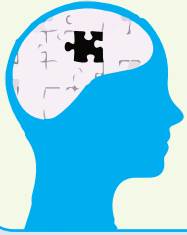




# Autistic Spectrum Disorder in Nigeria

## 5 THINGS YOU SHOULD KNOW

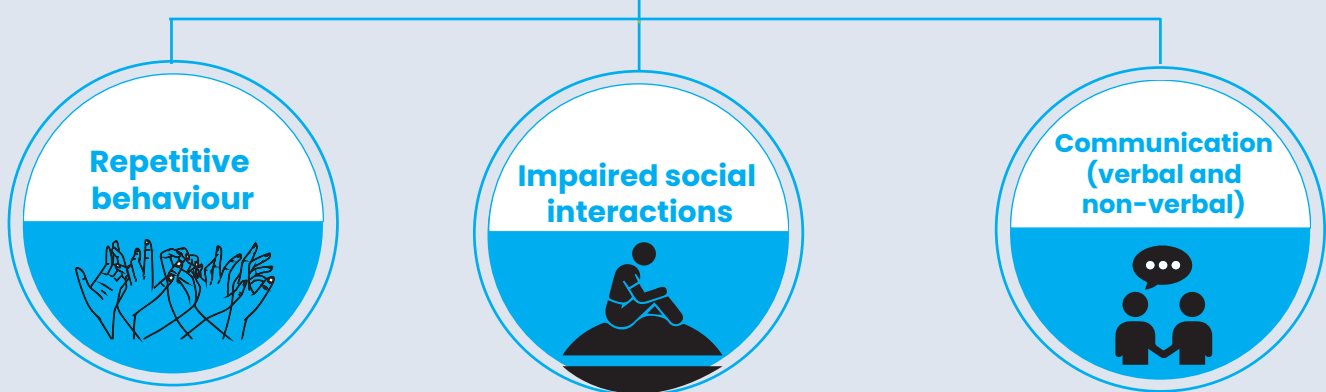
By Ifeyinwa Yusuf



### What do we know about Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)?

Autism is often called spectrum disorder because it has symptoms that occur in different ways at various degrees, and this differs from person to person. Hence, the term Autism spectrum disorder (ASD), which is a developmental disorder that can cause significant social, communication and behavioural **challenges**. In Nigeria, it is diagnosed using the International Classification of Diseases (**ICD-11**).

### The three primary characteristics of ASD known as autism triad are:



**AUTISM REPRESENTS ONE OF THE MOST COMMON DEVELOPMENTAL DISORDERS AFFECTING CHILDREN**

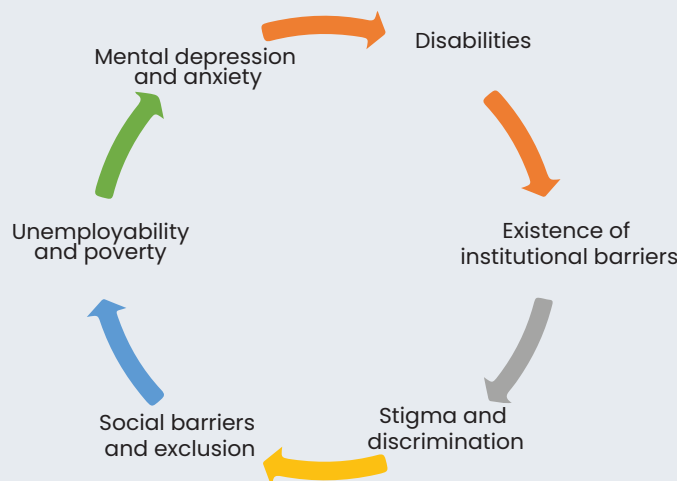
# 2,320

Total number of new cases reported in University College Hospital, Ibadan alone as at 2014

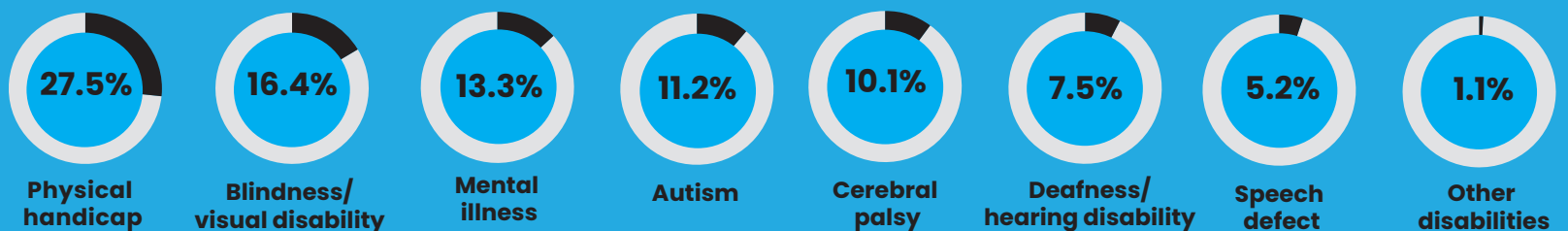


In Nigeria persons with ASD are categorised as a sub-sect of People Living with Disability (PWD); hence in terms of current situation in Nigeria the term PWD includes persons with ASD

### STRUGGLES OF PERSONS WITH AUTISTIC SPECTRUM DISORDER CONTRIBUTE TO INCREASED DISABILITY IN PERSONS AND NON-INCLUSIVE ECONOMIC GROWTH OF THE COUNTRY WHICH IN TURN CREATES A VICIOUS CYCLE



### STATISTICS OF PEOPLE LIVING WITH DISABILITY (PWD) BY TYPE





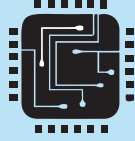
# Struggles

of persons with **Autistic Spectrum Disorder**

## SOCIAL CARE:



NO NATIONAL SOCIAL SERVICE



VERY LOW PROVISION AND AVAILABILITY OF ASSISTED DEVICES



STIGMA AND DISCRIMINATION



DENIAL FROM PARENTS AND CAREGIVERS ON AUTISTIC SPECTRUM DISORDER (ASD)

## TREATMENT:



Most treatments are out of pocket payments



Low access to the Health Insurance Packages for People living With Disability (PWD)



Poor attitude of health workers



Inadequate inclusion of autistic children into the Nigerian educational system



Little or no knowledge of treatment locations

## RESEARCH:



**NO**  
CURRENT NATIONAL RESEARCH OR DATA

**ZERO EMPLOYMENT AND SOCIAL PROTECTION DATA**

1

### PROVIDING A NETWORK OF SUPPORT FOR ASD

**Zeebah foundation** provides early intervention program with applied behaviour analysis (ABA) Therapy, school based and in-home therapy since 2014.

2

**Ike Foundation for Autism**, an NGO in Nigeria have been providing care and interventions to improve the living conditions of people living with autism in Nigeria since 2008.

3

**Centre for Children with Special Needs** was set up in 2005 in a regular school environment, to provide tailor made quality education for each child depending on his or her disability. They work with the community to promote inclusion (integration) of children with special needs.

4

Online: Ms. Toks Bakare (Behaviour Analyst) with an online platform for persons who do not want to be identified <https://asktoks.com/>

## RECOMMENDATIONS TO VARIOUS STAKEHOLDERS



### JOINT NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES (JONAPWD)

- a. Joint National Association of Persons with Disabilities (JONAPWD)
  - i. develop a strong online presence
  - ii. Promote public – private partnerships and include stakeholders in academic in all States to promote primary research on PWD with reference to existing effective **research** from University of Capetown
  - iii. Establish State level networks to identify and include disability assessment in routine check for early identification.



### FOUNDATION

- i. Promote synergy with other foundations to network and deliberate on matters requiring national intervention
- ii. Promote behaviour change communication to communities to promote early identification and intervention.
- iii. Appeal to Health Maintenance Organisation (HMOs) to include a minimum number of service coverage for autistic children within a certain age group

“There is no single professional group who will be able to meet the needs of people with ASD. The best models are ones that combine different disciplines and different perspectives and that work in partnership with families and **communities**”.  
University of Capetown – CARA



### SCHOOL

i. to build the capacity of teachers to train autistic children with zero stigma and discrimination



### HEALTH FACILITIES

- i. Conduct routine behaviour change communication for health workers to change their perception about disabilities and attitudes to PWDs
- ii. Build capacity of health workers to reduce discrimination, provide care, and conduct community sensitisation programs
- iii. build the capacity of health workers to identify children with autistic symptoms



### EMPLOYMENT SECTOR

i. increase employment of persons with disability who are employable and make active provisions for them to be able to work effectively.



### GOVERNMENT

- i. promote evidence- based research on ASD
- ii. Increase funding for PWDs to provide amenities, equipments and technologies needed to provide quality care for these groups
- iii. Increase funding to reduce out of pocket payments
- iv. Increase the number of university courses to better understand ASD and provide funding to students who want to study Psychiatry and Psychology in various universities
- v. To include in the next review of the task shifting and task sharing policy training on psychosocial and mental health support to buffer the effect of the shortage of these specialists
- vi. Review the National Health Insurance Benefit package to specifically include coverage for ASDs children to a certain age

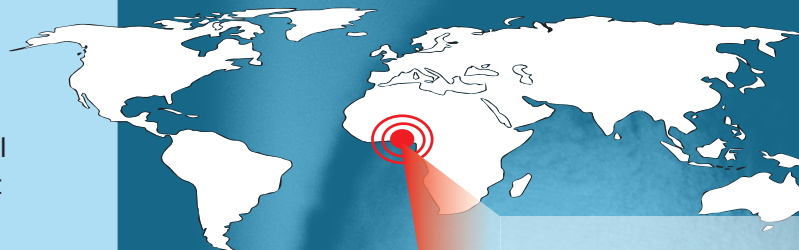


### POLICY MAKERS

The Discrimination against Persons with Disabilities (Prohibition) **Act** 2018 focused on establishment of an independent commission, political will, and creation of an implementation committee and framework. These establish the legal rights for PWDs in Nigeria.

However, more could be done. Policy makers should:

- i. enact legislations that ensure that all policies include specific provisions not just clauses but detailed integration and planning for PWDs that addresses structural, institutional and social barriers
- ii. Eleven states—Plateau, Lagos, Ondo, Jigawa, Anambra, Nasarawa, Ogun, Kano, Bauchi, Kogi and Kwara—have enacted disability laws, each at a different implementation stages. Policy makers could enforce the legislation of the Discrimination Against People with Disability Act in the remaining 25 States and the FCT.
- h. Religious leaders and the public – promote awareness of persons with Autism and integrate them as core members.



**In Nigeria, according to a research conducted by Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development, Prevalence rate of People living With Disability (PWD) was 3.2% as at 2011, this implies that about 4.8 million people were living as PWD.**

**Globally, ASD estimated at 7.6 cases per 100 (1 in 132) was based on a review of epidemiological studies in 2019**