

2025 WHITE CANE SAFETY DAY REPORT

“NAB Calls for Greater Government and other Stakeholders Strategic Support on White Cane Day 2025”

Venue: Uyo, Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria

Theme: *“Vision Beyond Sight: Celebrating Independence, Resilience, and Recognizing Achievement of the Blind”*

Organized by: Total Inclusion Limited/GTE in collaboration with the Nigeria Association of the Blind (NAB) and the Humanitarian Ministry Akwaibom state

With Funding from: First Bank of Nigeria PLC



Introduction

In a bid to strengthen advocacy and deepen inclusion for persons with disabilities, especially individuals who are blind or visually impaired, Total Inclusion Limited/GTE continues to champion the full integration of all persons into the Nigerian social and economic fabric.. The commemoration of the 2025 International White Cane Safety Day was organized by Total Inclusion in conjunction with the Nigeria Association of the Blind, and sponsored by First Bank Nigeria. It was held in Uyo, Akwa Ibom State, under the theme “Vision Beyond Sight: Celebrating Independence, Resilience and Recognizing Achievement of the Blind.”. In attendance were top officers from NAB, government, other DPOS and of course from Total Inclusion. In our bid to include those not resident in Uyo, there was a Zoom link, making participation possible from the United Kingdom and Australia.

The event began with an awareness walk through major streets of Uyo to raise public consciousness about the rights and mobility needs of persons who are blind, followed by a seminar session that provided a platform for dialogue, policy advocacy, and knowledge sharing.

During the seminar, The Nigeria Association of the Blind (NAB) called for increased support from both Federal and State Governments for its members across the country.

The organisation advocated for the appointment of mobility orientation officers in all 774 Local Government Areas of the country, to assist with mobility needs. Among other requests, the association also called on the Akwa Ibom state Government to work towards the provision of ICT training for its members in the state.

Speakers and Highlights

The event featured several distinguished speakers, including:

- **Mr. David Okon**, Executive Director, Total Inclusion Limited/GTE
- **Mr. Stanley Onyebuchi**, National President, NAB
- **Mr. Nsikak Udo**, Chairman, NAB Akwa Ibom State
- **Mrs. Emem Ibanga**, Commissioner, Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs, Akwa Ibom State
- **Dr. John Asein**, Director General, Nigerian Copyright Commission (NCC)
- **Barr. Clifford Thomas**, Human Rights Advocate
- **Representatives of First Bank Nigeria** Ms Aniekpeno Etuk
- **Dr. Ifeolu Omoniyi Akintunde** and **Mr. Ubong Udo** (Virtual contributions from the United Kingdom and from Australia)

The proceedings centred on the achievements and resilience of visually impaired individuals, with speakers emphasising the need for ongoing collaboration to ensure their well-being and successful integration into society.

Mr. David Okon reiterated the call for the establishment of mobility orientation offices in every Local Government Area, stating that their role would be to ensure proper training for visually impaired persons on the use of the white cane, thereby helping to prevent accidents.

Highlighting the challenges posed by the Nigerian environment to the mobility of visually impaired individuals, Mr Okon urged the government to provide essential facilities to support the blind. He specifically mentioned the need for covered drainage to prevent accidents and to adapt traffic lights to be accessible to the blind.

He remarked, “It is commendable to possess a white cane, but without proper training and usage, it becomes ineffective. Furthermore, our leadership at all levels should advocate vigorously to the state, federal, and local governments that each local government area in Nigeria should employ a mobility and orientation officer.

“They will be notified when a blind or visually impaired person moves into their community. It will be their responsibility to identify such individuals and provide them with proper orientation, ensuring they are familiar with their environment and can navigate from their home to essential locations such as the bus stops, train station, or nearby school.”

Ms Aniekpeno Etuk, representing First Bank, announced the launch of financial services specifically designed for the blind and partially sighted, eliminating the need for third-party involvement. She stated that this initiative would enable these individuals to open bank accounts and access services using Braille and voice technology.

“As we celebrate White Cane Day today, we salute the strength and determination of those with impairments. Your enduring faith inspires us to build better systems, design accessible solutions, and foster a society in which everyone is seen, heard, and valued.

“At First Bank, we shall continue to champion accessibility, inclusion, and innovation, ensuring that every customer can confidently say, ‘My bank sees me, hears me, and serves me’,” she affirmed.

Commending the Akwa Ibom government for its support, the National President of NAB, Mr Stanley Onyebuchi, called for further training and ICT support. He encouraged the visually impaired to use their white canes daily and to take pride in doing so.

In his remarks, Mr Nsikak Edet Udo, Chairman of NAB Akwa Ibom State, noted that the 2025 celebration signified a commitment to accessibility, inclusion, and the empowerment of persons with visual impairment through collaborative and impactful efforts.

Mr Udo urged the removal of both physical and attitudinal barriers that hinder easy access for the visually impaired, expressing hope for a shift from policy formulation to actual implementation and from mere intention to tangible impact.

He stated, “To the government of Akwa Ibom State, we commend your leadership and urge continued investment in disability-inclusive development. To our partners, your work is transformative. Let us deepen this collaboration and widen our alliance.”

Speaking virtually from Australia, Mr Ubong Udo underscored the importance of education, employment, and equal participation in society for the blind, while insisting that blind individuals must be willing to pursue education and strive for advancement.

Mr Udo advocated for essential learning tools, accessible infrastructure, and an end to patronising attitudes towards individuals with disabilities.

He commented, “Our challenge is not our blindness, but the inability of the sighted to acknowledge our opinions, often presuming to think on our behalf. Is the Nigerian government providing us with the education we deserve? What is the rationale of employing a blind person without equipping them with the tools to work? Is such employment merely charitable?”

“We desire an Akwa Ibom where employment is available without recourse to protest, and where everyone enjoys equal opportunity and access to education.”

In his contribution, Dr. Akintunde shared his personal journey and professional experiences, including collaborations with various commissions and government officials, and expressed gratitude for these partnerships.

Dr. Akintunde spoke about the necessity of creating inclusive environments for all, regardless of ability. He highlighted the significance of vision and resilience in achieving goals, and the need for continued personal and collective development.

Addressing Disability Rights and Cultural Empathy, Dr. Ifeolu Omoniyi Akintunde emphasised the need for a cultural shift towards empathy and equity, criticised the slow pace of disability legislation, and highlighted the crucial roles of various stakeholders, including banks and airlines, in promoting accessibility.

He advocated for a Nigerian-centred approach to disability rights, rather than the adoption of Western models, and called attention to the underrepresentation of persons with disabilities in the workforce.

He encouraged attendees to promote awareness of disability rights in all spheres and to The Commissioner for the Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs, Mrs Emem Ibanga, outlined the state government’s contributions to supporting the blind, including the full sponsorship of a visually impaired law student, a financial grant of ₦5 million, a monthly upkeep allowance of ₦250,000, and guaranteed employment in the Ministry of Justice. She also noted the special promotion of two visually impaired civil servants to the rank of Director.

“These interventions are not only impactful in advancing inclusion, empowerment, and dignity for persons with disabilities; they represent historic milestones in Akwa Ibom State,” she said.

advocate for the full inclusion of persons with disabilities in Nigeria’s development.

The Nigerian Copyright Commission announced an initiative enabling blind individuals to convert any book into an accessible format at no cost by the close of

2025. The Commission pledged to work with the legislature to ensure practical implementation of accessible reading materials for visually impaired children.

The event concluded with the distribution of white canes to several visually impaired individuals from the 31 local government areas.

Key Takeaways

The 2025 White Cane Safety Day in Uyo, Akwa Ibom State, reinforced the call for stronger government action to support persons with visual impairment. The Nigeria Association of the Blind (NAB) urged both federal and state governments to appoint Mobility Orientation Officers in all 774 Local Government Areas to enhance safe mobility and independence for blind persons.

Speakers emphasized the need for inclusive infrastructure such as covered drainages and audible traffic lights, as well as expanded ICT training to promote digital inclusion and employment opportunities. A major highlight was First Bank Nigeria's introduction of accessible banking services using Braille and voice technology, enabling blind customers to operate accounts independently.

The Akwa Ibom State Government was commended for disability-friendly initiatives including scholarships, grants, and job placements for the visually impaired. Contributors also called for a cultural and legislative shift toward empathy, equity, and full inclusion of persons with disabilities in national development.

Speakers from UK who called in through zoom further emphasized education, employment, and attitudinal change as essential drivers of inclusion.

The Nigerian Copyright Commission's plan to provide free book conversion into accessible formats by 2025, alongside the distribution of white canes to participants from 31 LGAs, symbolized progress and renewed commitment to accessibility and empowerment.

Conclusion

The 2025 White Cane Safety Day was more than a commemoration it was a statement of purpose and a collective reaffirmation of commitment to inclusion. The event demonstrated the power of partnership among government, the private sector, and civil society in driving social change. It also highlighted the resilience and determination of persons with visual impairment to contribute meaningfully to national development when given equal opportunities.

As the call for action echoes beyond Uyo, the message is clear: inclusion must move from advocacy to implementation, from policy to practice. With sustained collaboration, empathy, and strategic investment, Nigeria can build a society where every citizen regardless of ability can live, work, and thrive with dignity.

Annexes



Figure 1 the road work showing road safety officers In Front and a young man with physical disability.



Figure 2 a line of members of the blind community with Their aids during the white cane walk.



Figure 3 A cross section of participants and NAB Officials at the white cane walk in Uyo



Figure 4 the Executive Director of total inclusion gte ltd during the white cane work in Uyo



Figure 5 the PA to the Governor of Akwaibom state on disability matters joined total inclusion in the walk



Figure 6 the NAB President with officials of NAB in the white cane walk. Akwaibom state at the walk



Figure 7 Mr. Stanley Onyebuchi, National President, NAB •Mr. Nsikak Udo, Chairman, NAB Akwa Ibom State , Dr. John Asein, Director General, Nigerian Copyright Commission (NCC) Mr. David Okon, Executive Director, Total Inclusion Limited/GTE, Barr. Clifford Thomas, Human Rights Advocate



Figure 8 Mr. Stanley Onyebuchi the National President of NAB giving his goodwill message.



Figure 9 cross section of participants at the seminar



Figure 10 cross section of participants at the seminar



Figure 11 Dr. John Asein, Director General, Nigerian Copyright Commission (NCC) Making a presentation



Mr. David Okon, Executive Director, Total Inclusion Limited/GTE and Mrs. Emem Ibanga, Commissioner, Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs, Akwa Ibom State



Figure 2 Mrs. Emem Ibanga, Commissioner, Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs, Akwa Ibom State with other speakers at the occasion