. Although most polling units are sited in public buildings that are supposed to be accessible to PWDs but on the contrary it is not the case in many countries. Especially, polling units that are wheelchair accessible and there are special booths that have writing surface at a suitable level of a wheelchair to ensure the privacy of voters are considered to be accessible, as such they could enhance access to elections for PWDs.

Assistive Aids

Assistive materials aid PWDs to complete tasks or other daily functions without human assistance. To make elections accessible to PWDs, different types of assistive materials should be introduced by EMBs and other electoral stakeholders. Examples of such materials are; magnifying glass, in election access, magnifying glasses are required to aid persons with partial visual impairment or albino to read instructions and vote, hearing aids are employed to help voters that have hearing challenges to listen to election instruction and guidelines, Braille or tactile ballot guide is special ballot paper designed for PWDs, specifically the visually impaired persons to have access to elections unaided, tactile stickers or box tops indicate which ballot goes into which box for voters who are blind when they deposit ballots into more than one box on Election Day, lowered voting booths that are accessible to wheelchair users help to ensure the secrecy of the vote. Countries around the world have started introducing all or some of these assistive aids to improve PWDs' access to elections.



Inclusive Election Administration, Monitoring and Observation

Another good electoral practice that can enhance inclusive election for PWDs is the recruitment and deployment of PWDs as election administrators, monitors, and observers to represent the interest of PWDs in the planning, budgeting, procurement, structuring of the polling unit in a disabled-friendly manner, and the overall conduct of elections.

The mainstreaming of PWDs into the electoral process would garner more trust and confidence if opportunities are given to the PWDs community to be represented actively across the various stages of the electoral process as its obtainable in some other climes.



RESEARCH OUTCOME

This section presents the outcome of the study elicited through the two (2) approaches to desk-based research and qualitative research. Numerous documents were consulted and key informant interviews with identified respondents were carried out. Accordingly, the overall findings are classified into;

LEGAL FRAMEWORK

Even though many legal frameworks exist for the inclusion of PWDs in the electoral processes, studies and public commentaries have shown that there are gaps in extant laws.

Nigeria is a signatory to a couple of international protocols on the inclusion of PWDs, namely: United Nations Convention for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and Continental Plan of Action for the African Decade of Persons with Disabilities, but still does not have a legal framework to mainstream PWDs into the electoral process.

In the same vein, the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria provides that every citizen have the right to freedom from discrimination, while the Electoral Act 2010 (as amended) stated the criterion that qualifies a citizen to register and vote.

Despite the numerous international and National legal instruments that provide for the protection of PWDs, their rights to participate freely and on an equal basis with other people in the society, and in elections are usually violated and they are often discriminated against and inhibited by institutional and infrastructural impediments because there is no specific legislation that mandates EMBs and other key stakeholders to provide special materials to ease their access to elections.

Excerpts from the Key Informant Interview that aligned with the above submission

"The electoral law did not take into consideration specific issues on inclusivity, whether gender or disability issues. Most of the content for inclusivity came from the EMB itself." - KII INEC

"There are many gaps in existing electoral laws but the most relevant to an inclusive election for PWDs is that there are no special provisions that are targeted at mandating the electoral management bodies to provide electoral materials in an accessible format for PWDs" - KII National Assembly.

"Most of those institutional and structural barriers are catered for in the Discrimination against Persons with Disabilities Prohibition act 2018 but the implementation of the act has been a challenge" - KII OPDs

"Legal Framework ideally should align with implementation, however in Nigeria having a law does not mean the law will be complied with, apart from the fact that the barriers for inclusive election for PWDs require formidable legislation, effort should also be made to enforce compliance of extant laws" - KII Media



VOTERS' REGISTRATION

Elections are a process in which each event affects the one after it. Elections consume a large amount of human and financial resources and require abundant preparation, dissemination, and training. Therefore, the electoral process must be detailed and thoughtful.

The Nigeria constitution stated that all Nigerians are qualified to register to vote if they are: 18 years of age and older and not subject to any legal incapacity to vote. Also, the Nigeria Electoral Act, 2010 outlines that the requirements to register as a voter are as follows;

Each applicant for registration under the continuous registration system shall appear in person at the registration venue with any of the following documents; birth or baptismal certificate; national passport, identity card or driver's license; or any other document that will prove the identity, age, and nationality of the applicant. However, the following factors have been identified as hindrances to a comprehensive and continuous voters' registration for PWDs in Nigeria; PWD community have little or no voter literacy to understand the importance of voters' registration, the electoral staff lacks the requisite training to communicate with PWDs during registration, the PWDs inability to present the required documentation for registration, lack of alternative provision for the leper community during biometric data capturing. All the aforementioned are key obstacles to comprehensive and continuous voters' registration in Nigeria.

Excerpts from the Key Informant Interview that aligned with the above submission

"Our software has been designed to capture disability types from the first commission, but manipulation of a different kind to by-pass regular registration to special registration tampered with the data from the registration, thus we did not use the data. That was the reason why some PWDs were disenfranchised but in 2019 it has improved" - KII INEC

"Exclusion of PWDs, especially the leper community was observed in the 2019 election as a result of no provision for their type of disability during the biometric data capturing, as such some PWDs were systematically disenfranchised" - KII OPDs

"In my opinion, voters' registration should be comprehensive and continuous to accommodate as many citizens as possible including the PWDs in order not to leave anybody behind as governance should be a collective responsibility" - KII Media



VOTERS' EDUCATION

Voters' Education is a description of the dissemination of information, materials, and programmes designed to inform voters about the specifics and stages of the voting process for a particular election. Voter education entails the provision of information on who is eligible to vote; where and how to register; how electors can check the voter lists to ensure they have been duly included; what type of elections are being held; where, when, and how to vote; who the candidates are; and how to file complaints.

According to the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) 2019 post-election survey in Nigeria, a whopping 39% of the respondents indicated that they were not exposed to INEC Voter education messages, those are People without disabilities talk less of the PWDs.

The means of disseminating voters' education have been fully optimized, as most PWDs are not well-informed of the voter registration process nor its requirements due to their different kinds of impairments.

This affects their level of awareness on the electoral process, specifically, their eligibility, registration centre and process accessing the voters' register, type of election, date of the election, how to vote, candidates for election, and how to complain about irregularities.

These are critical indicators that voters' education presently is not accessible to PWDs in Nigeria.

Excerpts from the Key Informant Interview that aligned with the above submission



“Most Voters’ Education programmes are not disseminated through an accessible format for instance radio jingle cannot be accessible to the hearing impaired person likewise voters’ education printed on billboards cannot be accessed by a visually impaired person” - KII OPDs

“PWDs tend to take ownership of some types of voters’ education if someone from their community is empowered enough to transfer knowledge to the other members of the community, take for instance a visually impaired person training some visually impaired persons how to use braille ballot guide” - KII Donor Agency

“They face a lot difficult to receive information for example some of them are blind and deaf and the media did not reach them. As was the case in the 2019 general election, when the election was postponed it was very difficult to inform a lot of the PWDs” - KII Media

ACCESS TO POLLING UNITS FOR PWDs

Polling units are the unit to which individual voters are assigned for election day. More specifically, voters are usually placed on the registration list for a specific polling unit. As the place where voters are assigned to vote, polling units are the building blocks for the casting and counting of votes.

In designing a polling unit that is accessible to all voters, special guidelines and facilities are needed, polling units are supposed to be spacious and equipped with ramps to enable people with mobility challenges to cast their votes. The Nigeria example of a polling unit has been tagged to be largely inaccessible to PWDs, considering the following factors; no signage that can direct voters to the polling unit, polling unit dimensions are not large enough to create space for a car park that PWDs can make use, there are mostly hurdles like a gutter, stairs to cross to access polling unit and special entrances are not available for PWDs on the wheelchair to access the polling unit.

In a nutshell, the polling units in Nigeria are either short of all or some of the requirements of an accessible polling unit which has a ripple effect on access to elections for PWDs.

Excerpts from the Key Informant Interview that aligned with the above submission

"INEC has a standard polling unit layout but what is obtainable in the field is different from what is in the paper."

"I agree with you that some of our polling units are not accessible generally but the communities are not cooperating to move polling units to more accessible location" - KII INEC

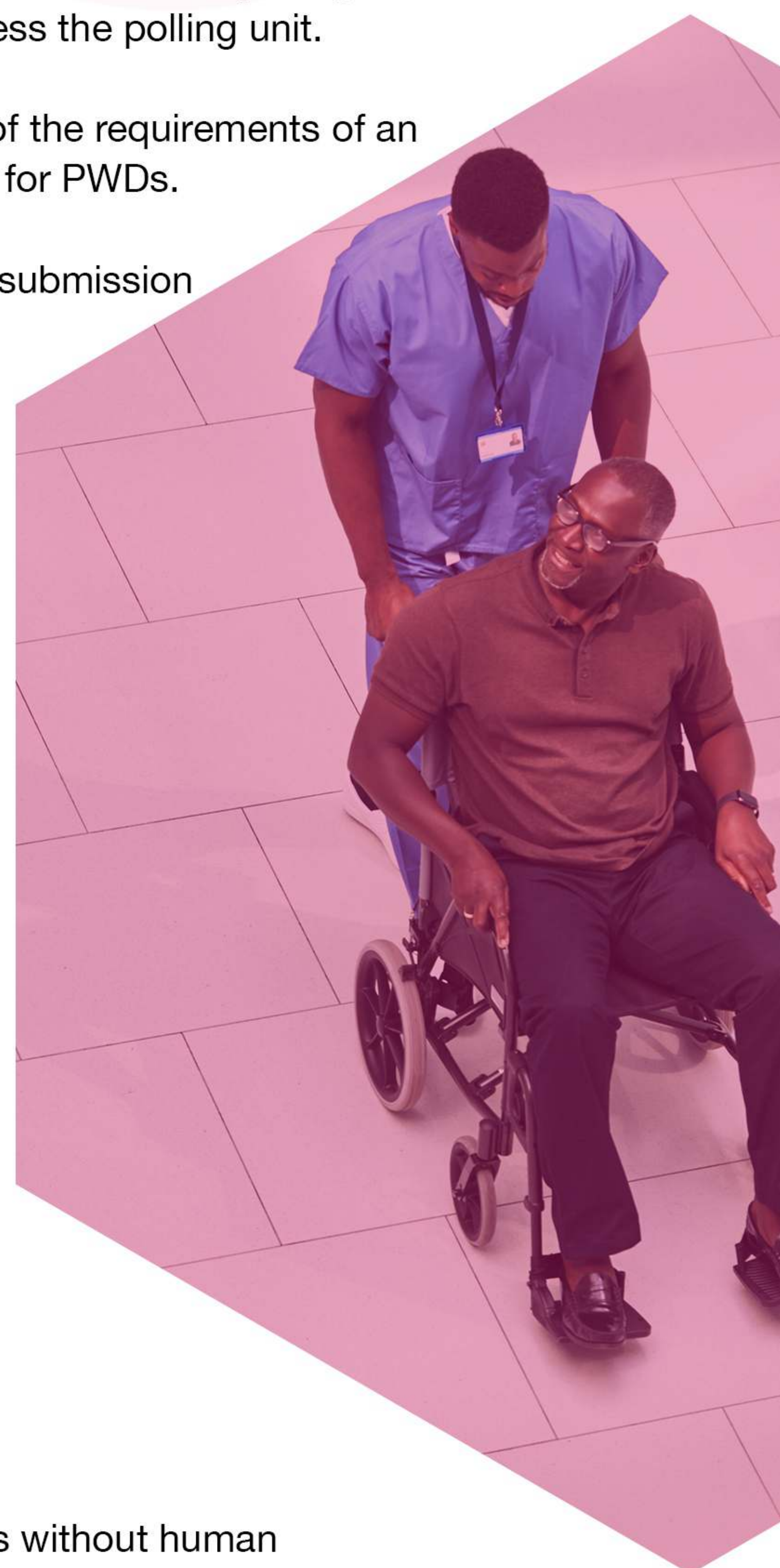
"Physical barriers are major hindrance to access to elections for PWDs in Nigeria, a mere thought of a gutter to cross or stairs to climb to cast a vote is enough to discourage people to turn out for the election, PWDs inclusive" - KII Media

"The idea behind secret ballot type of election is mostly defeated when PWDs tries to vote with the help of an assistant because he/she must have seen whom the disabled person voted for"
- KII Donor Agency

ASSISTIVE AIDS

Assistive materials aid PWDs to complete tasks or other daily functions without human assistance. To make elections accessible to PWDs, different types of assistive materials should be introduced by EMBs and other electoral stakeholders.

Examples of such materials are; magnifying glasses, hearing aids, Braille or tactile ballot guide, tactile stickers or box tops, and lowered voting booths. Countries around the world have started introducing all or some of these assistive aids to improve PWDs' access to elections.



In Nigeria, assistive aids were alien to our electoral system until 2018 during the Ekiti and Osun State Gubernatorial election and carried forward to the 2019 general election, where written code instruction accommodated the hearing community but the braille ballot guide was introduced in Osun state gubernatorial election in 2018 while magnifying glasses for those with albinism was introduced in the 2018 Anambra gubernatorial election. Notably, 2019 was the first time that the visually impaired were allowed to vote independently through the use of a braille ballot jacket.

As referenced, provisions were made for magnifying glasses, sign language translation, and a priority queue for PWDs. However, only 46% of polling units had Braille ballot guides to accommodate voters with visual disabilities, while PWD Poster EC.30E with written instructions for voters with hearing impairments was posted in 81% of polling units.

The situation during the election period was that some polling units have excess assistive materials while some do not have at all which in a way affects the access to an election for some PWDs across the country.

Excerpts from the Key Informant Interview that aligned with the above submission



“During an observation assignment in the 2019 general election, election materials in accessible format were available in some polling units while other units do not have at all.

Some of the electoral officials are not even informed on the usage of some of these materials” - KII Media

*“Inadequate provision of assistive aids for PWDs has contributed hugely to the exclusion of the disabled community from the electoral process which also endangers democracy”
- KII National Assembly*

"Lack of assistive aids in the last 2 election cycles was the main reasons why some PWDs boycotted elections because they felt highly marginalized" - KII OPDs

*"With assistive aids in the 2019 general election, PWDs voted swiftly with no hiccup in some polling units the news of the deployment of braille ballot guide in a polling unit in Edo state attracted more PWD voters to show up at the poll"
- KII Donor Agency*

ELECTION ADMINISTRATION, MONITORING, AND OBSERVATION

As the executors monitor and observers of the electoral process, the responsibility of this category of people is to ensure an inclusive, free, fair, credible, and successful election for all, including PWDs. To achieve this, the composition of the EMBs, field monitors, and election observers is meant to be inclusive of PWDs to bring the disability thought to the planning, the disability lens.

to monitor and observe. In Nigeria, the EMBs are recruiting PWDs into the system but the composition of the management of the electoral commission is exclusive of at least a PWD.

In recent times different organizations have recruited PWDs to monitor and observe the electoral process but reality has revealed that more need to be done to enhance the access to elections for PWDs in the country. However, due to the inadequate representations of PWDs in the recruitment and deployment of administrators, monitors, and observers, there seems to be limited understanding about disability, accessibility for PWDs is often overlooked and left unaddressed.

Excerpts from the Key Informant Interview that aligned with the above submission

“Exclusion of PWDs during the planning stage and when it comes to training negatively impact on the access to elections for PWDs in Nigeria, especially, in voters' education and budgetary allocation” - KII OPDs

“PWDs like every other category of people can only claim ownership of something that they are part of the process until then the process could not be tagged as inclusive” - KII Donor Agency



FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents findings from the study, elicited through desk review alongside the key informant interviews. This includes; data presentation and analysis, limitations, and remedies to the identified challenges.

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

This section presents analyses of INEC and NOA's budgetary allocation based on available information.

The analysis covers three (3) consecutive election cycles (2010 and 2011 budgets, 2014 and 2015 budgets, and 2018 and 2019 budgets).

The findings from the analysis are as presented in the figures below;



"During an observation assignment in the 2019 general election, election materials in accessible format were available in some polling units while other units do not have at all.

Some of the electoral officials are not even informed on the usage of some of these materials" - KII Media

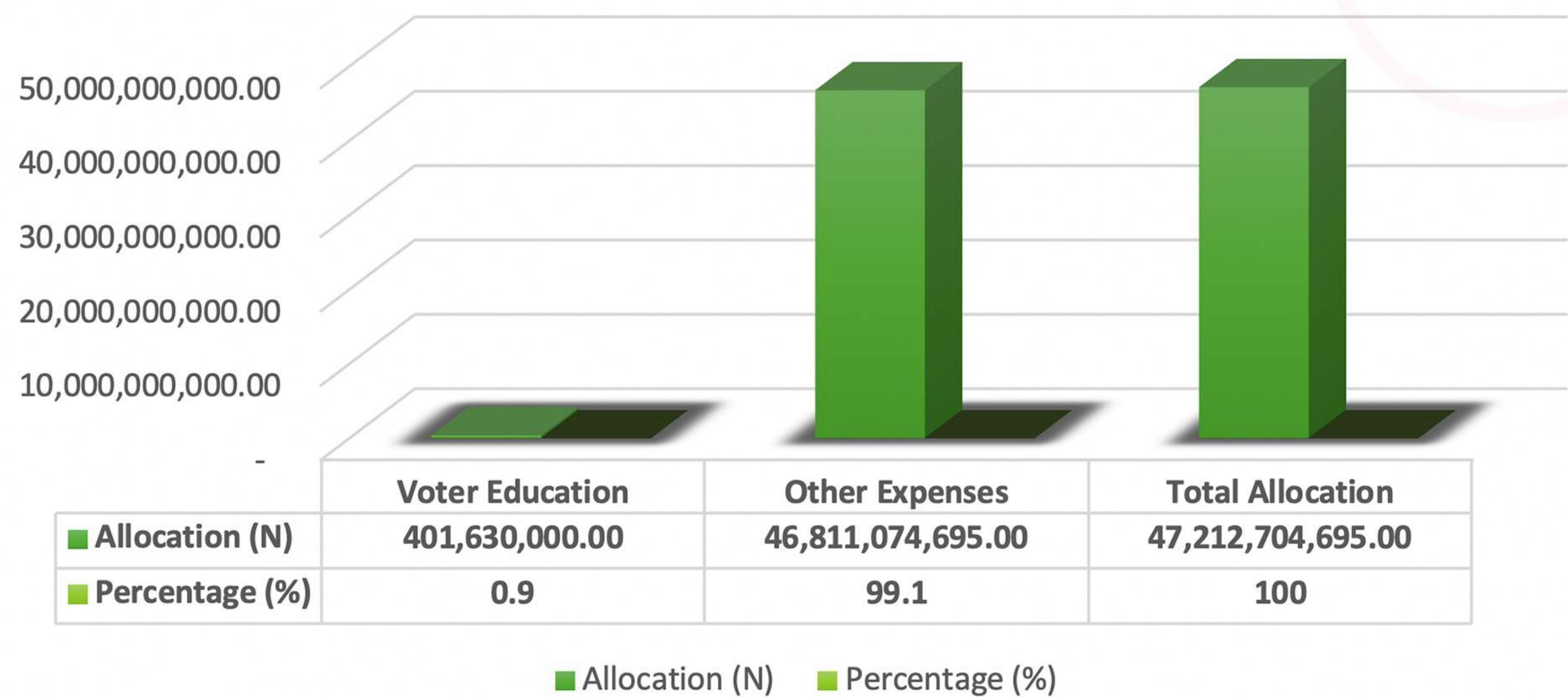
"Inadequate provision of assistive aids for PWDs has contributed hugely to the exclusion of the disabled community from the electoral process which also endangers democracy"
- KII National Assembly

"Lack of assistive aids in the last 2 election cycles was the main reasons why some PWDs boycotted elections because they felt highly marginalized" - KII OPDs

"With assistive aids in the 2019 general election, PWDs voted swiftly with no hiccup in some polling units the news of the deployment of braille ballot guide in a polling unit in Edo state attracted more PWD voters to show up at the poll"
- KII Donor Agency



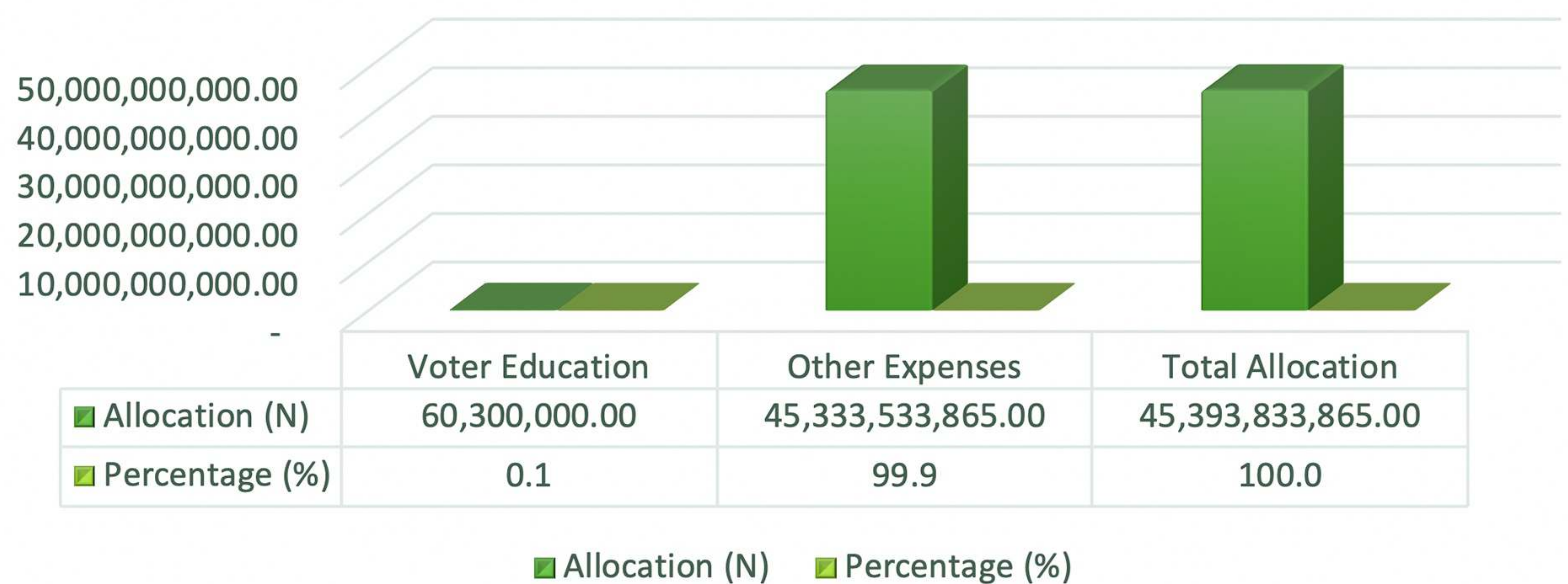
INEC'S BUDGETARY ALLOCATION FOR 2010



As shown in Figure 2 above, only 0.9% of INEC budgetary allocation for 2010 was earmarked for voter education among other provisions that could help make Nigeria’s elections more accessible for PWDs, yet, the voter education was not PWD centered.

This indicates that INEC's budgetary allocation for 2010 did not consider PWDs as a special group that requires special provisions to access elections.

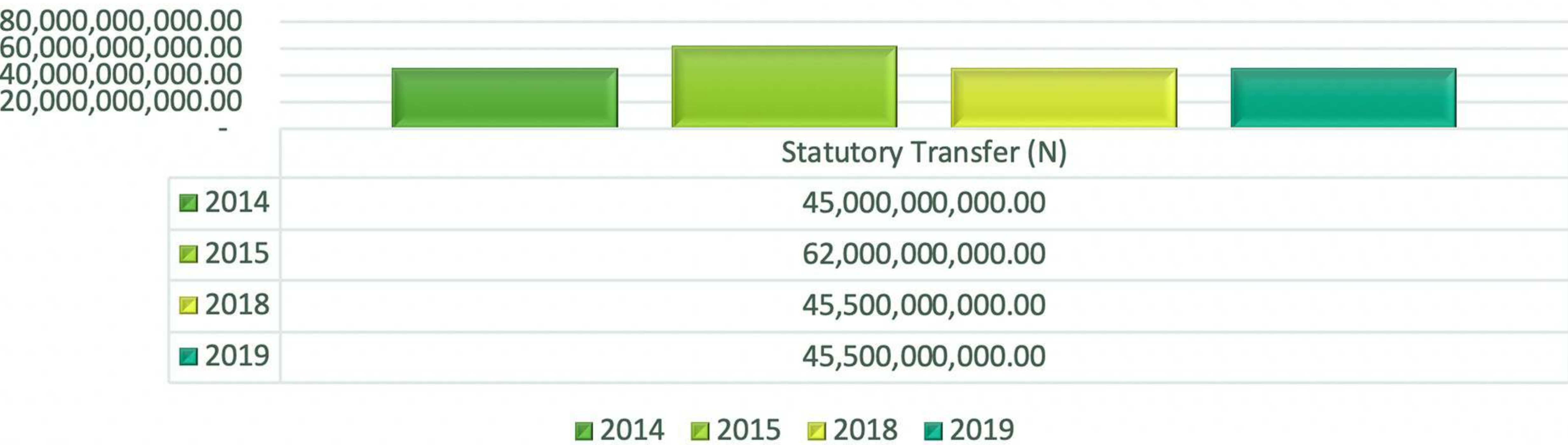
INEC'S BUDGETARY ALLOCATION FOR 2011



As shown in Figure 3 above, only 0.1% of INEC budgetary allocation for 2011 was appropriated for voter education while the remaining 99.9% was expended on other expenses. Voters' education line items for 2011 outlines PWDs as one of the groups that were considered as beneficiaries of the programme.

This indicates that INEC's budgetary allocation to help make Nigeria's elections more accessible for PWDs in 2011 was utterly insignificant.

INEC's Statutory Transfers from 2014, 2015, 2018 and 2019 Budget Years



As shown in Figure 4 above, in 2014, 2015, 2018, and 2019, INEC received statutory transfers, thus the annual budget for these years was prepared internally and could not be accessed for this study. Although, recent actions to ensure access to elections for PWDs like deployment of braille ballot guides for the visually impaired, magnifying glasses for the albinos, Election Day written instructions for the deaf, and specialized voter education for PWDs across the disability types among others is a manifestation of improved budgetary allocation to make Nigeria's elections more accessible for PWDs between 2018 and 2019 in contrast with the 2010 and 2011 budgetary allocation.

NOA'S BUDGETARY ALLOCATION FOR 2010

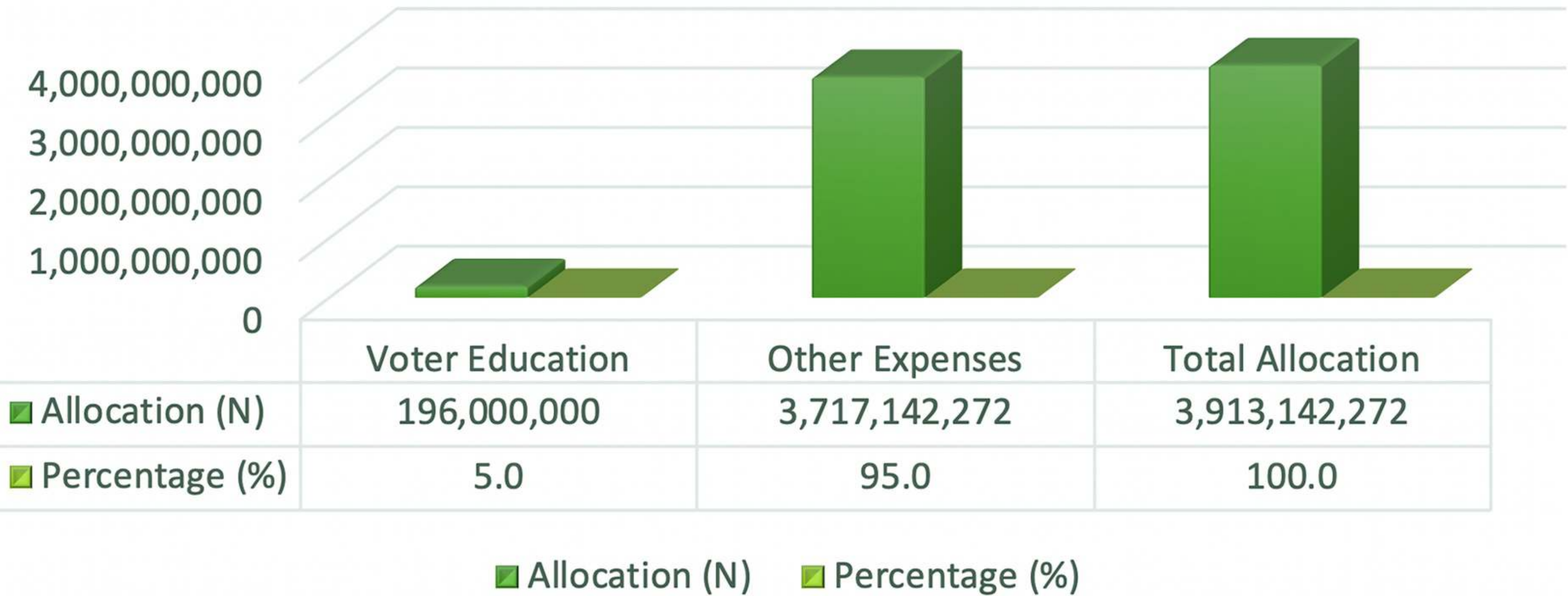
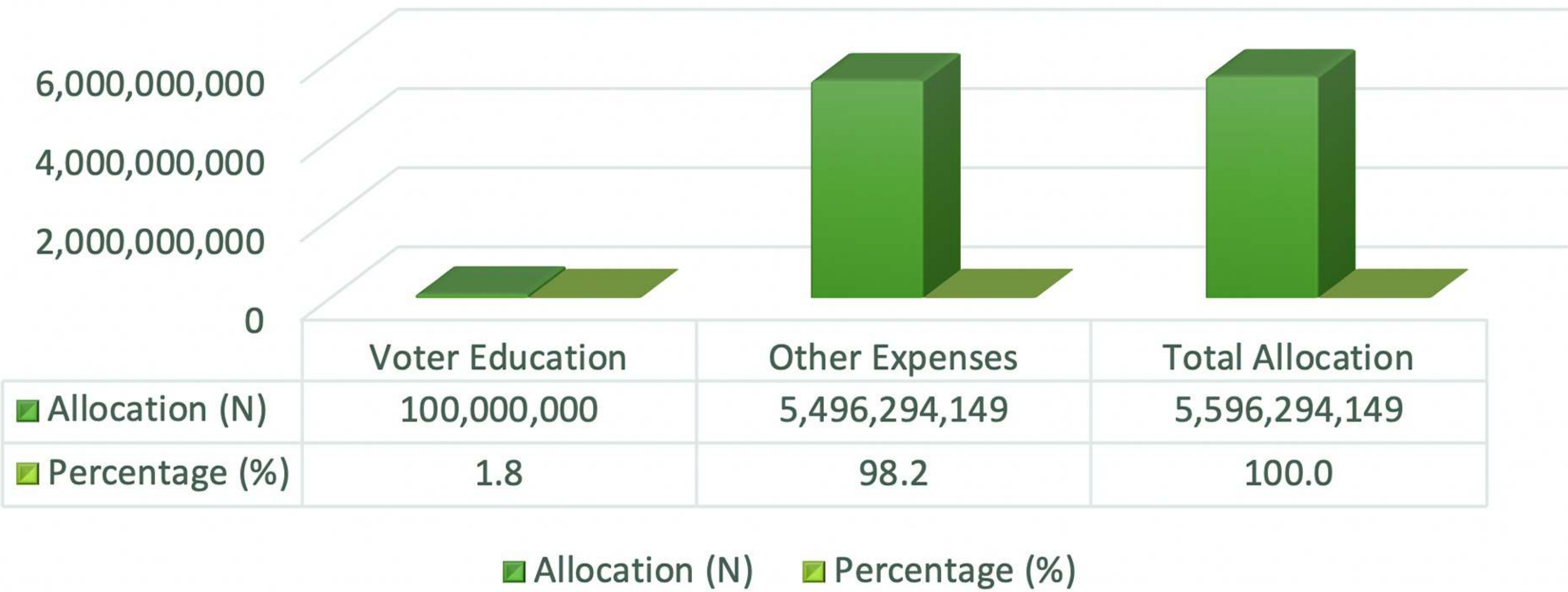


Figure 5 above depicts that 5% of NOA's 2010 annual budget was allocated to voter education ahead of the 2011 general election.

In a similar vein with INEC's, the allocation was described as a "Nationwide voter education campaign" which did not specify whether the voter education considered PWDs or not in the design and implementation of the campaign.

This indicates that NOA's budgetary allocation for 2010 did not consider PWDs as a special group that requires special education on voting and election processes generally.

NOA'S BUDGETARY ALLOCATION FOR 2011



As shown in Figure 6 above, 1.8% of NOA's 2011 annual budget was appropriated for voter education while the remaining 98.2% was expended on other expenses. Like in the previous year, the description of the budget line item on Voter education did not specify whether the campaign considered PWDs or not in the design and implementation of voter education.

This is an indication that NOA's budgetary allocation for 2011 did not consider PWDs as a special group that requires special education on voting and election process.



NOA'S BUDGETARY ALLOCATION FOR 2014

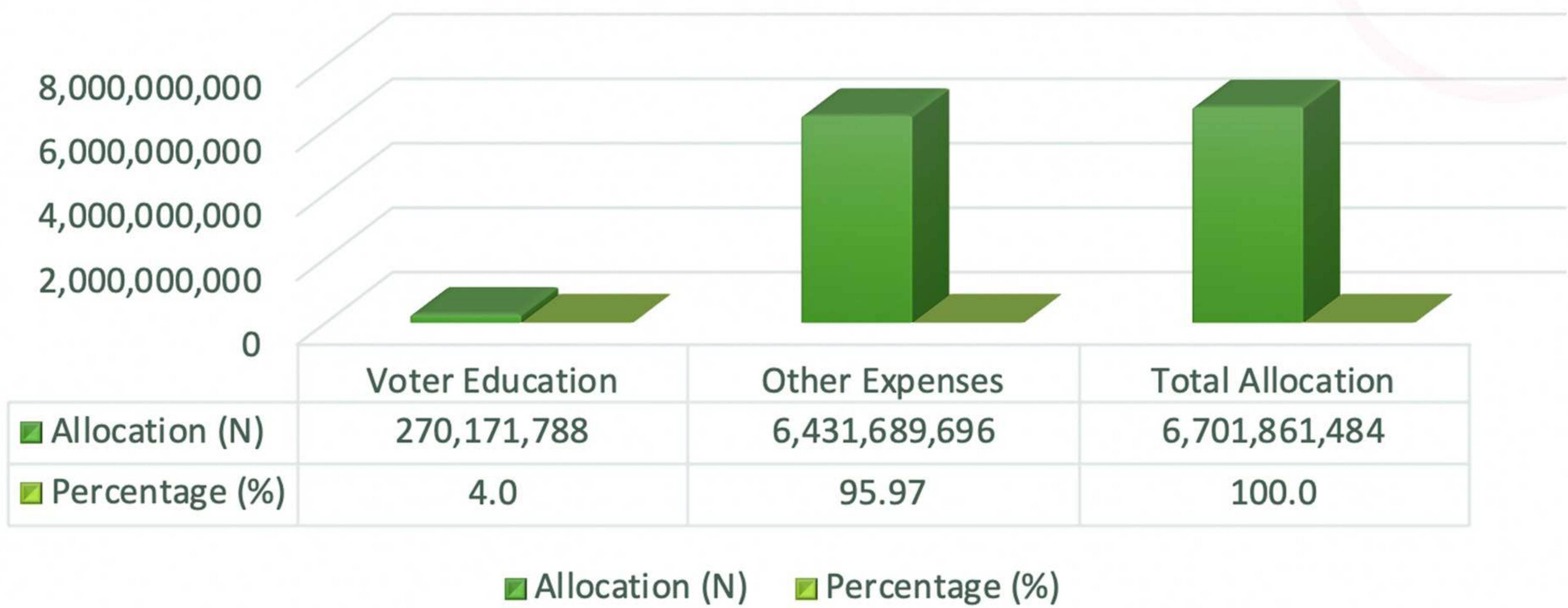
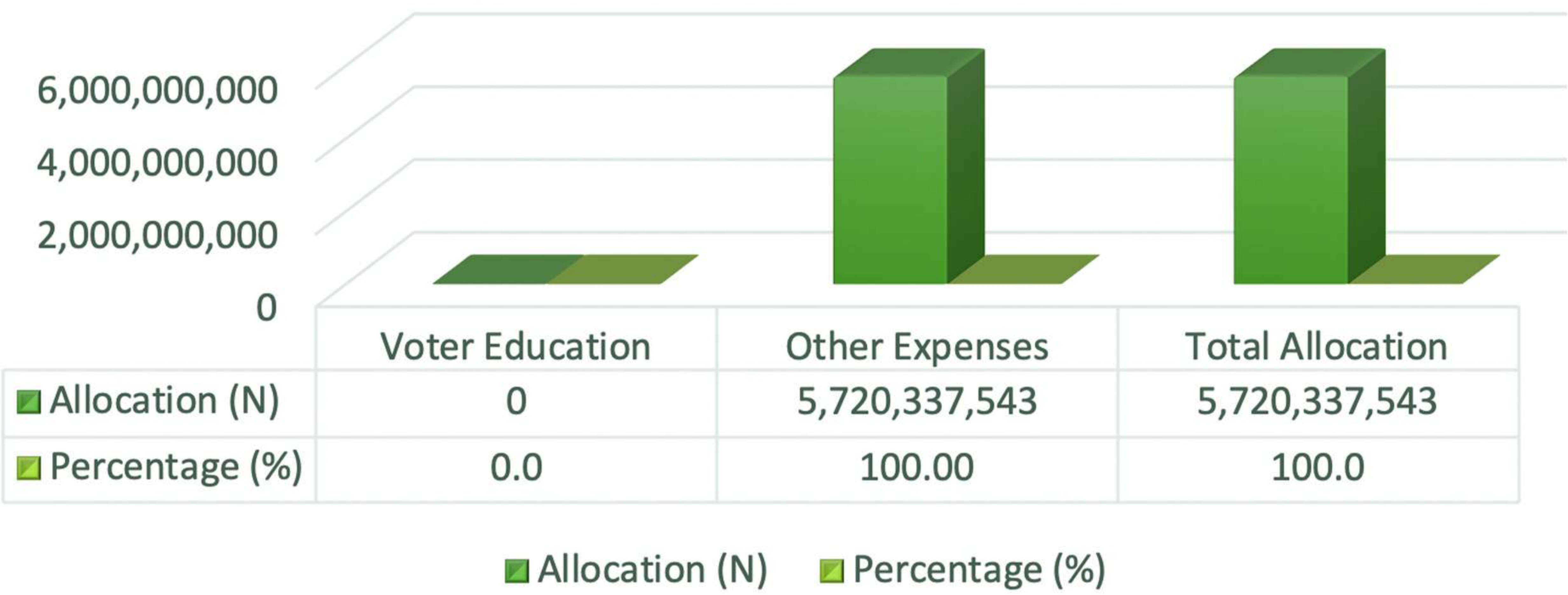


Figure 7 above depicts that 4.0% of NOA's 2014 annual budget was allocated to voter education ahead of the 2015 general election. The trend of non-specificity in describing the allocation persist, expenditure on voter education was described as "Civic/voter education campaign for 2015 general elections and Voters education towards 2015 elections" which cannot be taken as efforts to make Nigeria's elections more accessible for PWDs.

Thus, the concern of PWDs on voter education is not in the front burner of NOA's budgetary allocation or rather provision in the 2014 annual budget.

NOA'S BUDGETARY ALLOCATION FOR 2015



As shown in Figure 8 above, no budgetary allocation was made to ensure Nigeria elections are more accessible for PWDs in the 2015 budget of NOA. This implies that no voter education programme or campaign was carried out in that budget year as provision for voter education for the 2015 general election was budgeted for in the previous year.



NOA'S BUDGETARY ALLOCATION FOR 2018

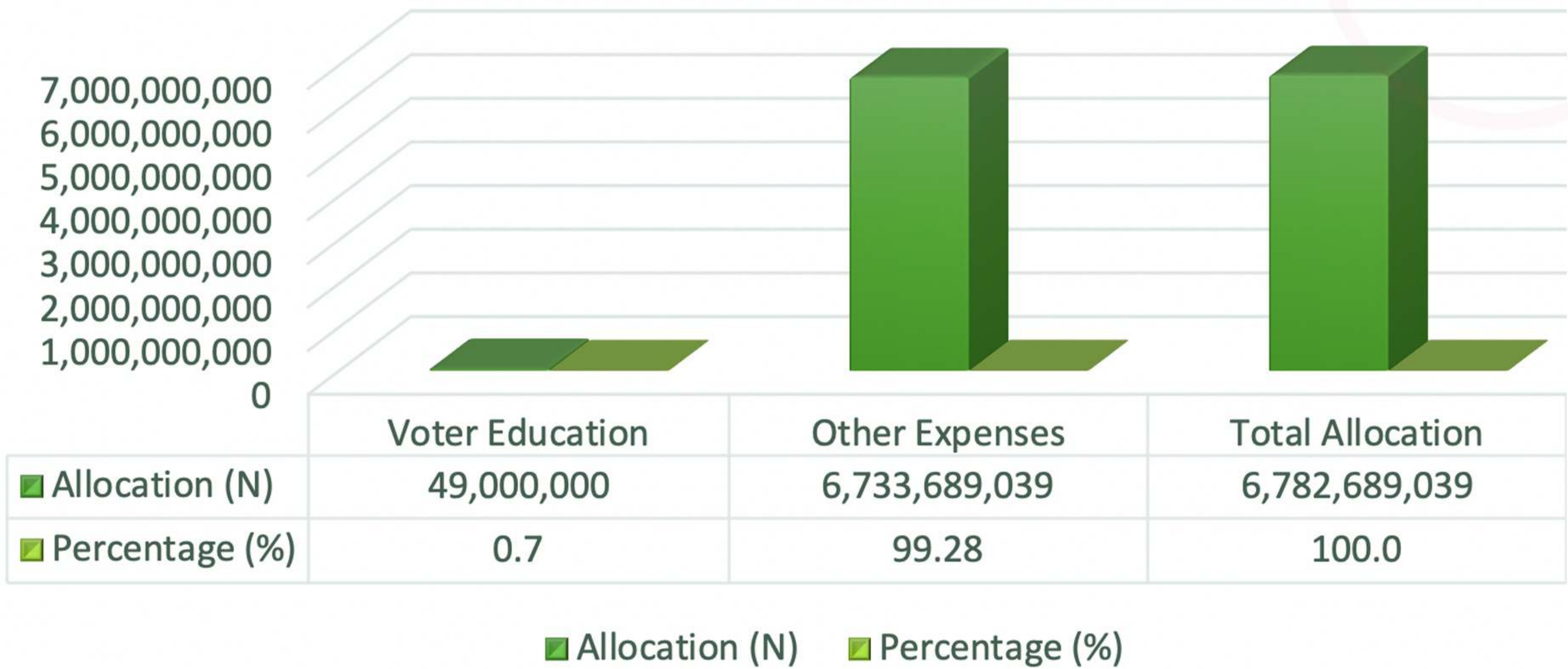
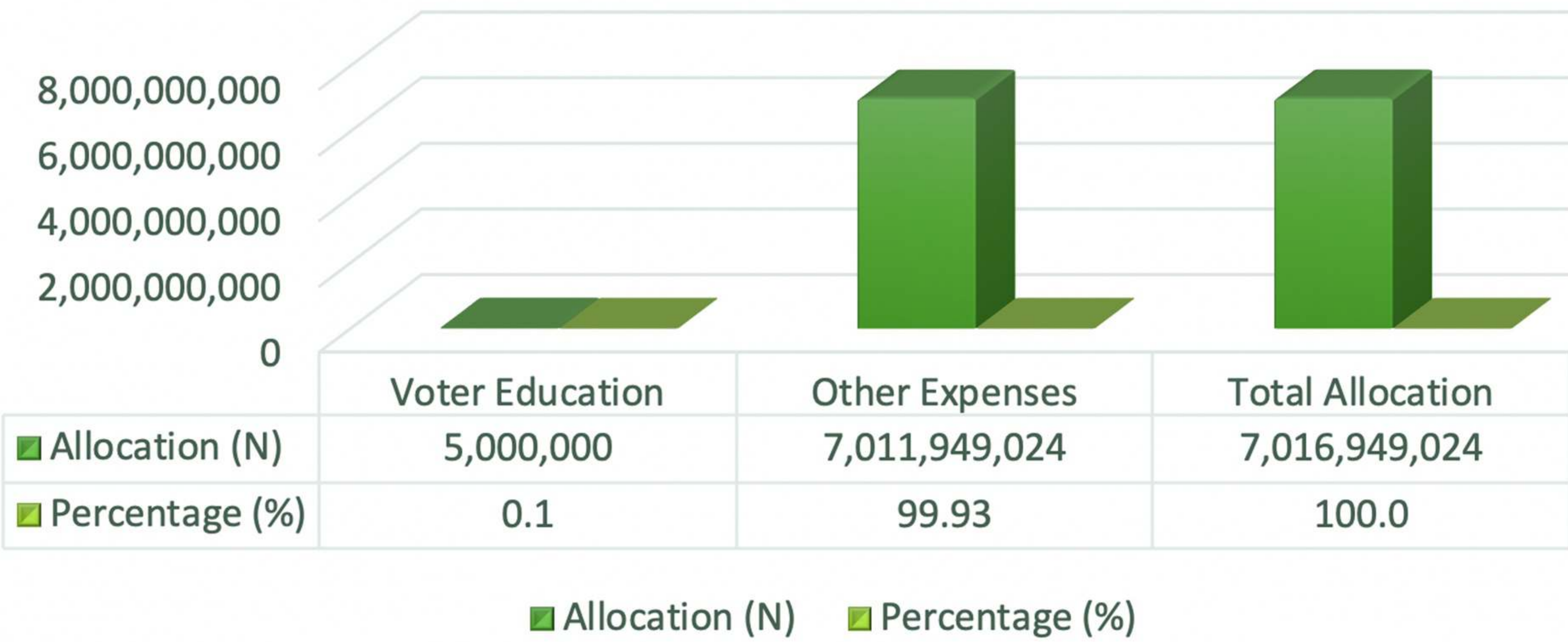


Figure 9 above depicts that 0.7% of NOA's 2018 annual budget was allocated to voter education ahead of the 2019 general election. Like the previous years' budgetary provision, the line item for voter education was described broadly as the "Voter Education Programme toward successful 2019 General Elections".

Therefore, the budgetary allocation for voters' education in the 2018 budget is infinitesimal as such cannot be viewed as an effort to make Nigeria's elections more accessible for PWDs.

NOA'S BUDGETARY ALLOCATION FOR 2019



As shown in Figure 10 above, the information from NOA's 2019 annual budget reflected that 0.1% of the budget was appropriated for voters' education to complete an ongoing programme from the previous year.

The trend of non-specificity in describing the allocation was maintained, therefore the same deduction is applicable. The budgetary allocation was insignificant and does not seems to enhance access to elections for PWDs in Nigeria.



Some of the informants acknowledged that even though giant strides have been recorded in terms of actions that could improve access to elections for PWDs in Nigeria, budgetary allocation of INEC and NOA to make Nigeria's elections more accessible for PWDs is insignificant.

The description of line items that are related to access to elections in the INEC and NOA's budget is an indication that PWDs concern of access to elections is not a priority but an after-thought, thus budgetary allocation becomes inadequate to cater for very essential electoral materials or actions that should enhance the access to elections for PWDs in Nigeria.



ACCESSIBLE ELECTION MATERIALS FOR PWDS

Deduction from the numerous barriers that hinder PWDs access to elections has shown that election materials like magnifying glasses, braille ballot guide or tactile, accessible voting cubicle, election day written instructions among others are essential for inclusive election.

These election materials were identified to be essential through desk-based research to ease the access to elections challenge of PWDs in Nigeria. Below is the description of the materials, its significance in catering for specific impairment during elections, and prevailing cost:



Magnifying Glass

Also known as a magnifier is a small magnifying composition of lenses that are placed in a frame. Most magnifiers have a magnification between 4x and 20x.

A simple version of a magnifier often consists of a single lens and has a lower magnification. In addition to single magnifiers, there are also composite magnifiers that consist of two or more lenses.

In election access, a magnifier is required to aid persons with partial visual impairment to vote.



Source: Market Survey, July 2020

	Description	Lowest Cost	Highest Cost
1.	Magnifying Glass Price is dependent on the quality and diameter of the glasses	N1,200	N2,000

Braille Ballot Guide

Braille is a series of raised dots that can be read with the fingers by people who are blind or whose eyesight is not sufficient for reading printed material.

It is not a language but a code by which languages such as English, French, and Spanish among others may be written and read.

Therefore, the Braille ballot guide is a special ballot paper designed for PWDs, specifically the visually impaired persons to have access to elections unaided.

	Description	Lowest Cost	Highest Cost
1.	Production of Braille ballot guides. Price is dependent on the material used (paper or plastic) and political parties to appear on the guide.	N1,000	N3,000

Hearing Aid

A hearing aid is a small electronic device that makes some sounds louder so that a person with hearing loss can listen, communicate, and participate more fully in daily activities.

It amplifies people hearing more in both quiet and noisy situations.
The hearing aid receives sound through a microphone, which converts the sound waves to electrical signals and sends them to an amplifier.

In this instance, the device is regarded as an election material because studies have shown that in other climes, it is employed to help voters that have hearing challenges to listen to election instruction and guidelines.



	Description	Lowest Cost	Highest Cost
1.	Hearing Aid Price is dependent on the type and brand.	N2,500	N8,000

Accessible Voting Cubicle

A voting cubicle refers to a small room or space in which voters can secretly cast their ballot. It is located inside a polling unit. Voting cubicles are important as they ensure voter secrecy. For this reason, voters enter the booth unaccompanied.

Meanwhile, an accessible voting cubicle is a PWDs friendly kind of booth that is lowered to ensure easy access for persons on wheelchair or roller skate without any special assistance.

	Description	Lowest Cost	Highest Cost
1.	Roller Skate	N5,000	N15,000
2.	Wheelchair	N25,000	N1,000,000
3.	Accessible voting cubicle	N8,000	N25,000

Ramp

A ramp is a flat supporting surface tilted at an angle, with one end higher than the other, used as an aid for raising or lowering a load.

Ramps permit wheelchair users, as well as people pushing strollers, carts, or other wheeled objects, to more easily access a building. Even though there are various types of the ramp but a wheelchair ramp is an inclined plane installed in addition to or instead of stairs.

	Description	Lowest Cost	Highest Cost
1.	Metal Foldable Ramps for Wheelchair Users Price dependent on the length of the ramp in feet (1-9 ft)	N40,000	N180,000



	Description	Lowest Cost	Highest Cost
1.	Metal Foldable Ramps for Wheelchair Users Price dependent on the length of the ramp in feet (1-9 ft)	N40,000	N180,000
2.	Metal ramps with handrails Price dependent on the length of the ramp in feet (1-12 ft)	N250,000	N700,000
3.	Wooden Ramps Price dependent on the length of the ramp in feet (1-12 ft)	N15,000	N20,000
4.	Concrete Ramps Price dependent on the length of the ramp in feet (1-12 ft)	N25,000	N52,000
5.	Concrete Ramps with handrails. Price dependent on the length of the ramp in feet (1-9 ft)	N68,000	N75,000

Election Day Written Instructions

Written Instructions is a note guide on how to carry out a task or conduct an activity. Meanwhile, the election day written Instruction is a polling unit poster that explains the Election Day procedure for voters with hearing impairment to disseminate information inclusively, in some cases depicting the instructions in infographics.

	Description	Lowest Cost	Highest Cost
1.	Election Day Written Instructions Price is dependent on the size of paper print	N200	N500



Based on the findings from the market survey, the cost of some of these election materials is not fixed due to variation in type and brand. Thus, pricing depends on the specification of customers, however, the tables above have depicted the lowest and highest cost of the materials in line with the prevailing market price.

This is an indication that efficient and cost-effective budgetary allocation for election materials in an accessible format for PWD is realizable.

LIMITATIONS TO ADEQUATE BUDGETARY ALLOCATION

Having acknowledged that budgetary allocation for electoral materials in an accessible format is inadequate from the review of available budgets, it is imperative to highlight some key limitations to adequate budgetary allocation to access to elections for PWDs in Nigeria.

The following are some identified limitations:

Lack of Political Will

From the decision-making point of view, another key factor that was identified as a limitation to adequate budgetary allocation for electoral materials in an accessible format is the lack of political will.

This study has discovered that over the years, the yearnings and aspirations of OPDs on behalf of the PWDs on access to elections have enjoyed minimal or no attention of the decision-makers until recently, which is a function of the political will of those at the helm of affairs at the time.

The trajectory of budgetary allocation from 2011 has shown that the statutory transfer for INEC in 2015 was N62,000,000,000, the highest allocation that was allotted to the commission out of the six (6) annual budget (2010, 2011, 2014, 2015, 2018, and 2019) reviewed, yet it was in 2018 and 2019 that N45,500,000,000 was allocated to INEC consecutively that assistive aids were provided to enhance access to elections for PWDs.

Excerpts from the Key Informant Interview that aligned with the above submission

"Yeah, we are making a gradual process, although we have not reached the stage we want to be because there was awareness in 2011 election, 2015 in 2019 we have some of our recommendations featured prominently because we have an inclusive chairman" - KII OPDs

"The disability community are lucky that we have a disability-friendly chairman that listens to their concerns and intervene accordingly" - KII INEC

"An assessment of various collaborative programmes like workshops and other forms of engagement between INEC and OPDs that never happened in previous years is an attestation of a boast of political will on participation in elections of PWDs in Nigeria" - KII Donor Agencies



Inadequate Funding

The inability of INEC to budget adequately for the provision of electoral materials in an accessible format can be attributed to inadequate funding for the aforementioned institutions.

Even though INEC has been receiving statutory transfer since 2012 as indicated in the Nigerian annual budget documents but the commission is strangled with different capital intensive.

activities in its processes. Also, there was a huge decline in INEC's allocation from N62,000,000,000 in 2015 to N45,500,000,000 in 2018 and 2019 respectively and there was no difference in the 2018 allocation and 2019 that is a general election year.

Similarly, NOA's annual budgetary records reflected that the agency is challenged with funding which is the determinant of all its budgetary provisions for different line items.

Excerpts from the Key Informant Interview that aligned with the above submission

"Budgetary allocation of INEC to actions that could make elections more accessible for PWDs is not sufficient, because with our engagement with the commission one can deduce that INEC is strangled by budget through all of its processes" - KII Donor Agency

"Funding can help to achieve inclusive election for PWDs in Nigeria, but reality has revealed that resources are limited as such the election management bodies are seen to be financially affected in a way" - KII National Assembly

"Funding is fundamental to elections, sometimes we forget to budget for braille ballot guide or whatever in some cases it is under-budgeting when we have to look for fund elsewhere to ensure inclusivity because without funding a lot could not be done" - KII INEC

"Electioneering generally in this clime is capital intensive and adequate funding is required to mainstream PWDs in elections and electoral processes in Nigeria" - KII OPDs

Inadequate Data

The role of data in planning a cost-effective and inclusive election cannot be overemphasized.

This study discovered that the dearth of comprehensive and accurate data is a clear limitation to adequate budgetary allocation for electoral materials in an accessible format.

Numerous reports have conspicuously highlighted inadequate data as a major challenge to elections generally in Nigeria, however, it affects electoral spending specifically in a way that EMBs budget more funds to a line item that requires less and less for a line item that requires more because the data that inform such budgetary allocation is not comprehensive and accurate.

For instance, the EMBs or any other government institution cannot boast of possessing a comprehensive data of PWDs in Nigeria disaggregated into location and types of disability, this kind of data is supposed to be a guide for budgetary allocation to procure election materials in accessible format and deployment to different polling units based on the Needs of registered PWDs in the area.



Thus, a budgetary allocation is most likely to be inadequate for the provision of electoral materials in accessible format due to the lack of a comprehensive database of PWDs.

Excerpts from the Key Informant Interview that aligned with the above submission

“The challenges of PWDs in terms of access to the ballot are quite a number but the most important one is the issue of data. I don't think there is a comprehensive and accurate database of PWDs in Nigeria that affects the electoral commission in planning elections and its process.”

- KII Donor Agency

“The dearth of information on PWDs in Nigeria is a major hindrance to the adequate budgetary allocation for materials that would ease the access of PWDs to elections because the assumption of numbers in this case is unsustainable” **KII Media**

“Just like a project, the basis for election management should be accurate data, identifying with precision the number of different category of people and detailing their Needs to inform onward decision” **KII OPDs**

Gaps in Legislation

Somewhere in this report, the importance of formidable legislation to the actualization of an inclusive election has been conspicuously identified. Meanwhile, the study discovered that one of the critical factors that limit adequate budgetary allocation for election materials in an accessible format for PWDs is the gap in legislation.

The major legislation that guides Nigeria elections are the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN) and the Electoral Act 2010 (as amended) and the major gap could be traced to the Article 56 (2) which says and I quote that “the commission may take reasonable steps to ensure that voters with disabilities are assisted at the polling place by the provision of suitable means of communication, such as Braille, Large embossed print or electronic devices or sign language interpretation, or off-site voting in appropriate cases”.

This non-mandatory provision of the act is a gap that has limited adequate budgetary allocation for electoral materials in an accessible format for PWDs for years because it is not enforceable and as such it creates a justification for inadequate budgetary allocation for electoral materials in an accessible format for PWDs.

Excerpts from the Key Informant Interview that aligned with the above submission

“Well, the existing laws were made general without taking into cognizance issues of inclusivity, looking at the constitution and the electoral act even some provisions that are related to the concerns of PWDs are not mandatory as such it's a major gap” **KII INEC**

“There are many gaps in existing electoral laws but the most relevant to an inclusive election for PWDs is that there are no special provisions that are targeted at mandating the electoral management bodies to provide electoral materials in an accessible format for PWDs”

KII National Assembly



“As part of the system, the enabling laws that allow accessibility are not there. Most of the things that INEC is doing is simply because the people involved have a passion for PWDs of which a mischievous person can take them up on it and win” KII OPDs

Inadequate Advocacy on the path of OPDs

The inability of INEC to budget adequately for the provision of electoral materials in an accessible format can also be linked to inadequate advocacy on the path of OPDs on the concerns of PWDs on the election. This study has revealed that the electoral process is powered by demand and supply, so if there is no demand, there would not be a response from the system. For instance, some years back issues of PWDs in elections do not enjoy much attention until some OPDs intensify their advocacies and engagements with key stakeholders.

It is a similar scenario with budgetary allocation for the provision of electoral materials in an accessible format for PWDs, INEC personnel prepare the annual budget of the commission based on Needs, of which the Needs are informed by demand on particular concerns that require attention.

Although advocacy of OPDs has improved in recent time, specific actions on improved budgetary allocation for the provision of electoral materials in an accessible format for PWDs is still not sufficient.

Excerpts from the Key Informant Interview that aligned with the above submission

“Inadequate advocacy on the part of persons with disabilities is also a reason for inadequate budgetary allocation, not until recently that organizations like IFA and others championing the courses of drawing the public and international attention to some of these issues, we would not have had a situation where this budget concerns would have been raised” - KII Donor Agency

“Most people that advocate for issues of PWDs are not persons with disabilities, and there is a disability slogan that says nothing about us without us, thus the inadequate budgetary allocation seems one of the gap from such non-inclusive advocacy for PWDs” - KII OPDs



REMEDIES TO INADEQUATE BUDGETARY ALLOCATION

Based on the findings from this study, the following recommendations emerged as essential remedies to improve budgetary allocation for election materials in an accessible format for PWDs and eventually enhance their accessibility to elections.

- a) The coalition of OPDs in a coordinated manner should improve its advocacy to the EMBs and other relevant institutions to demand just and fair consideration for PWDs in electoral decision making.
- b) INEC in partnership with OPDs should propose to the National Assembly to improve funding for elections in Nigeria to make elections accessible to PWDs through adequate budgetary allocation for election materials in an accessible format.
- c) INEC should mandate its enumerators during voters' registration to collect data of PWDs inclusive of location and type of disability to create a database that would guide planning and logistical decisions on persons with disabilities during elections.
- d) OPDs should continually advocate INEC and other relevant institutions for increase budgetary allocation for electoral materials in an accessible format for PWDs to ensure the promotion and protection of the right to political and public life on an equal basis with others.
- e) OPDs should collectively initiate an amendment process on the Nigeria electoral act 2010 (as amended) to specifically mandate INEC to collect comprehensive data of electorates and provide assistive aids for PWDs during elections.





RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

RECOMMENDATIONS

In line with best practices and research tradition, the following options are recommended through which the challenges of access to elections for PWDs could be addressed in Nigeria.

Partnership and Advocacy

- a) The coalition of OPDs should deepen its advocacy to the National Assembly for the amendment of extant laws to support inclusive elections for PWDs in Nigeria.
- b) OPDs should advocate INEC for full compliance to Federal Character guideline of 5% PWDs in INEC recruitment to ensure inclusiveness in election administration, monitoring and observation.
- c) OPDs should continually advocate INEC for proper planning and deployment of assistive aids for both general and off-cycle elections.
- d) INEC in collaboration with OPDs should commence advocacy for support and understanding to communities for the relocation of inaccessible polling units to accessible locations.
- e) INEC in partnership with OPDs should commence strategic advocacy to the governors' forum to make all public schools within their respective jurisdiction accessible for PWDs to address the challenge of inaccessible polling units.

Training

- a) INEC should ensure intensive and regular disability-sensitive training for polling staffs on accessible elections for PWDs during the electoral process.
- b) OPDs should intensify efforts to build the capacity of PWDs to empower them as advocates, trainers, monitors, and observers of an accessible election in Nigeria.
- c) INEC should deepen its collaboration with OPDs to train PWDs on the electoral process including voters' registration and usage of assistive aids during an election.
- d) INEC should also train specialized staff to mine data of PWDs inclusive of location and disability type during voters' registration.

Awareness

- a) INEC, NOA, and the coalition of OPDs should develop a strategic communication plan to disseminate electoral information accessible to PWDs of any kind.
- b) OPDs should improve collaboration with the media to promote actions and programmes aimed at actualizing accessible elections for PWDs in Nigeria.
- c) OPDs should create awareness on specific rights of PWDs stipulated in extant laws frequently to enrich the knowledge and understanding of the people on persons with disabilities.



CONCLUSION

The Nigerian government has committed itself to the protection and advancement of the political rights of PWDs by ratifying the UNCPRD, however, the implementation seemed inconsistent as regard access to an election for PWDs.

This study outlines good electoral practices on inclusive elections for PWDs worthy of emulation and adopted as standard practice. Notwithstanding, some barriers inhibit PWDs from accessing election ranging from gaps in legislation, non-inclusive voters' registration, inaccessible voters' education, infrastructural barriers, inadequate assistive aids, Election Administration, Monitoring, and Observation.

It is eventually established that budgetary allocation for election materials in an accessible format is inadequate, thus, inadequate funding, lack of political will, inadequate data, gaps in legislation, and inadequate advocacy on the path of OPDs are identified as possible limitations to the adequate budgetary allocation of electoral materials in an accessible format for PWDs.

Furthermore, materials like the braille ballot guide, magnifying glasses, hearing aids, and accessible voting cubicle, etc are classifiable election materials in an accessible format for PWDs, and based on the findings from the market survey, the cost of some of these election materials are not fixed due to variation is types and brand.

Therefore, pricing depends largely on the specification of customers which was ranged from the lowest cost to the highest cost.

APPENDICES

Key Informant Interview Guide

Respondents	Questions
Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC)	<div>1. What are the gaps in the existing electoral laws and policies that hinder the Inclusive Election for PWDs in Nigeria?</div> <div>2. What role does funding play to ensure Inclusive election for PWDs in Nigeria?</div> <div>3. What is your opinion on budgetary allocation for electoral materials in an accessible format?</div> <div>4. What are the implications of inadequate budgetary allocation for electoral materials in an accessible format?</div> <div>5. Based on the trend of this interview, what are your recommendations to stakeholders to achieve an inclusive election for PWDs?</div>



Respondents	Questions
National Orientation Agency (NOA)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What is the importance of Voters' education to Inclusive elections in Nigeria? 2. What role does funding play to achieve creative, Inclusive, accessible Voters' education in Nigeria? 3. What is your opinion on Budgetary allocation for Voters' education in Nigeria? 4. What is the implication of inadequate budgetary allocation for Voters' education to Inclusive elections in Nigeria? 5. Based on the trend of this interview, what are your recommendations to stakeholders to achieve creative, inclusive, and accessible Voters' education in Nigeria?
National Assembly	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What are the gaps in the existing electoral laws and policies that hinder the Inclusive Election for PWDs in Nigeria? 2. What role does funding play to ensure Inclusive election for PWDs in Nigeria? 3. What is your opinion on budgetary allocation for electoral materials in an accessible format? 4. What are the implications of inadequate budgetary allocation for electoral materials in an accessible format? 5. Based on the trend of this interview, what are your recommendations to stakeholders to achieve an Inclusive election for PWDs?
Media	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What is the major access to elections challenges for PWDs in Nigeria? 2. What role does funding play to ensure Inclusive election for PWDs in Nigeria? 3. What is your opinion on budgetary allocation for electoral materials in an accessible format? 4. What are the implications of inadequate budgetary allocation for electoral materials in an accessible format? 5. Based on the trend of this interview, what are your recommendations to stakeholders to achieve an Inclusive election for PWDs?



Respondents	Questions
Organization of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs)	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. What is the major access to elections challenges for PWDs in Nigeria?2. What role does funding play to ensure Inclusive election for PWDs in Nigeria?3. What is your opinion on budgetary allocation for electoral materials in an accessible format?4. What are the implications of inadequate budgetary allocation for electoral materials in an accessible format?5. Based on the trend of this interview, what are your recommendations to stakeholders to achieve Inclusive elections for PWDs?



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