



Disability Access and Inclusion in the Political Processes of Four Southeast Asian Countries



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Abbreviations and Acronyms

AGENDA	General Election Network for Disability Access
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
CRPD	United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
CSO	Civil society organization
DPO	Disabled persons' organization
EMB	Election management body
FGD	Focus group discussion
ICCPR	International Convention on Civil and Political Rights
IFES	International Foundation for Electoral Systems
KII	Key informant interview
NDI	National Democratic Institute
NGO	Non-governmental organization
UDHR	Universal Declaration of Human Rights
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WHO	World Health Organization

Cambodia

CDPO	Cambodia Disabled People's Organization
CEC	Commune Election Committee
COMFREL	Committee for Free and Fair Elections in Cambodia
CPP	Cambodian People's Party
CNRP	Cambodia National Rescue Party
ERA	Election Reforms Alliance
LECC	Law on Elections of Commune Councils
LEMNA	Law on the Election of Members to the National Assembly
LPPRPD	Law on Protection and Promotion of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
NEC	National Election Committee of Cambodia
PEC	Provincial Election Committee

Indonesia

BAWASLU	Election Supervisory Body (<i>Badan Pengawas Pemilihan Umum</i>)
DKI	Special Capital Region (<i>Daerah Khusus Ibukota</i>)
JPPR	People's Voter Education Network (<i>Jaringan Pendidikan Pemilih untuk Rakyat</i>)
KPU	General Election Commission (<i>Komisi Pemilihan Umum</i>)
PPDI	Indonesian Disabled People Association (<i>Persatuan Penyandang Disabilitas Indonesia</i>)
PPUA Penca	Center for Election Access of Citizens with Disabilities (<i>Pusat Pemilihan Umum Penyandang Cacat</i>)

Philippines

APP	Accessible Polling Place
BEI	Board of Election Inspectors
COMELEC	Commission on Elections of the Republic of the Philippines
KAMPI	National Federation of Organizations of Persons with Disabilities in the Philippines (<i>Katipunan ng Maykapansanan sa Pilipinas Inc.</i>)
NCR	National Capital Region
PCOS	Precinct-Count Optical Scanners

Vietnam

Hanoi ILC	Hanoi Independent Living Center
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Acknowledgments

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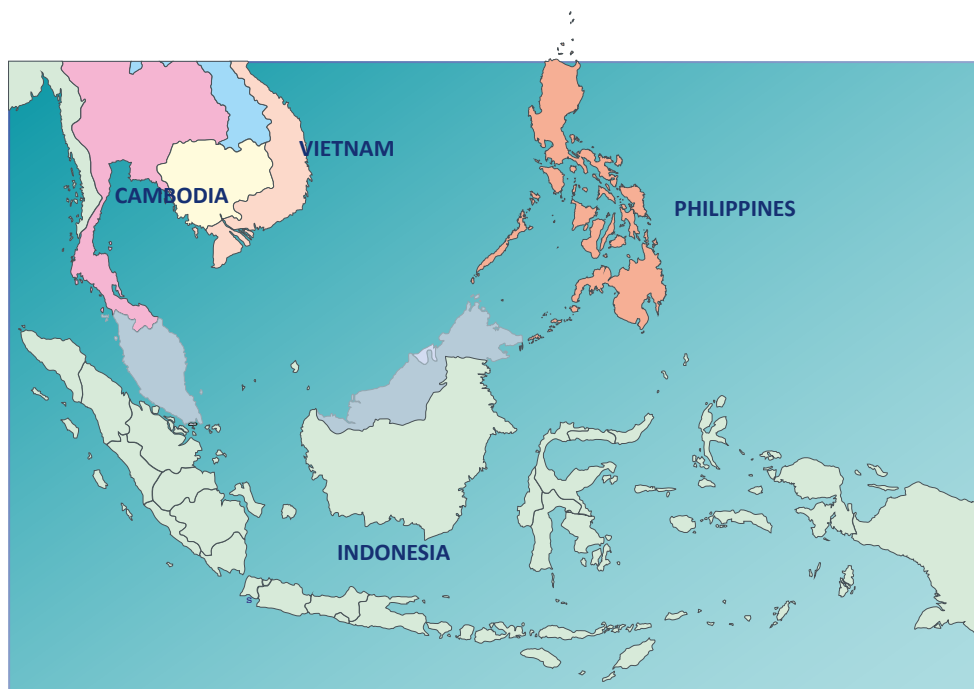
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About AGENDA



Established in 2011, the General Election Network for Disability Access (AGENDA) was formed to improve access to political and electoral opportunities for persons with disabilities in Southeast Asia through increased public awareness and advocacy for change. AGENDA is a creative partnership between the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES), disabled persons' organizations (DPOs), and election-focused civil society organizations.

AGENDA is currently in its second phase, which is funded by the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) provided funding for the first phase of the project. The network's principal objectives have been to promote election accessibility in Southeast Asia and ensure that access to disability-inclusive political processes is on the human rights agenda of regional bodies, especially the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

During its first three years, the AGENDA network established a strong reputation amongst key stakeholders, including organizations focusing on politics and human rights, election commissions, and ASEAN and Asia-Pacific officials. The AGENDA partnership is now considered the lead Southeast Asian regional actor promoting the political rights of persons with disabilities.

This report documents a series of research studies from Cambodia, Indonesia, the Philippines, and Vietnam that were conducted in 2015 as a follow up to the 2013 publication "Accessible Elections

for Persons with Disabilities in Five Southeast Asian Countries,” a collection of research reports by AGENDA network organizations in Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, the Philippines and Vietnam, which was the first systematic attempt to gather data on election access and good practices from across the region.

AGENDA also published the first checklist for monitoring election accessibility which was developed and piloted in five local elections in Indonesia. It was then used to monitor elections in Cambodia, Malaysia, Myanmar and the Philippines, as well as outside of the region in the Dominican Republic, Haiti, Kosovo and Nepal. DPOs around the world have translated the checklist into over 10 languages including Arabic, French, Spanish, Tamil, and Farsi.

AGENDA Research Partners

AGENDA has at least one partner in each of the four participating countries (Cambodia, Indonesia, the Philippines, and Vietnam). The four partners listed below are the country-based organizations that conducted the research included in this report.



Cambodia Disabled People's Organization

Established in 1994, the Cambodia Disabled People's Organization (CDPO) is a disability-led organization with a mission to develop networks of persons with disabilities to support, protect, serve, and promote disability rights, achievements, and interests. Its overall aim is to promote the peaceful participation of persons with disabilities and ensure their equality in Cambodian society.

CDPO's work focuses on improving access to and availability of services for persons with disabilities, facilitating the full implementation of national and international disability rights instruments, the inclusion of persons with disabilities in their respective societies, capacity-building for DPOs, and raising public awareness about disability rights through the media, events, and campaigns.



Indonesian Disabled People's Association

Established in 1987, the *Persatuan Penyandang Disabilitas Indonesia* (PPDI) is an umbrella organization comprised of diverse disability rights organizations dedicated to realizing the full and equal participation of persons with disabilities in all aspects of Indonesian life. PPDI serves as a coordinating agency and advocacy leader for its members, and works to support the government in the formulation of inclusive and accessible disability rights policies and programs. PPDI's network includes organizations from nearly all of the provinces of Indonesia, and PPDI itself is a member of Disabled Peoples International. Since 2005, PPDI has actively encouraged scholarly work and advocacy efforts on the full implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in Indonesia.



National Federation of Organizations of Persons with Disabilities in the Philippines

The *Katipunan ng Maykapansanan sa Pilipinas Inc.* (KAMPI) is a network of cross-disability, self-help grassroots organizations of persons with disabilities providing a voice in pushing for the implementation of relevant disability rights programs and policies. KAMPI was established during the Second National Congress of Persons with Disabilities in July 1990, with an initial membership of chapters from seven provinces. Since then, KAMPI has expanded to its present membership of 25 chapters covering 58 provinces.

KAMPI envisions a “Society for All” where persons with disabilities are fully empowered and equal members of society. It seeks to encourage the participation and mainstreaming of Filipino persons with disabilities in order for them to have more control over the necessary services needed to live productive and independent lives.



Hanoi Independent Living Center

The Hanoi Independent Living Center (Hanoi ILC) was established in January 2009 with support from the Nippon Foundation. It is operated by persons with disabilities to serve the needs of their peers. The objectives of Hanoi ILC are to:

- Provide services to help every person with a disability to live independently and develop their potential;
- Promote and expand the independent living movement in Vietnam; and
- Advocate for government support for establishing an independent living model.

Services provided include peer-group counseling, an independent living program, a personal assistance service, and acting as a source of information and advocating for the independent living model in Vietnam.

Executive Summary

With support from the International Foundation for Electoral Systems, four disabled people's organizations (DPOs) in Cambodia, Indonesia, the Philippines and Vietnam conducted research under the [General Election Network for Disability Access \(AGENDA\)](#) project on the rights of persons with disabilities in the political process in each country. There are several common themes that link these countries with each other and with other countries in Southeast Asia.

Of note are the positive accomplishments and progress described in each country, a result of the Southeast Asian region's role as a leader in proactively supporting the rights of persons with disabilities, including their electoral and political rights. For example, AGENDA researchers found positive feedback for Filipino EMBs, where respondents noted the EMBs had made good progress toward increasing accessibility to voter registration processes and polling places. Vietnamese respondents from DPOs, media, and government agencies provided a wide range of ideas for inclusive activities that could be implemented. Researchers in Indonesia noted that EMB policies encouraged access for persons with disabilities, and stated that the EMB in Cambodia recently committed to providing more access to election materials and to hiring persons with disabilities as part of their staff.

There are also common areas for improvement. Though strong legal frameworks and/or election regulations supporting and protecting access to elections for persons with disabilities are present in all four countries, the consistent implementation of these policies has been slow to occur. Sometimes there are issues with not budgeting for accommodations beforehand, or not initiating plans early enough to provide accessibility on time. There are often gaps in training for poll workers, meaning that disability policies are implemented well in some areas and less well in others.

Additionally, researchers have also noted a universal, urgent theme for data on voters and candidates with disabilities. Without the data, it is difficult for communities to gauge precisely how effective policies are, and it makes it more difficult for EMBs and other election stakeholders to plan, prepare and provide services where they are needed the most.

Though there remain areas for improvement, there are also numerous opportunities for electoral and political stakeholders to propel Southeast Asia even further forward as a leading supporter of the rights of persons with disabilities.



Introduction

Chapter 1

Chapter 1: Introduction

Though recent years have seen commendable progress in advancing the economic, educational, and employment rights of men, women, and children with disabilities throughout Southeast Asia, there remain areas for improvement, particularly in regards to the right to political participation. While equal access to political and electoral processes such as voting, running for office, and working as observers or as election officials is a right protected by several international treaties and laws at the regional and national levels, significant obstacles such as inaccessible polling stations and election materials continue to persist.



Until a few years ago, little data was available recommendations or activities focusing on the status of access to elections and other political processes by persons with disabilities. To address this gap, in 2012 the General Election Network for Disability Access (AGENDA) project initiated the first systematic attempt to gather data on election accessibility and document good practices from Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, the Philippines and Vietnam. The final results were published in a 2013 report entitled "Accessible Elections for Persons with Disabilities in Five Southeast Asian Countries."

The research results shared in the 2013 report encouraged disabled persons' organizations (DPOs) and election management bodies (EMBs) in Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, the Philippines and Vietnam to begin conversations on how to support the political inclusion of citizens with

disabilities. Some EMBs and DPOs began activities such as revising election laws, conducting election access observations, and improving the accessibility of voter education materials, polling stations and ballots.

As a follow-up to the 2013 report, a new series of research studies were conducted by AGENDA country partners in Cambodia, Indonesia, the Philippines and Vietnam in 2015. Each research partner focused on an area essential to ensuring that persons with disabilities are able to participate in political processes in their country. In Cambodia, the Cambodian Disabled Persons' Organization (CDPO) examined the accessibility of the voter registration process. In Indonesia, the Indonesian Disabled People's Association (PPDI) looked at the level of political participation by persons with disabilities. In the Philippines, the National Federation of Organizations of Persons with Disabilities (KAMPI) assessed the work of Filipino EMBs towards promoting election accessibility. In Vietnam, the Hanoi Independent Living Center (Hanoi ILC) researched the level of political awareness of persons with disabilities.

In each research study, AGENDA partners discovered that there are positive indicators demonstrating that EMBs, DPOs, and other stakeholders are steadily improving access to elections for persons with disabilities. However, as research participants consistently noted, there are opportunities for further improvement in each country and across the region. With new information, key stakeholder groups such as EMB officials, media representatives, civil society organizations, DPOs, persons with disabilities, and the family, friends, and neighbors of persons with disabilities can continue to build equal access and equal opportunity to political processes for all citizens in Southeast Asia.

The Right to Political Participation in Southeast Asia

The countries of Southeast Asia have signed or ratified numerous international, regional and national treaties that underline and reinforce the message that the equal participation of men and women with disabilities is of significant importance to Southeast Asian societies, including in the area of political participation.

On an international level, the **UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)** is a landmark document protecting several rights for persons with disabilities. Article 29 explicitly protects the right to political participation. Since its passage in 2006, the convention has been either signed or ratified by nearly all Southeast Asian countries.

Other significant documents include the **Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR)**, in which Article 21 supports the right to participate in government and election processes, and the **International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR)**, in which Article 25 states that every citizen – including persons with disabilities – should have the opportunity to vote and run as candidates in elections.

Of note as well is the **Incheon Strategy to “Make the Right Real” for Persons with Disabilities in Asia and Pacific**. Established by the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) and adopted in November 2012 by governments and persons with disabilities across the Asia-Pacific region, the Strategy aims to encourage the collection of data on persons with disabilities and aims to reduce barriers across the region. Goal 2 of the Incheon Strategy focuses on the political participation of persons with disabilities, seeking to increase the numbers of persons with disabilities in parliament and as voters.

On a regional level, the current **Charter of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)**, which went into force in 2008, notes its commitment to “strengthen democracy, enhance good governance and the rule of law, and to promote and protect human rights and fundamental freedoms” (Article 1), including the rights of persons with disabilities. The ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR) has continuously demonstrated its support for the rights of persons with disabilities; most recently, it held its first regional disability rights dialogue in late 2015.

In November 2012, AGENDA held a Regional Dialogue on disability access to political processes for Southeast Asian stakeholders, in which participants created the **Bali Commitments on Equal Access to Elections**, providing a set of regional guidelines and commitments for eliminating obstacles to participation in elections for persons with disabilities. In January 2015, the **Jakarta**

Addendum to Address Overlapping Forms of Marginalization was introduced at a subsequent Regional Dialogue, committing participants to inclusion of persons with disabilities from different marginalized groups, such as women, youth, indigenous populations, ethnic and religious minorities, LGBT communities, and older people.

These international and regional laws, when combined with national laws in Southeast Asian countries, serve as the foundation of support for the political rights of persons with disabilities. The research studies that are described in the following pages are efforts to determine to what extent these laws have been implemented, and to identify and make recommendations for areas where implementation could be strengthened.

Table 1 - Status of International and Regional Treaties in Southeast Asia

	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights	UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities	Charter of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)
Brunei Darussalam	✗	✓ <i>signed</i>	✗
Cambodia	✓	✓	✓
East Timor	✓	✗	✗
Indonesia	✓	✓	✓
Laos	✓	✓	✓
Malaysia	✗	✓	✓
Myanmar	✗	✓	✓
Philippines	✓	✓	✓
Singapore	✗	✓	✓
Thailand	✓	✓	✓
Vietnam	✓	✓	✓

Legend: Signatory Ratified Neither signed nor ratified



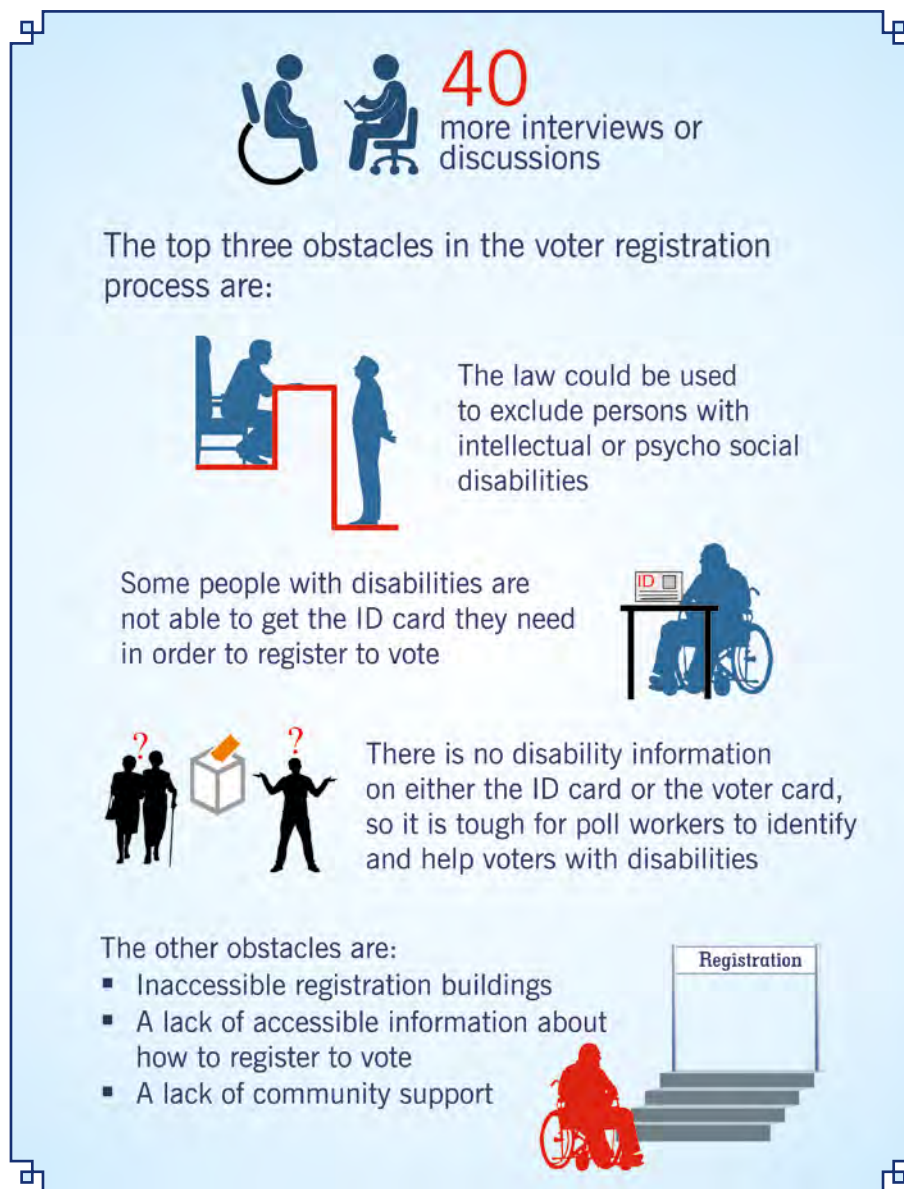
Cambodia

Chapter 2

Chapter 2: Cambodia

Disability Inclusion in Voter Registration Processes

Research conducted by the Cambodian Disabled People's Organization (CDPO)



I. Background

From the early days of Cambodian democracy, the Royal Government has ensured the equal access and participation of its citizens in politics. The Cambodian Constitution, which was enacted on September 21, 1993, states that Khmer citizens shall enjoy the right to vote and to stand as candidates for the election.¹ Almost two decades later, Cambodia enacted the *Law on Protection and Promotion of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* (LPPRPD) in 2009 and subsequently ratified the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* (CRPD) in December 2012. Both treaties guarantee the fulfillment of political rights of persons with disabilities in Cambodia. Legally, none shall be prohibited in exercising their political rights in Cambodia.²

Yet, inclusive elections are still not the norm. In particular, voter registration remains a major challenge for Cambodians with disabilities. This is shown through research among 450 respondents conducted by the Cambodia Disabled People's Organization (CDPO) and funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) which shows that only 66.2% (n=298) of respondents with disabilities participated in the 2012 Election, while 33.8% (n=152) were not registered on the list.³ For those who were registered (66.2%, n=298), the process was not easy, as claimed by 21.8% (n=65) respondents with disabilities.⁴ Inaccessible registration locations and unavailability of assistances were the main reasons. In the end, only 61.6% (n=277) of respondents with disabilities voted in the 2012 Election.⁵

Cambodia will hold a national election in 2018 and preparation has already begun. It is important for CDPO to effectively advocate for inclusive elections with the National Election Committee (NEC). The NEC, in turn, needs to address the challenges that voters with disabilities face and promote their participation in political processes, as guaranteed by the constitution. Therefore, research on accessible voter registration as a pathway to disability inclusion in political rights was conducted by CDPO with support from International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) through the AGENDA project. The report will be used as part of advocacy materials and support provided to the NEC in redesigning the voter registration process in Cambodia.

Voter Registration in Cambodia

Cambodia maintains a periodic voter list generated by voters registering at government-designated registration offices made available for a one-and-a-half-month period each year. Typically, the

1 Article 34 of the Amendment of the Constitutional Law, 1999.

2 LPPRPD Article 44 and CRPD Article 29.

3 CDPO. (2013). Accessible elections for persons with disabilities in Cambodia. Phnom Penh: AGENDA/IFES/USAID.

4 *Ibid.*

5 *Ibid.*

registration period is held around nine months prior to an election. For the 2018 election, the NEC intends to use a digital voter registration system that will utilize voters' finger prints and photos to verify their identity. It is hoped that this new system will prevent voter list irregularities found in past elections. Currently, the registration system relies on each voter possessing a national identification card (Khmer ID) to prove their eligibility. Once registered, it is incumbent upon citizens to appear at the registration office each year in order to verify that their information is correct.



Responsibility for the voter list and for managing the voter registration process is shared between the NEC and locally elected Commune Councils under the Ministry of Interior without clear demarcation of responsibility and accountability between the two. In addition, recently enacted laws such as the *Law on Election of Members to the National Assembly* (LEMNA) – which established requirements for voter registration - and the NEC Law, may represent a step backward in democratic principles and may not necessarily improve the voter registration process. Civil society has called for amending both laws.

An NEC audit carried out two weeks prior to the July 2013 election found that 9% of people registered to vote in the election could not find their names on the voter registry. Similar audits by the Committee for Free and Fair Elections in Cambodia (COMFREL) and the National Democratic Institute (NDI) reinforce the significant disenfranchisement of Cambodian voters due to overlapping lines of responsibility between the NEC and Commune Councils, inadequacy of identity and residency documents, antiquated handling processes, cumbersome requirements on the voter to appear every year, and unclear procedures to correct errors on the voter list.

For the upcoming commune and national elections, the NEC will continue to cooperate with sub-national administrations to implement the national voter registration process. The process begins

with the NEC establishing voter registration offices inside commune and *sangkat*⁶ offices (and in some *phum*⁷ or village offices) throughout the country prior to the registration period.

The registration period for the upcoming commune elections has been set from March 1st, 2016 to 10 August 10th, 2016. Eligible voters must visit the registration office during this timeframe to register or to verify their registration. Voters with disabilities are permitted to be accompanied by an adult.

To be placed on the voter list, voters are required by law to meet the following criteria:

- Khmer nationality;
- Age of 18 (eighteen) years by Election Day;
- Residency or place of abode in the commune, *sangkat* or *phum* where they cast their ballot; and
- Not be insane or be under custody with a letter certified by a competent ministry or institution.

Upon confirming eligibility, NEC staff use a computerized system to register voters and submit data from the registration office to the NEC Computer Center daily. Most complaints are dealt with at the Commune Council with the possibility of appeal to the NEC and to the Constitutional Council. Each registration office posts their preliminary voter list and lists of the names of people who are deleted from the voter list at the registration office and at a site in the commune, *sangkat* or *phum*. At the NEC Computer Center, preliminary electoral rolls are posted after registration and all complaints at all levels are decided upon. In hiring decisions, the NEC encourages - and gives priority to - applicants with disabilities who are competent and are physically suitable for the jobs concerned.

II. Research Objectives

In general, this research aims to explore the possible options to improve the political participation of voters with disabilities in Cambodia to be considered by NEC in redesigning the process for the next election.

6 Subdivision of a district (*khan*).

7 A *sangkat* is further subdivided into *phum*, which are usually translated as villages, though they do not necessarily cover one single settlement.

To achieve this aim, key questions of the research are as follows:

1. What are the challenges for voters with disabilities in the registration process?
2. What are the good practices in ensuring accessible voter registration for voters with disabilities?
3. What are the lessons learned in ensuring accessible voter registration for voters with disabilities?

III. Research Methodology

Location

The research was conducted mostly in Phnom Penh, Cambodia where most of the targeted key informants live. However, there were a few interviews conducted by E-Mail with DPO representatives from the Philippines, Laos, and Indonesia.

Data Collection Methods

Qualitative methodology was used for data collection, with desk-based research, key informant interviews (KIIs) and focus group discussions (FGDs).

Desk-based Research

Secondary data was collected through desk-based research on documents that relate to electoral issues, the voter registration process and/or the Cambodian elections as well as related legal frameworks. Specifically, CDPO collected data on inclusive voter registration policies and/or practices in other countries.



Key Informant Interviews (KIIs)

KIIs were conducted with individuals whose information, ideas and recommendations on the related topics will enrich the analysis. Twelve CDPO interviewed experts on inclusive voter registration from the EMB, DPOs, other Cambodian and non-Cambodian CSOs, and academia. The key informants are described in the table below:

Table 2 - Interviewed informants

Informant type	Number
Election Specialists from related CSOs	3
EMB officials	3
DPO officials who advocate on election access in other countries	3
Academics	3
Total	12

Focus group discussions (FGDs)

To obtain the perceptions and attitudes of specific groups, 13 FGDs were conducted with officials from non-governmental organizations (NGOs) whose organizations work on disability and/or electoral issues, representatives from political parties, and representatives from Provincial Election Committees (PECs) and Commune Election Committees (CECs).

Table 3 - FGD participants

Informant type	Number
Officials from NGOs working on disability issues (Phnom Penh)	6
Officials from NGOs working on electoral issues (Phnom Penh)	6
Members of Provincial Election Committees (Kampong Spue Province)	6
Members of Commune Election Committees (Kampong Spue Province)	6
Representatives of political parties Phnom Penh	6
Total	30

Limitations

The limitations of this study are as follows:

1. CDPO finalized this report under an accelerated timeline so that its contents would be useful in the public discussion with the NEC on the inclusiveness of the voter registration process.
2. Final voter registration regulations were not finalized until after research for this report was completed.
3. The CECs had not yet been appointed during the period of research for this report.
4. CDPO was facing difficulties arranging meetings with the NEC to interview members as part of the research since the newly appointed commissioners were busy drafting the Voter Registration regulations.
5. Communication with DPOs in other countries was very difficult since it took a long time for them to respond to emails and interview requests.

IV. Findings

Challenges

This research strengthens earlier research that CDPO conducted through AGENDA in 2013.⁸ Twenty-one legal frameworks have not fully protected all types of disabilities, nor removed physical and social barriers to the fulfillment of political rights. Social barriers remain an underlying challenge as reflected in negative attitudes toward persons with disabilities. This challenge will be described in the subsections below.

Gaps in the legal framework

Even though there are many legal frameworks that exist for the inclusion of persons with disabilities in the electoral processes, gaps in the law remain. For example, persons with intellectual or psychosocial disabilities and persons under guardianship may be excluded from standing as candidates in the election of the National Assembly and excluded from registering to vote.

8 CDPO. (2013). Accessible elections for persons with disabilities in Cambodia. Phnom Penh: AGENDA.

The Law on Elections of Commune Councils (LECC), which was initially promulgated in 2001 and then amended in 2006, prohibits persons who are “certified by a competent institution as being insane or under a guardianship” to register or vote in the Commune Councils election. This restriction not only puts persons with intellectual or psychosocial disabilities at high risk of being excluded from those political and electoral processes, but codifies discrimination as a social barrier.

Requirements and process of voter registration

There are three main challenges for voters with disabilities in Cambodia that relate to registration requirements.

First, the legal frameworks have potentially excluded persons with intellectual and psychosocial disabilities through the LEMNA and LECC laws. The ambiguity (and absence of explanation) as to what defines “insane” and “under guardianship” may lead to confusion and misinterpretation.

“There isn’t any statement saying how people who have intellectual disability involve in social and political events and so on. There is not yet regulation, Prakas and procedure” (TR, male, FGD Disability NGOs, Krousar Thmey)

A second challenge is the requirement of providing a valid identity (ID) card to register to vote. The process of obtaining an ID card is a significant challenge for individuals with some types of disabilities. Government officials and caregivers are not prepared to assist persons with disabilities in navigating this often cumbersome and inaccessible bureaucratic process. As a result, some persons with disabilities may not be eligible to vote in the 2018 national elections.

A third challenge is that there is no identification of one’s disabilities either on the identity card or on the current registration form. It is not feasible to expect clerks to automatically identify and assist voters with disabilities given their workloads. Numerical errors and misspelled names are common examples.

“Some names of voters were not found in the list or there were double name but we do not know the unfound names how many percentage are disabilities or normal people” (PR, Male, KII Election Specialist CSO-Transparency International Cambodia)

Inaccessible Registration Posts

Regardless of the fact that an accessible environment has been guaranteed through LPPRPD, the research has found that access continues to be a challenge. First, the location registration posts might not be accessible to voters with disabilities. Then, even if voters with disabilities are able to reach registration posts, they may not be able to navigate the posts which may also be inaccessible.

Further, posts may not be equipped with assistive devices and materials like braille. The unavailability of braille materials is supposed to have been available since the 2008 General Election.

“There is no braille letter for them to register, especially when they ask to check the name on the list, they could not do it” (TR, male, FCG Disability NGOs, Krousar Thmey)

Lack of Information

A lack of information contributes significantly to the violation of persons with disabilities’ rights. In terms of voter registration, access to information is crucial to know when, where, and how to register.

The role of mass media is important as public opinion is shaped through the information that the media disseminates, including on voter registration. Yet, this has not been fully optimized. Persons with disabilities are not well-informed of the voter registration process nor its requirements.

“We want to disseminate information about voter registration, but the information does not reach them. Both media and information could not reach them. Sometimes, the media reaches them, but they could not catch it” (KC, Male, KII Election Specialist CSO, COMFREL)

Secondly, there is a lack of awareness of the rights of persons with disabilities. These apply not only to electoral officials, but also to the disability community itself.

Furthermore, it is commonly found that the provision of assistive devices is seen as an expensive effort, especially among EMB officials. This is a good example that limited understanding of disability and lack of capacity puts persons with disabilities’ rights as “the cost”.

“There is not enough budget to assist PWD in registration for example to facilitate them with wheelchair and so on as we have until 1633 registration offices, and it might increase” (KII EMB TMR, female, NEC Rep of CNRP)

Lack of social support

Lack of social supports is a fundamental barrier for persons with disabilities in exercising their political rights. In general, society still stigmatizes persons with disabilities and even belittle their political aspirations.

*“People generally assume that number of PWD is so small which their voice is not so significant”
(FGD Electoral NGOs)*

There is a common perception that persons with disabilities are under their families’ responsibility. Thus, all of their needs must be fulfilled by the family including assistance in the electoral process.

“It is a family of persons with disabilities’ obligation to spread the information as they are more accessible to information than their persons with disabilities’ family member” (YV, female, KII Academic from Build Bright University)

At the same time, families do not understand that their relatives with disabilities have political rights too. There is an assumption that the voices of their relatives with disabilities are not significant and thus there is no need to encourage them to engage their political rights.

“There is no encouragement from family and society. Sometimes people do not understand about the significant of voting” (FGD Disability NGOs)

“There is no encouragement from family, friends and society to participate in election process including voter registration, saying it is not necessary for PWD to go to vote” (KC, Male, KII Election Specialist CSO, COMFREL)

Usually, non-profit organizations contribute to advocating for the rights of citizens in the government's absence. Since electoral access is an emerging topic, however, there is a limited number of electoral CSOs and NGOs which include inclusion as part of their agenda. At the same time, there is a limited number of DPOs that work in political rights. This helps to explain why there is limited effort in ensuring inclusive elections.

This lack of support has affected persons' with disabilities self-confidence and realization of their rights. As has been argued by informants in this research, the willingness and commitment of voters with disabilities themselves is vitally important in the provision of support.

Good Practices in Cambodia

Fortunately, there are a few enabling factors that bring optimism in promoting an inclusive voter registration process in Cambodia despite the different legal frameworks.



Coverage of legal frameworks

The law and the Constitution have the ultimate authority over efforts to impede the rights of voters with disabilities to be registered and participate in elections. The Constitution guarantees that “Khmer citizens of either sex shall enjoy the right to vote and to stand as candidates for the election”.⁹ In addition to the fact that the Royal Government of Cambodia has been a state party to human rights instruments including CRPD, the LPPRPD ensures that “in case of any provisions

9 Article 34 of the Constitution.

that contradict the provisions of this law, the provisions of those international treaties shall be considered as the principle provisions.”¹⁰ In short, the rights of persons with disabilities have been guaranteed by the government.

Some of the informants acknowledge this and argue that problems occur not due to legislation, but their implementation.

“There is law that state PWD has equal rights and opportunity to participate in political and social activities without discrimination. Yet, the implementation still have some gap as there is no encouragement and PWD did not receive information well and clear enough. Law is already there, but the problem is about implementation” (FGD Disability NGOs)

Recently voter registration regulations and procedures in Cambodia were redesigned by the new NEC. This new draft allocates more time for the voter registration process over five to six months. In particular, it allows for enough time for voters to review and submit complaints for any problem related to their registration processes. Most importantly, the term “PWD” is mentioned in the new voter registration regulations and procedures and the NEC is now considering including a disability column as part of the registration list.

“We already discussed about this within NEC. Some country they like to put and some country don’t like to put disability type because sound discriminate to them. We will wait for the call of disability representative to decide whether or not we put the column of disability type” (HP, Male, KII NEC Rep of NGOs)

Engagement and partnership

The Cambodian voter registration process does not fully accommodate the needs of voters with disabilities. However, there has been progress. Efforts are underway and contributions are being made by DPOs and NGOs.

10 Article 49 of LPPRPD

“In the past, disability meet difficulty since there was not any mechanism to facilitate disability, so they are also careless in the voter registration process but I think in the new law, the NGOs, which work with disability, participates in advocating, so it may make change in new election law” (YS, Male, KII Academic, PUC)

“COMFREL actually has a committee called ERA, Election Reform Alliance that has over 20 NGOs including DPOs. The committee works to advocate to election reform, laws, and regulations of NEC” (KC, Male, KII Election Specialist CSO COMFREL)

There were meetings between CDPO, DPOs and the NEC to discuss disability inclusion in the new electoral reforms process, including advocacy for notation of the disability type in the voter registration list. CDPO actively participated in the process of amending the draft law on NEC and the LEMNA and in meetings, workshops and press conferences with the Election Reforms Alliance (ERA) and the two main political parties, CPP and CNRP.

Most recently, on June 5, 2015, CDPO proposed an advisory group called the National Election Committee Disability Advisory Group which aims to provide support and advice on specific initiatives to be undertaken by the NEC to remove barriers in the electoral process and to increase opportunities available to persons with disabilities.¹¹

Also, on June 5, 2015, CDPO submitted its Disability Inclusive Policy to NEC for increasing participation of persons with diverse disabilities in the electoral process. The Policy will help to guide the NEC in making the electoral process barrier-free for persons with disabilities. In the policy, two priority areas are noted:

AREA 1: Strengthening NEC’s inclusive policy to increase participation and promote the empowerment of persons with disabilities in electoral processes

AREA 2: Establishing an inclusive regulatory framework and institutional practices and policies which include all persons with disabilities in the election process.

11 Draft of National Election Committee: *NEC Accessibility Advisory Committee*. Term of Reference year 2015

As a result of the policy, the NEC released a formal letter to CDPO responding to the inclusion of “Disability Policy” in the following:¹²

1. NEC encourages and gives priority to peoples with disabilities who are capable of and physically fit for jobs to be employed with the election committees at all levels,
2. NEC has included the procedure for collecting fingerprints for disabled people who have lost one or both thumbs or one or both arms in the computer system during voter registration period and organized papers with special frames for the people who have lost two eyes and still want to cast ballots by themselves,
3. NEC has introduced sign language for deaf people in educational spots related to voter registration and elections,
4. NEC has installed polling stations on the ground floors to create access for people with disabilities to enter to vote, given priority to people with disabilities to enter the voter registration offices and polling stations and provided some other assistances required by the Election Law.

Good Practices and Lessons Learned in Other Countries

Legal mechanisms

In many countries, the CRPD has played a very important role in reinforcing governments’ obligations to protect the rights of persons with disabilities. In order to provide equal access, national laws should explicitly include universal suffrage for all citizens.

Implementing the values in CRPD can be done by many political actors. In South Africa, political parties have a significant role in amending the Electoral Act to recognize all forms of identification.

Citizens can use their green, barcoded ID book;¹³ smartcard; or a valid Temporary Identity Certificate to register as voters, the option to use different documents has successfully minimized the number of citizens who are disenfranchised. Meanwhile Liberia, DPOs played a major role in drafting the national disability law. The law was drafted as an effort to abide by and implement the CRPD.¹⁴

12 Formal letter from National Election Committee N.056/15/NEC, subject: *Request for inclusive of “Disability Policy” in the National Election Committee for review and consideration*

13 A South African national ID book features citizens’ unique ID number and barcode, when a voter applies for registration his/her ID book is scanned using a machine.

14 Pintor & Gratschew, 2002

In Liberia, accessibility for voters with special needs is addressed within the National Election Commission guidelines. The NEC regulation states that voter registration centers should be abolished in areas that are free of threats, politically neutral and accessible for all, particularly for persons with disabilities. Liberia's 1986 Election Law was specially amended and two subsections were added to respectively give preference to persons with disabilities at registration centers and to instruct the electoral commission to arrange the establishment of registration centers at locations accessible to voters with special needs.¹⁵

Another good example of inclusion for persons with disabilities can also be found in the Philippines' Republic Act No. 10366. The Act states that the role of the election management body and the government is to ensure the inclusion of different types of disability in the electoral processes:¹⁶

The Philippines EMB implements the Act through a regulation that improves voter registration access for person with disabilities. Section 10 of Commission on Elections (COMELEC) of the Philippines Resolution 9149 provides:

“Express Lane for Elderly, Disabled, Detainees and Pregnant Applicants –The Office of the Election Officer shall provide during the registration period express lane and give priority/preferential treatment to person with disabilities, elderly, detainees and pregnant applicants.”

Joint collaboration and capacity readiness

The inclusion of persons with disabilities in the voter registration process cannot be achieved by the EMB alone. It is more strategic for EMBs to work closely with DPOs who understand the needs of persons with disabilities and the barriers they face in accessing voter registration.

One of the best practices for such initiatives is in the Philippines where the EMB formed an Inter-Agency and NGO Network on Empowering Persons with Disabilities.¹⁷ A working group was established to develop inclusive policy recommendations such as establishing better campaigns for registering persons with disabilities to vote.

15 Evrensel, (2006, p. 142). *Voter Registration in Africa*. Johannesburg: EISA.

16 Philippine Republic Act No. 10366

17 IFES. (2014, p. 45). *Equal Access: How to Include Person with Disabilities in Election and Political Process*. Washington: IFES.

DPOs in the Philippines have been working with the other electoral stakeholders to ensure voters with disabilities could fulfill and practice their political rights. For the upcoming 2016 elections, the COMELEC, in partnership with the National Council on Disability Affairs and The Asia Foundation, created a satellite voter registration¹⁸ for persons with disabilities and senior citizens in malls.¹⁹ The registration was conducted in celebration of the 37th National Disability Prevention and Rehabilitation week. More than 5,200 people went to malls for voter registration and validation over the appointed weekend resulting in higher turnout than any election offices.

In Laos, many DPOs have tried to counteract the stigma associated with disability. One of the largest DPOs is the Lao Disabled People's Association (LDPA) with branches in 11 of the 18 provinces. A representative from the LDPA argued that many DPOs in Laos just started factoring political rights into their advocacy activities.

“There is a very few organizations active in the issue of PWD’s political rights. Even if there is some of advocacy activity mention the political rights of PWD, it is addressed in very broad or generic term. Most disability sectors in Lao PDR advocate for other rights of PWD; such as livelihood, well-being, access education, healthcare, work and employment, vocational training, access to physical environment and access to information, rather than specifically political rights” (NT, male, KII Indonesia, LDPA)

The General Election Commission (KPU) of Indonesia invited DPOs to contribute to drafting its regulation on voter registration and its registration system. Due to the representation of persons with disabilities in the decision making process, the Indonesian voter registration system now provides a column for disability type. The system has allowed DPOs and EMBs to understand the statistics behind persons with disabilities at each polling station and be better able to allocate any support, assistance, and materials to accommodate persons with disabilities throughout the election process. This is helpful in the allocation of assistive devices.

These examples strengthen the argument in this report that active involvement of DPOs in the registration process is essential. The higher the level of involvement is, the better the communities’ and the government officials’ understanding of disability issues and, therefore the higher the chances of achieving a fully inclusive voter registration process.

18 COMELEC Resolution No. 9853 - Chapter I

19 Aquino, L.A., (17 July 2015). “PWD welcome mall-based voting in 2016”, *Manila Bulletin*. Available at: <http://www.mb.com.ph/pwds-welcome-mall-based-voting-in-2016/>

It is also important that EMBs and DPOs place attention and effort in pre-election assessments to find out how the voter registration process addresses accessibility for persons with disabilities.

In an example from the Philippines, DPOs and other NGOs worked closely with COMELEC to find out the barriers that might be faced by persons with disability in voter registration and came up with program suggestions on how persons with disabilities could be encouraged to register to vote.

“We look at the accessibility of registration venue, and we found out the most of the venues are not accessible.” (CM, female, KII, National Council on Disability Affairs of the Philippines)

In Armenia, DPOs have worked through successive electoral cycles to document physical barriers to polling centers and to undertake barrier removal at certain sites. In Canada, transfer passes are provided to enable voters with physical disabilities, while in Ghana, most polling stations are outdoors.²⁰

Voter education

Raising awareness on the importance of participating in the election process (especially voter registration) plays a crucial role in increasing the number of registered voters. EMBs should pay close attention to marginalized groups such as persons with disabilities.

“We have been educating them about their rights to vote ...education for person with disability and their family...and you cannot get the right service as you desire if you don’t participate in choosing a leader.” (CM, female, KII, National Council on Disability Affairs of the Philippines)

A voter education initiative can help enhance society’s awareness of voting rights. To ensure voter registration accessibility for persons with disabilities, voter education materials and tools should exist in various formats.

In Quebec, Canada, informational materials for voters were made available in alternative media such as braille, audiocassette, large print, as well as videocassettes in both Quebec Sign Language and American Sign Language. In addition, all televised messages were subtitled for people with hearing or visual disabilities and a teletypewriter for the deaf (TTY). Different media provides options for election information officers in adapting the best mode of communication for their audience.

20 Pintor & Gratschew, 2002

The Philippines in 2011 had a national campaign on the involvement of persons with disabilities in elections.

“Sometimes, during the disability week, there is nation-wide that sign of registration going on. We are the part of that campaignwe go around to different cities, and gather stakeholders and aware them about person with disability and how to assist people with disability”

In Guatemala, an increase in the number of registered voters was not only due to massive registration campaigns, but also through the EMB’s alleviating the administrative procedures and the cost to register. The EMB had taken into account long-term voter education (Pintor & Gratschew, 2002).

“We have PWD’s voting rights in our education system.” (CM, female, KII, National Council on Disability Affairs of the Philippines)

Registration day

To enhance the inclusion of persons with disabilities in voter registration, the Philippines allowed persons with disabilities to be assisted by their relatives, the Election Officer, or other officials when completing the registration application. In South Africa, persons with disabilities were encouraged to come and register daily until Election Day.

“We fill out the form, and asking what assistant would you require for the election?” (CM, female, KII, National Council on Disability Affairs of the Philippines)

In Indonesia, it wasn’t until the 1997 election that voter registration was “compulsory” and door-to-door registration was used. Problems were encountered by those who did not have permanent residency. By 1999 the “compulsory” registration system was abolished, and a “voluntary” voter registration method was adopted. The most significant change about the new method is that it only requires one form of legal identification to register.²¹ While gaining one form of identification, the enumerator will be able to collect data on an individual’s household status, ID card number, full name, birthplace, and physical or intellectual disability data. The data provide information for polling stations to accommodate different physical and intellectual disabilities needs.

21 Pintor & Gratschew, 2002

V. Conclusions and Recommendations

Learning from global experiences, cooperation between EMBs and DPOs is key to an inclusive voter registration process. While there are a lot of legal instruments from the international, regional and national level in place to ensure and to accommodate the rights and full participation of persons with disabilities in the political exercise, there are still gaps and legal gray areas especially when there is no detailed regulation or guidelines.

In this redesign of voter registration regulations and procedures, the upcoming commune and national elections in 2017 and 2018 mean that this is a golden opportunity to have different NGOs and DPOs working in disability sectors to improve disability inclusion in the voter registration processes, and the electoral system as whole.

The following are recommendations for short and long term outputs and outcomes for disability inclusion in the voter registration process:

Legal Mechanisms

- DPOs should work together to draft policies on political rights for persons with disabilities (such as Philippines Act 10366) (long term plan).
- DPOs advocate with the NEC on new inclusive regulations and procedures for voter registration.

Joint Collaboration and Capacity Readiness

- Joint collaboration between DPOs and the NEC.
- DPOs should closely work with the Ministry of the Interior and local police to make sure persons with disabilities are able to obtain a National ID card.
- DPOs engage in the planning and implementing of the electoral process or at least in the voter registration process.
- DPOs should look for financial support for voter registration education.
- Persons with disabilities should be included as registration officers.
- Capacity building to improve NEC and election officer training on how to facilitate and accommodate persons with disabilities.
- DPOs should work closely with local authorities to identify barriers that might be faced by persons with disabilities and suggest better solutions.

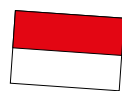
- Statistics showing the type of disability for which assistance may be needed should be clearly recorded in the voter registration form/database for the purpose of support services arrangements.

Voter Registration Education

- Raising awareness of voter registration should take place before the registration date and different means of communication should be used to reach persons with disabilities (consider TV, radio, posters and door-to-door).
- Mainstreaming voter registration in the formal education curriculum (long term).
- Ongoing awareness raising at the village level about disability rights to impact community attitudes towards persons with disabilities.
- Persons with disabilities and their family members should be specifically educated about the importance of their participation in voter registration and of exercising their political rights.

Voter Registration Period

- DPOs should accommodate severely disabled people who cannot register to vote on their own.
- Assistants, support and assistive materials should be accessible to persons with disabilities.
- Persons with disabilities should have a longer acceptance period than others for coming to registration offices.



Indonesia

Chapter 3

Chapter 3: Indonesia

Political Participation of Persons with Disabilities in Indonesia

Research conducted by *Persatuan Penyandang Disabilitas Indonesia* (PPDI)



The majority of persons with disabilities interviewed wanted to vote

However, there are three types of obstacles they encounter:



Social:

Family members do not encourage persons with disabilities to vote



Policy:

The EMB is so large that policies made at a national level are not understood or used by poll workers at a field level



Technical:

Materials and buildings are still not fully accessible

I. Background

The Indonesian government has committed to the text of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) by adopting Law No.19/2011, which affirms its ratification of the CRPD. However, persons with disabilities still face barriers that hamper the full realization of their civil and political rights.

One reason that the Indonesian disability community is unable to fully exercise their political rights is the slow implementation of Law No.19/2011. For example, the KPU did not provide any data regarding the number of voters with disabilities in the 2014 Legislative and Presidential Election. This data should have been available for the general public and all stakeholders simply by accessing the Fixed Voter List. However, the “type of disability” column, a column that should have been there according to KPU Regulations, was not used optimally by the KPU.²² The absence of the data regarding the number of voters with disabilities have impacted the facilitation by polling stations all across Indonesia as found by the observations conducted by JPPR,²³ SIGAB,²⁴ or AGENDA,²⁵ indicating that the rights of persons with disabilities have been disregarded.

In the 2014 presidential election, AGENDA conducted election monitoring in 5 provinces of Indonesia (Aceh, DKI Jakarta, Central Java, South Kalimantan and South Sulawesi) in 470 polling stations. During the monitoring process, 1,387 persons with disabilities were observed during the voting process.²⁶ AGENDA’s findings indicated that the level of political participation of voters with disabilities needed to increase in terms of quality and quantity during the electoral cycle.

The monitoring results from the 2014 presidential election indicates that there is much that has to be done. Impediments to the full electoral participation of persons with disabilities in Indonesia are complex and multidimensional. This research outlines some of the most prevalent legal, informational, physical and attitudinal barriers encountered by persons with disabilities that can influence their level of political participation.

22 See, for example, KPU Regulation 9/2014 governing the Voter List Compilation for the 2014 Presidential
23 JPPR, the 2014 Election Observation Report, p. 66 - 70.
24 Salim, Ishak, ed., “The Diffable Took Over Voting Booths”, SIGAB, 2015, p. 126 - 145.
25 AGENDA Monitoring on Accessible Election in Presidential Election, 2014
26 2014 Presidential Election in Indonesia- AGENDA; page 43

II. Research Objectives

There were three objectives for this research study:

1. To examine the level of political participation of persons with disabilities in Indonesia.
2. To identify the key factors influencing the political participation level of persons with disabilities during the electoral cycle.
3. To define specific recommendations for increasing the level of political participation by persons with disabilities during elections.

III. Research Methodology

Location

The research was conducted in three different provinces: DKI Jakarta, Aceh, and South Sulawesi. This research study was conducted within the Indonesian cities of Jakarta, the Special Capital Region of Jakarta (*Daerah Khusus Ibukota/DKI Jakarta*), Makassar, South Sulawesi and Aceh. The data obtained from these diverse research sites help to offset any Java-centric subjectivity.

The locations were chosen based on sites previously monitored by AGENDA in a prior research study. Since PPD and AGENDA wished to form partnerships with local DPOs at the sites to facilitate data collection for the current research study, these sites were also chosen on the basis of the presence of local DPOs representing different types of disabilities that could participate in the study.

Data Collection Methods

The research activities consisted of a desk review, focus group discussions, and in-depth interviews.

Research questions

The researchers identified four specific questions in this research:

1. What are the significant factors that influence the level of political participation of persons with disabilities in Indonesia?
2. Do these factors have an impact on policy implementations or cultural problems or attitudinal problems?

3. What are the challenges and opportunities for political participation by persons with disabilities in Indonesia?
4. What recommendations are there to improve access to political rights and opportunities for persons with disabilities in Indonesia?

Sampling method

This research used a non-probability sampling strategy.²⁷ Informants were selected to represent the diverse views and opinions of the target population, in this case the disability community. Because the topics of disability, election and election access are very specific, the research team targeted informants that had in-depth knowledge of elections and/or disability issues in Indonesia. Experts were chosen from the Legislative Council, EMBs, the disability community, and other non-profit organizations working in electoral and/or disability issues.

Research approach

The rights-based approach is the foundation of this research, which emphasizes political rights and participation specifically on election and disability access. Persons with disabilities are considered as citizens who have full and equal rights as non-disabled persons.

Prior to key informant interviews and focus group discussions, each participant received an information sheet outlining the background and objectives of the research study. It also stated that interviews would be recorded but that all personal data would be removed and uniquely coded to ensure confidentiality. Informants were informed that they could refuse to respond to any question and/or withdraw from the study at any time.

Desk-based research

Desk-based research was utilized primarily in relation to objective one, that is, to review the prevailing legal framework for the political participation of persons with disabilities in Indonesia. However, during the course of the desk research, data and information was also collected for the other objectives mentioned. A research inventory was developed as part of the desk-based research plan (see table below). The research team analyzed printed and online resources, carefully evaluating the validity and credibility of these sources. Once validity had been established, patterns and themes were then collected for further analysis.

27 Non-probability sampling is commonly used when it is not feasible, practical or theoretically sensible to find a random selection of interviewees.

Table 4 - Desk research topics

Topics	Sub-Topics
a. Legal framework, including human rights instruments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. International election laws and regulations at the regional level ii. Indonesian Constitution iii. National Disability Laws iv. National election laws and regulations
b. Challenges and barriers to political participation for persons with disabilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Legal barriers ii. Physical barriers iii. Social or attitudinal barriers iv. Institutional barriers v. Informational barriers vi. Environmental barriers
c. Good practices to promote accessible elections	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Voter registration ii. Voter information iii. Voter education iv. Election Day v. Candidates with disabilities vi. EMB officials with disabilities vii. Poll workers with disabilities viii. Election observers with disabilities ix. Innovations
d. DPO experiences on promoting election access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Overview of DPO efforts to promote political participation and election access ii. DPO initiatives with other civil society organizations to promote election access iii. DPO engagement with national human rights institutions and EMBs

Key informant interviews

Key informant interviews were conducted with individuals expected to have information and suggestions relating to the topic of this research. For this research, the targeted groups were:

1. KPU officials;
2. Officials from the Election Supervisory Body (*Badan Pengawas Pemilihan Umum/ BAWASLU*);
3. Members of the House of Representatives of the Republic of Indonesia;
4. Officials from the human rights organizations working in the Southeast Asia region which have an office in Indonesia; and
5. Representatives from the DPOs that actively work at the provincial level.

The choice of DPO representatives was determined by their participation in the polling simulations of 2009,²⁸ indicating they understood and had experience on ensuring accessible elections for persons with disabilities. This was important in order to ensure a wider understanding of election access issues across the targeted regions. The in-depth interviews included 19 persons with various types of disabilities (hearing, visual, physical, and/or intellectual disabilities).

Interviews were conducted either face-to-face or via telephone with a mixture of structured and open questions. The research team aimed to approach an equal number of female and male informants, but given the limited availability of the informants contacted, this was not possible. This suggests that the number of women with disabilities who serve as voters is more severely limited than men with disabilities, possibly as a result of a combination of gender and disability-related barriers to processes within the electoral cycle.



28 PPUA Penca, funded by UNDP, held voter education and polling simulations from 1 March 2009 to 31 July 2009 at 10 provinces. Source: The Center for Election Access of Citizens with Disabilities (PPUA Penca), 2009.

The gender distribution of the key informants is as follows:

Table 5 - Key informants

Participant type	Women	Men	Total
KPU officials (EMB)		3	3
BAWASLU officials (Election Supervisory Body)		3	3
Poll workers		3	3
Voters with disabilities	4	8	12
People with disabilities who are not voting	3	4	7
Total	7	21	28

Focus group discussions

The focus group discussions included representatives from EMBs and the Election Supervisory Body, voters with various types of disabilities, and poll workers. The research team held one focus group discussion in each of the three provinces. Focus group discussions were mediated by two moderators, and recorded and transcribed by one note-taker. In addition, an observation room was prepared so lead researchers could observe the discussions.

Research Strengths and Limitations

This research benefited from the following strengths:

1. A strong commitment by DPO partner organizations in each of the three provinces, which was valuable in identifying and interviewing research participants.
2. The active network and partnership amongst DPOs, CSOs (namely the JPPR network), the local government agencies and the disability community, which supported the process of identifying informants.
3. The expertise in electoral and/or disability issues of the informants, particularly the election-related organizations and the DPO/CSO partner organizations that supported the data analysis. This was also supported by the research team who not only had knowledge in disability issues but also experience in research.

Those strengths assisted the research team in tackling the following limitations:

1. National legal frameworks do not always have official English translations, which required careful attention as there was a possibility of misinterpretation and confusion.
2. Participants with certain disability types were unable to participate directly in the interviews, such as participants who were deaf and used sign language interpreters.
3. Finding informants using very specific criteria such as being deaf, never having voted before, and being female was challenging in all 3 provinces. Although alternate informants with disabilities were found, finding informants that were deaf were difficult to reach. When they were contacted, it was discovered that there was very limited knowledge on election, political participation and disability rights.

IV. Findings

Factors that influence the political participation of persons with disabilities

This research found at least three main factors affecting the dynamics of the political participation of persons with disabilities in the 2014 General Elections: social, policy, and technical factors.

Social factors

Persons with disabilities

Nineteen (19) respondents with disabilities participated in this research, representing four types of disabilities (hearing, visual, physical or intellectual). Eleven (11) voted in the 2014 Legislative and Presidential Elections while eight (8) didn't. Respondents who voted stated that their equal right as a citizen was their main reason to vote. The majority of them believed that participation in an election is a part of their contribution for the state.

"We have the right to vote. Although we have disabilities, our vote can change the nation". (PI.03.ID.20.F.ACH).

"Participation, I think, is very important. Why? Because without participating in casting a vote, we will not be able to demand our rights to the government." (PI.10.MD.35.M.MKS)

Meanwhile, respondents who did not cast a vote stated that their reasons were mainly administrative, e.g. not having the same ID card as the polling station they intended to vote in.

“I currently live in Banda Aceh but I was originally from another region. Without a Banda Aceh ID Card, I wasn’t allowed to vote. I asked why because I think I don’t have to have a Banda Aceh ID Card to vote. They said, that was not possible.” (PI.03.ID.20.F.ACH)

Another reason was the unavailability of accessible facilities. A respondent from Aceh stated that he has previously arrived at the polling station, but because there were no braille templates available, he refrained from voting as he might make a mistake if voting without the template.

“I might mistakenly cast a vote for another candidate I don’t support. I am blind, I and they both know my situation. Facility should be better provided.” (PI.19.VD.26.M.ACH)

The 2014 Presidential Election monitoring report by AGENDA revealed that the braille template was not found at all polling stations, which consequently led to some persons with disabilities not wanting to cast their vote. Not all poll workers understood the importance of the braille template, as stated by a respondent from Aceh.

“If I can make my assessment, election has become more accessible nowadays because people used to not care at all. However, how can we vote without the braille template? I told poll workers that there is a template to help us vote. Many poll workers don’t even know what or how to use that template.” (PI.03.KPU.Aceh)

Although all KPU respondents claimed that they have conducted trainings about accessible elections, which included the use of a braille template for those who are blind or have low vision, the trainings have not managed to guarantee full accessibility for persons with disabilities.

The absence of braille templates was a problem in both the presidential election and the legislative election, though the problem was much worse in the latter. KPU only provided braille templates for the House of Regional Representative elections and not for the House of Representatives and Provincial House of Representative elections for the reason that the design would be too complex. According to Syafi’ie, this is a violation of human rights. He investigated

the legal and human rights foundations leading to this decision by the KPU and found that Article 142 paragraph (2) of the Election Law explicitly mentioned that the braille template should be provided by the KPU for all elections.²⁹

Family members

Family members have a crucial role in encouraging political participation of persons with disabilities. However, in the 2014 Presidential Election monitoring report by AGENDA, a reason frequently mentioned as to why persons with disabilities weren't registered in the voter list was that their family did not support their participation.

Voters with intellectual disabilities faced particular challenges. Parents who have a child with intellectual disability were often not certain whether their child could participate in an election. A respondent who is a parent of a person with an intellectual disability stated that they and many parents in similar situations still feel embarrassed to have children with an intellectual disability.

"...many parents considered their children unable to vote, thus no need to register. As for me, I will just register my child. However, oftentimes, we as parents feel embarrassed if our children have intellectual disability..." (PI.11. ID.23.F.MKS)

This condition was confirmed by a BAWASLU respondent, stating that families often prevent their family members with disabilities from registering or participating in elections. This situation was also mentioned in the Aceh focus group discussion. Families did not support the participation of family members with disabilities and wouldn't assist them in visiting the polls. Aceh participants said:

"...Many families feel embarrassed or ashamed to tell data collection officers about disabilities in one of their members. Families still have low level of awareness." (FGD.06.ACH)

"...Why do we have to make other people burdened? Those families have a member with disability and did not bother to assist them to come to the polls." (FGD.06.ACH)

29 See Syafi'ie, M., in Salim Ishak, "Diffable Taking Over the Voting Booths" (Difabel Merebut Bilik Suara), SIGAB, p. 112 – 125

Other families were fortunate enough to have adequate awareness and assisted their members with disabilities in going to the polls.

Election Management Bodies (EMBs) and personnel



EMBs in Indonesia have conducted various efforts to great extents to facilitate persons with disabilities' participation in elections. For example, the KPU has conducted voter data collection and trainings for poll workers regarding disability access in elections. Furthermore, the KPU has instructed its staff to accommodate voters with disabilities, and has cooperated closely with PPUA Penca to collect recommendations regarding the fulfillment of political rights of persons with disabilities in elections.³⁰

Although the KPU has made efforts to accommodate voters with disabilities, technical implementation is still impacted by the lack of field staff understanding regarding the needs of voters with disabilities.

"Election officers are still not quite aware of voters with disabilities. Polling stations are often not accessible, leading to difficulties faced by us in accessing them. Most polling stations were in school buildings or small mosques with steps or staircases on its entryway, rendering it impossible for wheelchair users to enter. The table where ballot boxes or voting booths are placed are also often too tall." (FGD.4.ACH)

There are a number of findings that indicate areas for improvement. One such area is the recruitment of local poll workers. Respondents from among poll workers in Banda Aceh, Jakarta, and Makassar all mentioned that the sub-district office held control over the appointment of poll workers, and usually hired former poll workers. The tendency to appoint recurring poll workers

30 AGENDA, 3rd Regional Dialogue on Accessible Election for Persons with Disabilities, 28 January 2015, Jakarta

means a similar polling station design from election to election are used solely on the virtue of familiarity. As a result, many polling stations were located on the second floor of a school or other buildings accessible only through steps.

Additionally, data about voters' disability was not available both on national and regional levels. Without such data, poll workers will not be able to support voters properly. In many cases, voters with disabilities still struggle to get a National ID because of difficulties with the local bureaucracy. It was found that BAWASLU was aware that the KPU did not have data about voters with disabilities, but did not take any action. According to members of BAWASLU, their limited authority was why they weren't able to do more than just recommending some actions to KPU. In the future, the regional BAWASLU should supervise this more closely.

Policy factors (EMB policies)

Indonesian EMBs have established policies encouraging full participation of persons with disabilities in an election. However, respondents believe that the implementation of the policies are still not optimal. Information dissemination efforts, the respondents believe, are lacking in terms of quantity and penetration towards various layers and types within the disability community. The lack of access has resulted in persons with disabilities not having an adequate understanding of their political rights.

*"Persons with disabilities don't exercise their right to vote as we don't have enough knowledge and information about political rights and the right to vote."
(KII –VD-R.03 M)*

"...Audio information contains how to vote, how to avoid vote buying, how to identify candidates in support of our cause, and when the voting day will be. The audio information unfortunately is only usable for persons with who are blind or have low vision. I often find it difficult to communicate information to persons with hearing disabilities due to limited amount of materials in sign language or those who can sign." (FGD.02.MKS)

Another factor affecting the dynamics of persons with disabilities' participation in an election is the weakness of the voter registration system. Despite having a column regarding types of disabilities in the registration form, the column was not filled out in the Temporary Voter List or the Fixed Voter List, as if indicating there are no voters with disabilities. This clearly violates the KPU regulation which stating the column should mention the types of disabilities held by voters.

This shows that regulation alone does not guarantee the availability of data about voters with disabilities. KPU's instruction for officers to fill in this column was not properly heeded by field officers. This was emphasized by an informant in Aceh:

"There are data regarding voters with disabilities, but it is still very raw. It is handed over to polling stations, which does not have any procedures to note how many voters with disabilities attended the station and used their right to vote. There is only a data identifying the gender of voters who used their right to vote at the polling station." (PI_03_KPU_ACH)

Technical factors

Respondents with disabilities who voted in the legislative or presidential election stated that they encountered many technical obstacles when casting their vote. Although KPU has explicitly ordered the establishment of accessible polling stations, many inaccessible polling stations were still encountered by those with mobility, vision and/or hearing disabilities.

"Most polling stations were located in schools, which have steps and staircases leading to its hall; their pathways have gravels all over them. This made it impossible for wheelchair users to traverse and made it difficult for those with vision or who are deaf or hard-of-hearings. Information dissemination efforts weren't effective for persons with disabilities. Most was only conveyed in conventional methods such as banners, pamphlets, or announcements but without any specific methods employed to address those with disabilities. This is why the turnout of voters with disabilities in the 2014 General Election was still quite low." (FGD.02.ACH)

Many public facilities such as mosques are difficult to access for persons with disabilities due to having steps, thick patches of grass, considerable distances between the main building and the ablution area, and an inaccessible wudhu facility. The same is true for town halls where there is too often not enough facilities provided and the general public often does not receive or understand communication the rights of persons with disabilities.

Besides polling stations that were not designed in an accessible manner, poll workers were often not sensitive in responding to the special needs of persons with disabilities and did not provide the assistive tools necessary.

Respondents who are blind or have low vision had difficulties voting in the legislative election due to the numerous images they have to pick from. However, they had less difficulty voting in the presidential election.

“The legislative election was difficult, even with braille, because there were so many options, while the presidential election was easy because there were just two options even though there was no braille template.”

“I was able to access the polling station easily and they conveyed an explanation regarding the availability of a braille template for those with who are blind or have low vision. The poll workers’ service was very good.” (PI.04.VD.56.M.ACH)

Those who are deaf or hard-of-hearing and use sign language had difficulty accessing information at the polling station. Generally, poll workers who are not able to sign weren’t able to communicate properly enough to provide adequate assistance for those who are deaf or hard-of-hearing.

“It was hard to communicate with those with hearing disabilities.”

For those with intellectual disabilities, information about the process of elections and contending political parties/candidates was lacking, forcing them to only choose based on highly subjective reasoning.

“I was registered as a voter by my family. I voted as I see fit but only based on the pictures because I didn’t know anything about political parties, candidates, or others. I was not assisted in any way whatsoever when I cast my vote in the voting booth.”

The accounts above reveal that the 2014 general election did not fully facilitate the inclusion of persons with disabilities. Though there was guidance on how to establish an accessible polling station, the design was heavily influenced by several factors: decisions are often made by those who have been poll workers many times and prefer the old ways of doing things; a limited budget forced several poll workers to disregard accessibility; and a widespread lack of understanding about how to treat and communicate with someone who has an intellectual or psychosocial disability.

V. Conclusions and Recommendations

A number of obstacles faced by persons with disabilities in the current political climate have made activists realize the numerous difficulties faced in achieving a truly accessible election. Challenges include political ideologies and technical implementation of complicated election systems.

Research participants with disabilities reported encountering significant obstacles to participation in the electoral cycle, including:

- **Social stigma based on their disability.** Participants with disabilities are often dissuaded from participating in political processes by their family members or community as a result of stigma about their disability. This was especially noted by persons with intellectual disabilities who participated in the study.
- **An absence of accessible facilities.** Elections are often disregarded by persons with disabilities because they know they will encounter inaccessible polling stations. Often, the polling stations are placed on the second floors if it is held in a school or in a narrow alley, making it extremely challenging for persons with physical disabilities to access. For persons who are blind or have low vision, braille templates are either absent or not explained by poll workers.
- **A lack of accessible technology and information.** Campaign or election information must be accessible in all forms. Accessible information for persons who are deaf, hard-of-hearing, or blind or who have low vision is a must to ensure the rights of all citizens. Examples of information accessibility includes providing subtitles on television and an audio version of campaign materials.

Additionally, it was found that obstacles faced by persons with disabilities occur partially because EMBs at the local level and lawmakers have not yet developed an adequate understanding of how to implement the rights of persons with disabilities in elections which contributes to a lack of access when it comes to service, information provision, and implementation of electoral activities.

Recommendations are provided below:

Persons with disabilities and DPOs

- CSOs and DPOs must establish initiatives to encourage persons with disabilities and their families to increase their political participation. For example, CSOs and DPOs could conduct inclusive political education for the disability community.
- Advocacy and changes with regards to electoral regulations should be constantly and independently monitored and evaluated by DPOs and CSOs in order to ensure the incorporation of disability perspectives. The results of these independent evaluation and monitoring efforts must be regularly published and provided to EMBs and general society to expedite the improvement of electoral accessibility for persons with disabilities in Indonesia.

EMBs and Personnel

- The three main factors contributing to obstacles faced by persons to political participation – social factors, legal and regulatory factors, and technical factors – could be addressed by the mainstreaming of disability rights into all EMBs’ institutional practices and legal products as well as into all political parties and politicians’ considerations and practices.
- Regional and national EMBs should establish special units or dedicated information centers to provide information about accessible elections to the general society and other EMBs, such as the urgent need to establish a specific registry of voters with disabilities (available in the temporary and fixed voter lists). These units or information centers should cooperate with DPOs concerned about elections and the political rights of persons with disabilities.
- A number of participants with disabilities noted that EMB members, especially at the local levels, seemed unprepared to support voters with disabilities. Training modules for EMBs should incorporate materials about accessible elections and the right of persons with disabilities to participate in the political process.



Philippines

Chapter 4

Chapter 4: Philippines

Challenges and Good Practices of EMBs in Ensuring Inclusive and Accessible Elections to Persons with Disabilities

Research conducted by Katipunan ng Maykapansanan sa Pilipinas Inc. (KAMPI)

POSITIVE FINDINGS:



69%

of respondents said they noticed positive actions by EMBs to support accessibility in the 2013 elections



67%

of respondents identified good practices by the EMB to support election access



65%

of respondents said they did not see assistive devices at their polling place

Obstacles for persons with disabilities who tried to vote in 2013 include:



- Unclear EMB policies about what to do if a voter with a disability visits an inaccessible voting place
- Transportation challenges
- Difficulty reading the voter lists
- Difficulty using the automated machines

I. Background

According to the National Statistics Office, the population of persons with disabilities in the Philippines in 2010 was approximately 1.44 million, accounting for about 1.57 percent of the country's total population. The data further revealed that approximately 70 percent of persons with disabilities live in remote and rural areas where services are often inaccessible, and only 4.13 percent of the disability population have received an education. Moreover, in the October 2013 local elections there were 53,823,901 total registered voters, and out of this number only 339,144 voters with disabilities were registered with COMELEC.

Given the data cited above, it is apparent that a large number of the population in the global and local context are confronted with disability issues and struggle for development, economic independence, equal participation and inclusion in society. The role of the Filipino EMBs is crucial in ensuring accessible and inclusive elections. Of equal importance is their role in promoting the rights of persons with disabilities and increasing their participation in electoral processes.

It is in this light that this research study was conducted with the purpose to discover and document both the good practices of Filipino EMBs and any existing challenges there may be for them in ensuring inclusive and accessible elections for persons with disabilities. The legal framework on disability, various barriers confronting persons with disabilities, and challenges experienced by EMBs were covered in the study. Also, good practices and innovations as results of collaborative efforts of EMBs and other social structures were documented. Substantial recommendations were presented to ensure proactive participation of EMBs in advocating for disability rights and their important role toward realizing an inclusive and accessible election.

II. Research Objectives

The objectives of this research study were to:

1. Identify international best practices and innovations used or developed by Filipino EMBs; and
2. Identify any existing challenges that Filipino EMBs encounter when working to support electoral accessibility.

III. Research Methodology

Location

The research study focused on selected areas in three main regions of the Philippines, which are Pangasinan and La Union in Region 1, Iloilo in Region 6, and Makati and Quezon City in the National Capital Region (NCR). These areas were targeted on the basis of the size of the disability population or the number of persons with disabilities who are registered as voters. The inclusion of these areas also served as a follow through initiative of KAMPI and AGENDA to its previous project, since these were among AGENDA's previous research locations.

Data Collection Methods

Research approach

The study incorporated a participatory research approach, ensuring the involvement of persons with disabilities in all phases or stages of the study and recognizing them as active contributors to the research. It also made sure that persons with disabilities were provided equal access to information through the provision of sign language interpretation or other communication aids for respondents who are deaf or hard-of-hearing, and braille materials for respondents who are blind or have low vision.

Sampling method

The study used a non-probability sampling to select participants for the knowledge informant interviews and focus group discussions. It specifically applied the purposive sampling as it took into consideration the following factors: a) disability population and low number of registered persons with disability; b) focus on three pre identified locations; c) pre-identified respondents in target locations; and d) few government agencies, non-government agencies and civil society organizations advocating for the rights of and providing services to persons with disabilities. In this research study, a total of 90 respondents (34 men and 56 women) participated in the interviews and FGDs. This included informal interviews made by the research team with COMELEC officials at the national level and regional level.



Desk-based research

The desk-based research component reviewed the disability laws, legislations, literature, publications, websites, and other pertinent information related to political participation and rights of persons with disabilities in the Philippines.

Key informant interviews (KIIs)

Key informant interviews were used to collect information on the challenges experienced by EMBs and concerned COMELEC officials as they worked to ensure participation of persons with disabilities in electoral processes. Persons with disabilities were also interviewed to gather their experiences as they attempted to exercise their political rights during elections. Likewise, families of persons with disabilities and concerned government agencies, non-government organizations, and civil society groups and other stakeholders were interviewed to find out their level of awareness on the political rights of persons with disabilities and the support systems available for them.

Persons with disabilities. For the KIIs conducted with persons with disabilities, female respondents outnumbered male respondents in NCR and Region 1, while male respondents outnumbered females in Region 6. For the national total, there were more female respondents (35) compared with males (23).

EMBs. In Region 1, two male and two female EMB representatives were interviewed. In NCR, three male and two female EMB representatives were interviewed. While in Region 6, all EMB interviewees were males.

Family and other Stakeholders. In NCR, three male and two female family members were interviewed. In Region 1 and Region 6, all interviewees were females.

Table 6 - KII respondents

Respondent Classification	PWD			EMB			Family & other Stakeholders		
Gender	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
NCR	7	12	19	3	2	5	3	2	5
Region 1	5	14	19	2	2	4	-	5	5
Region 6	11	9	20	3	-	3	-	10	10
TOTAL	23	35	58	8	4	12	3	17	20

Age Distribution of KII Respondents

In the KIIs, most of the respondents (47 out of 58) were from the 25-59 age group. Only six respondents were from the 18-24 age group, while five respondents were aged 60 and older.

Table 7 - Age Distribution of KII Respondents

AREA	AGE			TOTAL
	18-24	25-59	60 >	
NCR	4	13	2	19
Region 1	2	14	3	19
Region 6	0	20	0	20
TOTAL	6	47	5	58

Disability type of Respondents with Disabilities per Area

Most of the KII respondents (34 individuals, or 57% of the total) had physical disabilities. Eight respondents (14%) had a visual disability, while six (10%) had a hearing disability. Five (9%) had a speech disability, and 1 (2%) had a psychosocial disability. Two respondents had multiple disabilities.

Table 8 - Disability Type of Respondents with a Disability

DISABILITY	AREA				
	NCR *	Region 1	Region 6***	TOTAL	
Physical	10	9	15	34	57%
Visual	2	3	3	8	14 %
Hearing	3	2	1	6	10%
Speech	2	3	0	5	9%
Psychosocial	1	0	0	1	2%
Multiple	0	2**	0	2	4%
Not indicated	1		1	2	4%
TOTAL	18	19**	19***	58	100 %

* NCR Respondent left the disability type blank.

**Region 1 Respondent had a visual, hearing and physical disability; the others stated multi-disability without specifying which types.

***Region 6 Respondent left the disability type blank.

Focus group discussions (FGDs)

The focus group discussions were organized to gather information that would contribute to the objectives of this research. There were nine FGDs conducted with members from the three target groups. Each group ranged from 3 to 11 participants.

Persons with disabilities. In the NCR focus group discussion for persons with disabilities, there was only one female participant, who had to leave early to assist her son; the other five were male, and one also left early due to an emergency. In Region 1, three were male participants and four were female. In Region 6, there was one female participant and the other five participants were male.

EMBs. In NCR, the EMB representatives who participated in the FGD were all male. In Region 1, two male and one female EMB representatives participated in the FGD. In Region 6, the FGD was attended by two male and six female participants (representatives in this FDG included members of the local government and other stakeholders from Iloilo City).

Family and other Stakeholders. In NCR, the family members who participated in the FGD were all female. In Region 1, the FGD was attended by two male and five female participants. In Region 6, nine female participants and two male participants participated in the FGD.

Table 10 - FGD Participants

Respondent Classification	PWD		Total	EMB		Total	Family & other Stakeholders		Total
	Male	Female		Male	Female		Male	Female	
NCR	5	1	6	4	-	4	-	4	4
Region 1	3	4	7	2	1	3	2	5	7
Region 6	4	1	5	2	6	8 *	2	9	11
TOTAL	12	6	18	8	7	15	4	18	22

*The FGD had involved the participation of local government partners and other stakeholders in Iloilo City.

IV. Findings

The data highlights a wide range of experiences on awareness about the rights of persons with disabilities and election accessibility in the three project areas. Given the recent focus on making elections more accessible, there was a disparity in the implementation of initiatives, which resulted in different perceptions of election accessibility. It is clear, however, that the concerted efforts of the EMBs/COMELEC officials, DPOs and NGOs were felt, albeit in varying degrees and levels.

Awareness on disability laws

Local laws - When asked about their awareness of laws protecting the rights of persons with disabilities, more than half of the persons with disabilities interviewed were able to cite specific laws. Meanwhile, almost all of the EMBs/COMELEC personnel interviewed were aware of disability-related laws. All the family members interviewed knew that there were laws for persons with disabilities, but could not provide specific examples.

CRPD. There was a fairly high awareness of the CRPD as most respondents were aware of it, although their knowledge ranged from simple awareness that it exists to some knowledge of specific provisions. However, most respondents did not know of any laws that were created or amended in response to the CRPD. When asked about their awareness of any laws or policies that were created or amended in response to the CRPD, most respondents with disabilities (40 individuals, or 69%), said they were not aware of any. Fifteen respondents or 26% gave answers, while 3 respondents (5%) did not answer.

Table 11 - Summary of Responses from Persons with Disabilities

AREA	AWARENESS ON DISABILITY LAWS CREATED OR AMENDED DUE TO CRPD						TOTAL
	Aware	%	Not Aware	%	No answer	%	
NCR	5	26%	14	74%	0	0%	19
REGION 1*	0	0%	19	100%	0	0%	19
REGION 6	10	50%	7	35%	3	15%	20
TOTAL	15	26%	40	69%	3	5%	58

Knowledge of government initiatives to implement laws on election accessibility - Among persons with disabilities, 79% said they knew of government initiatives to implement laws to make elections more accessible. They cited the special registration day for persons with disabilities, satellite registration drives at *barangays* (small towns), Accessible Polling Places (APP), and the provision of free transportation, priority lanes and assistance during the elections.

Meanwhile, the EMBs cited initiatives such as the allocation of budget for accessible infrastructure, training on disability awareness and rights, COMELEC resolutions mandating satellite registration and validation, express lanes, and the creation of APPs. In addition, the family members said that the government was carefully studying what laws to implement for persons with disabilities, conducting information dissemination through radio and other forms of media, identifying voters with disabilities in the barangays and inviting persons with disabilities and parents to consult.

Table 12 - Summary

AREA	KNOWLEDGE OF GOVERNMENT INITIATIVES						TOTAL
	Knows	%	Not	%	No answer	%	
NCR	15	79%	4	21%	0	0%	19
REGION 1	16	84%	2	11%	1	5%	19
REGION 6	15	75%	5	25%	0	0%	20
TOTAL	46	79%	11	19%	1	2%	58

Accessibility of the 2013 Elections

Awareness of the EMB's role in facilitating accessible elections. The awareness that EMBs have a role to play in facilitating accessible elections was fairly high among all the respondents. However, for many it seems it was more of a general awareness; since the respondents knew that EMBs are responsible for managing the elections, it makes sense to state that they would have a role. Respondents with a more specific awareness stated that it is the EMB's role to disseminate information, ensure accessibility, assist voters with special needs, enforce priority lanes for persons with disabilities and collaborate with the private sector and other groups for partnerships. There were a few who expressed their observation that the EMBs' role and work were noticeable only during election time.

For other respondents, their awareness is borne out of experience, because they see that the persons facilitating the elections are the same ones making sure that there is a priority lane for persons with disabilities and seniors, and giving assistance when needed.

Table 13 - Summary

AREA	AWARENESS OF EMB's ROLE IN FACILITATING ACCESSIBLE ELECTIONS						
	Aware	%	Not	%	No answer	%	TOTAL
NCR	13	68%	6	32%	0	0%	19
REGION 1	17	90%	1	5%	1	5%	19
REGION 6*	20	100%	0	0%	0	0%	20
TOTAL	50	86%	7	12	1	2%	58

The respondents with a more specific awareness cited that it is the EMB's role to disseminate information, ensure accessibility, assist voters with special needs, enforce priority lanes for persons with disabilities and collaborate with the private sector and other sectoral group for partnership.

"To contribute in the promotion of an accessible election, EMBs must endeavor to evolve and innovate updated and responsive systems of elections that will effectively provide persons with disabilities an enhanced opportunity to select a leader of their liking - a leader that they deem will govern best their locality or the country." (KII EMB, Male, R9, Region 6)

Perception of Accessibility of the 2013 Elections. In Regions I and VI, most persons with disabilities and their family members said that the 2013 Elections were generally not accessible. However, the reverse was true in NCR, where more respondents said that the election was accessible for them personally, while acknowledging that this may not be so for others from their region. The EMBs interviewed also recognized that the 2013 elections were not 100% accessible for persons with disabilities.

Challenges and barriers

Policy and regulations. The policy on voting by persons with disabilities who were assigned to inaccessible polling places remained unclear. While there were reports of some Board of Election Inspectors (BEIs) allowing ballots to be brought down so that persons with disabilities could vote, others say it was against the law to remove ballots from the polling precinct. Respondents also

noted a lack of implementation of disability laws, especially BP 344 (the Accessibility Law), which would have provided better access for persons with physical disabilities.

Voters list and information. One of the challenges cited by EMBs was the absence of a master list of citizens with disabilities who are of voting age from the Social Welfare and Health Department, specifically from the Persons with Disability Affairs Office. If produced, this list would serve as a strong basis for a more comprehensive review and update of registration records. In addition, the records of persons with disabilities were out of date and did not include information on disability type. Some of the EMB members' understanding of accessibility was limited only to persons with physical disabilities; they had only learned about accessibility for persons with visual or hearing disabilities during the interview or FGD for this study. Respondents said there should be more training for election staff on how to assist voters with different types of disabilities.



Infrastructure, communication, materials and automated machine. The inaccessibility of the polling precincts remained as one of the main problems encountered by persons with disabilities. This included a lack of ramps, no accessible toilet facilities, and no tables at accessible heights for persons with disabilities. Some respondents also noted the inaccessibility of some COMELEC field offices, which were located on the second floors of buildings without ramps, a lift or an elevator.

As for materials, several respondents noted that the voter's list was printed in small text which was hard to read; others said their name was not on the list at all. No braille materials were provided for voters with visual disabilities, and no sign language interpreters were available to assist voters who

are hard-of-hearing or deaf. Meanwhile, some persons with physical disabilities found it difficult to cast their vote into the Precinct-Count Optical Scanners (PCOS) machine.

Some persons with disabilities opted not to vote as they did not want to wait in long queues or wanted to avoid trying to navigate through large crowds. Some voters also crowded the precinct and pathways, which severely limited the ability of persons with disabilities to move around. A lack of accessible transportation options or fare money for persons with disabilities who live far from their assigned voting centers also prevented them from participating in the elections. The rainy weather on Election Day was a deterrent, as it made traveling to voting centers difficult. The nature of disability also played a part in their participation, as the elections were accessible to some, but not others.

Attitudes and behavior. Informants reported that some persons with disabilities did not participate in the elections because they were ashamed of their disability or had not received any education on their right to vote. Unsupportive family members also prevented some persons with disabilities from exercising their right to vote. Voters who did not have a disability and who were not aware of the priority lane or of the rights of persons with disabilities were uncooperative, making it challenging for EMBs and voters with disabilities. Lastly, some election staff did not have any idea how to assist voters with disabilities.

The EMB respondents further shared their diverse experiences as they tried to fulfill their duties. These included issues where some persons with disabilities refused assistance; the low turnout of registered voters with disabilities as compared to the expected statistical data (attributed in part to the low awareness of persons with disabilities of their political rights and issues with accessibility and transport); gaps in cascading COMELEC directives to the local level; the indifferent attitudes of voters who do not have disabilities; and ineffective or absent disability sensitivity training for election workers and other stakeholders.

“I would like to point out 2 things: as candidates running for certain positions, persons with disabilities faced challenges as to negative attitudes and building good relationship with non-Persons with disabilities; and as voters, persons with disabilities experienced issues on inaccessibility of infrastructures and also negatives attitudes of people toward them.” (FGD EMB/Stakeholders, Female, R5, Region 6)

Response to the challenges and barriers

In general, informants observed that persons with disabilities, government agencies and other stakeholders responded to the challenges of election accessibility by disseminating information and advocacy on the rights of persons with disabilities; coordination and collaboration between concerned agencies; providing good assistance and priority lanes to persons with disabilities; and improving physical accessibility overall. Some respondents also emphasized that more than just relying on the government, persons with disabilities themselves must also learn to persevere and help themselves by asserting their right to vote.

Persons with disabilities' involvement in promoting election access. More than half of respondents with disabilities said they were involved in promoting election accessibility. Some of them served as election monitors, helped to disseminate information, participated in discussions and consultations, worked with COMELEC, served as a member of the BEI, became election observers, conducted advocacy activities, coordinated with the barangays, encouraged fellow persons with disabilities to participate, and/or mobilized legislative support.

Sixty-nine percent of all respondents with disabilities (or forty individuals) in KIIs observed a response to the challenges and barriers that confront persons with disabilities during election period. Fourteen persons or 24% said that they observed no response. Four persons (7%) either said they did know or declined to answer.

Table 14 - Summary

AREA	PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES', GA and STAKEHOLDERS' RESPONSE TO CHALLENGES						
	Observed a response	%	Observed no response	%	No answer / Did not know	%	TOTAL
NCR*	9	47%	10	53%	0	0%	19
REGION 1	14	74%	2	10%	3	16%	19
REGION 6	17	85%	2	10%	1	5%	20
TOTAL	40	69%	14	24%	4	7%	58

EMBs' involvement in promoting election access. When asked about their own involvement in promoting accessible elections, the EMBs cited their initiatives to coordinate with and include school administrators and teachers as members of the BEI to ensure that voting precincts with persons with disabilities had centers located on the ground floor; conducting an information

drive and accessibility planning during registration and elections; monitoring and directing the implementation of COMELEC rules; acting as a facilitator or trainer to election workers; and coordinating with other stakeholders through partnerships.

Family and other stakeholders' involvement in promoting election access. Family members and other stakeholders also described how they supported persons with disabilities. Some provided personal assistance, encouraged family members of other persons with disabilities to support their right to vote, informed persons with disabilities about the priority lane, and participated in advocacy activities such as speaking at consultation forums. Others stated their support through passage of local legislations to affirm commitment on promoting disability rights, or sharing resources and providing assistance on information dissemination, such as offering their shopping malls as a venue for special or satellite voters' registration.

"We closely coordinate with our local COMELEC Office, especially on a massive information drive involving community health workers and persons with disabilities groups. Because of this, were able to conduct voters' orientation per barangay/local village with high turn-out of persons with disabilities registration." (FGD EMB/Stakeholders, Female, R6, Region 6)

Good practices by EMBs

Across all regions, 39 respondents (67%) were able to describe good practices that facilitated election access for persons with disabilities. Meanwhile, 15 individuals (26%) either said they did not observe good practices, or volunteered activities that could have been done to facilitate access for persons with disabilities.

Table 15 - Summary

AREA	GOOD PRACTICES THAT FACILITATE ELECTION ACCESS FOR Persons with disabilities						
	Described good practices	%	Did not describe	%	No or unclear answer /Did not know	%	TOTAL
NCR*	11	58%	7	37%	1	5%	19
REGION 1	14	74%	3	16%	2	10%	19
REGION 6	14	70%	5*	25%	1	5%	20
TOTAL	39	67%	15	26%	4	7%	58

*Two said no; three gave recommendations instead of observations.

COMELEC Issuances – COMELEC issued a number of resolutions and directives to promote election access to persons with disabilities. These were results of the advocacy and consultations made with the disability sector and other stakeholders. The COMELEC has continually evolved in its policy directions in giving updated, innovative and effective methods to promote or enhance the access of persons with disabilities in the elections.

“The COMELEC is continually evolving in its policy directions in giving updated, innovative and effective methods that promote or enhance the access of persons with disabilities in the elections.” (KII EMB, Male, R9, Region 6)

Satellite/offsite registration. Holding voter’s registration in the communities and in shopping malls at strategic locations made it easier for persons with disabilities to register, as many no longer had to travel as far. Respondents with disabilities valued both the information drive about voter registration and the holding of forums about the elections.

Creating accessible polling precincts. Due to intensive advocacy, accessibility audits were conducted in some areas prior to the elections to ensure that accessibility features were provided. COMELEC made an effort to locate precincts with persons with disabilities to arrange for their voting centers to be placed on the ground floor. In some areas where this did not happen, ballots were brought down for persons with disabilities to cast their votes. Designated APPs were piloted in one location outside the NCR.

Data collection on persons with disabilities. In preparation for the next elections, persons with disabilities are being asked to update their records to reflect their disability. This data will be used to determine which areas have a high number of registered voters with disabilities in order to assign or establish an accessible polling precinct.

Participating as a member of the BEI. A respondent with a disability was able to participate as a member of the BEI during the last elections, participating not only as a voter, but as a part of the election staff.

Sensitivity and quality assistance. One factor that made a significant impact in persons with disabilities’ perception of election access was the quality of assistance that was provided to them during the elections. In some areas where the circumstances were less than ideal, a sensitivity to their needs and the sincere assistance of EMBs and election workers made the experience easier for persons with disabilities.

Collaboration among stakeholders. Most respondents confirmed that collaboration among stakeholders for promoting accessible elections was apparent. Modest results of these collaborative efforts were felt by persons with disabilities; specifically, they mentioned the efforts and coordination by KAMPI, AKAP Pinoy, regional/city/municipality/barangay disability rights organizations, IFES, the Legal Network for Truthful Elections, Fully Abled Nation, PPCRV, One Vote, Task Force on Electoral Reform Network, Halalan 2016, the Asia Foundation, COMELEC, local government units, the National Council on Disability Affairs, the Commission on Human Rights, and the private sector such as SM and Robinsons Malls.

In addition to the above, the EMBs mentioned the supportive work of architect Jaime Silva of the United Architects of the Philippines, the Department of Education, the Philippine National Police, radio stations, constituents of the barangays and older persons.

When asked if the good practices they mentioned were done in collaboration with persons with disabilities and other stakeholders, 64%, or 37 individuals, said yes. Ten percent, or 6 individuals, said they were not. Twenty six percent, or fifteen individuals, either did not know or did not answer.

Table 16 - Summary

AREA	GOVERNMENT COLLABORATION WITH PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES AND OTHER STAKEHOLDERS						
	Yes	%	No	%	No answer / Did not know	%	TOTAL
NCR*	9	47%	3	16%	7	37%	19
REGION 1	12	63%	1	5%	6	32%	19
REGION 6	16	80	2	10%	2	10%	20
TOTAL	37	64%	6	10%	15	26%	58

Innovations

Innovations for accessible elections. When asked if they knew of any innovations designed to improve election access, a little over half of the respondents with disabilities said they were not aware of any innovations. On the other hand, 40% said they knew of innovations and cited the improvement of policies, the creation of an improved system for registering voters with disabilities, creation of APPs, express lanes, improved accessibility features (namely ramps and toilets), and provision of accessibility signs. Most of the family members interviewed were not aware of innovations. While basic accessibility features are legally mandated for all public places,

the inclusion of them as “new innovations” implies two things: first, that the previous election did not have these features (and thus was harder for persons with disabilities in those areas); and second, there is evidence of progress, even if it is slow.

Table 17 - Summary

AREA	INNOVATIONS DEVELOPED TO IMPROVE ELECTION ACCESS						
	Gave innovations	%	No innovation	%	No answer / Did not know	%	TOTAL
NCR*	4	21%	14	74%	1	5%	19
REGION 1	6	32%	11	58%	2	10%	19
REGION 6	13	65%	7	35%	0	0%	20
TOTAL	23	40%	32	55%	3	5%	58

Success of implemented innovations. When asked whether the innovations they identified were successfully implemented, a few respondents said they could not confirm because they had not seen the results. Others said that the innovations were successful, although some respondents said that the APPs were not applied to all areas. Generally, the respondents noted that efforts to make the process more accessible for persons with disabilities, such as bringing the voter’s registration at the barangay level and in the shopping malls and instituting express lanes for persons with disabilities, eased persons with disabilities’ voting experience and encouraged more of them to participate in elections.

Provision of assistive/adaptive tools. Sixty-five percent of respondents with disabilities said they did not know of any assistive devices used to support voters with disabilities. Only nine individuals said there were tools; however, some of them brought these tools themselves. The other tools referred to wheelchairs that were stationed at the schools for voters who had difficulty walking. The provision of assistive technology and adaptive tools is an area where there is much work be done to ensure that elections are accessible and inclusive.

In regards to the provision of adaptive or assistive tools for persons with disabilities, 38 respondents (65%) said they did not see any adaptive or assistive tools for persons with disabilities. Only nine individuals (16) said there were adaptive tools, however, some of them brought these tools themselves.

Table 18 - Summary

AREA	PROVISION OF ADAPTIVE/ASSISTIVE TOOLS FOR Persons with disabilities						
	Provided	%	Not provided	%	No answer / Did not know	%	TOTAL
NCR*	3	16%	13	68%	3	16%	19
REGION 1	2	11%	9	47%	8	42%	19
REGION 6	4	20%	16	80%	0	0%	20
TOTAL	9	16%	38	65%	11	19%	58

In NCR, three respondents answered that there were assistive devices. Two of them mentioned that there were wheelchairs provided for voters who had difficulty walking. Meanwhile, another respondent said that she brought her own magnifiers to aid her during the election.

In Region I, the two respondents who said that there were assistive devices classified the priority/ express lane for persons with disabilities as an assistive device. The rest of the respondents were almost equally divided between those who said they did not observe any, and those who said they had no information or did not answer at all. Meanwhile, in Region VI, the four respondents who said yes also noted that there were wheelchairs provided for voters.

V. Conclusions and Recommendations

In summary, the solid legal framework promoting accessible and disability-inclusive elections which the Philippines currently has is reflective of the remarkable efforts put in by the government, COMELEC, persons with disabilities, the disability rights sector and other stakeholders. In regards to election accessibility, there were efforts made to address the needs of Filipino voters with disabilities, but not yet to the point where elections were fully accessible. Therefore, the political will of disability rights supporters and government institutions toward implementing disability laws in elections remains a top concern.

The study presents key recommendations toward achieving accessible and disability-inclusive elections. Based on the data gathered, the following actions are recommended:

Continuing advocacy on implementation of laws for accessible elections

The Philippines already has a solid legal framework for accessible elections. The efforts of COMELEC and various stakeholders have resulted in concrete steps toward making elections more accessible

for persons with disabilities. However, in order to fully realize the objectives of an accessible election, current advocacy efforts have to be both sustained and intensified, especially at the grassroots level. Persons with disabilities themselves should make the most of these opportunities by participating in ongoing government processes and initiatives. The EMBs, COMELEC, persons with disabilities and other stakeholders must continue working closely to ensure the successful and consistent implementation of disability laws.

EMBs

To support an accessible election, EMBs should adopt a proactive role in fulfilling their duties and endeavor to create updated and responsive systems for elections that will effectively provide persons with disabilities with equal access to their political rights. Disability orientations and sensitivity training programs for EMBs may facilitate their active involvement in sustaining advocacy and implementation efforts for accessible elections.

Capacity building

One issue identified in this study with regards to the implementation of policies is that local-level EMBs do not consistently adopt directives provided by COMELEC at the national level. To ensure that important accessibility-related issuances are implemented at local levels:

- Involve disability rights organizations as COMELEC partners and work together in their local areas to promote accessible elections and monitor the implementation of disability laws and issuances.
- Conduct effective disability sensitivity trainings for EMB staff, teachers who are members of the BEIs, and election workers to increase their capacities in providing support to voters with disabilities.
- Increase the capacities of persons with disabilities and other stakeholders in advocacy efforts and monitoring of accessible elections.

Education and awareness-raising

- Integrate a rights-based disability sensitivity training in the COMELEC's training program for all election personnel and election volunteers.
- Create a primer for election workers on assisting persons with disabilities.
- Intensify voters' education program for persons with disabilities and their families,

especially at the grassroots level. Include information on the voting process, use of automated machines, the relevance of voting as a human right, and possibly the importance of selecting qualified candidates.

- Develop IEC materials which are simple, easy to understand and in accessible formats that will guide persons with disabilities and their families on election processes.
- Increase awareness-raising activities for the general public on disability rights and sensitivity to persons with disabilities.

Research and innovation

- Prioritize the use and provision of assistive technology and adaptive tools to create better access for voters with disabilities. These innovations should be developed so that they are appropriate and responsive to the needs of persons with disabilities in the Philippine context. This could be an area for possible research.





Vietnam

Chapter 5

Chapter 5: Vietnam

Research on Awareness of the Political Rights of Persons with Disabilities in Hanoi

Research conducted by the Hanoi Independent Living Center (Hanoi ILC)



I. Introduction

Political participation is an important right for all members of society, including persons with disabilities. However, persons with disabilities often encounter barriers to political participation. For example, many persons with physical disabilities find it challenging to use public transportation unless it is accessible, especially if they live in rural areas. Persons with visual or hearing disabilities have a difficult time acquiring information on political issues, since material is not available in accessible formats such as braille, audio, with captions, or in sign language. Many persons with intellectual disabilities also face difficulties in acquiring enough information about the political process and the candidates. Persons with psychosocial disabilities sometimes reside in hospitals or institutions and cannot easily visit a polling center. Negative social perceptions of persons with disabilities cause additional barriers in supporting persons with disabilities to join the political process.

The findings of this research indicate that a large majority of Hanoi citizens support the rights of persons with disabilities to participate in elections and to stand for election, but also suggest that many Hanoi citizens are unaware of the laws that protect these rights. In the last election (2011), election organizers reported progress toward ensuring that election procedures and polling stations were fully accessible for persons with disabilities. Various types of formal and informal assistance for persons with disabilities to exercise their citizenship rights were documented, including: transportation to and assistance at the polling station; information readers and sign language interpreters; and the provision of mobile ballots to the residences of persons with disabilities. Respondents also observed that many barriers remain. The respondents who did not have disabilities and those who did have disabilities ranked the importance of these barriers somewhat differently, as persons with disabilities gave greater importance to negative social attitudes and inaccessible environments as significant barriers to political participation. Media personnel strongly endorsed the proposition that the media has a key role in raising awareness in civil society of the rights of persons with disabilities, but they also reported that their organizations did not give much attention to these issues in stories prior to the 2011 elections.

The many open responses to the question of what each group can do in future elections to facilitate the political rights of persons with disabilities yielded a number of important themes, including: more effective dissemination of election information; collaboration between government, civil society organizations, and DPOs; support for fully accessible polling stations; and support for qualified persons with disabilities to stand for election. Based on respondent themes and key findings, we offer several recommendations to enhance the political participation of persons with disabilities.

II. Research Objectives

The purpose of this study is to assess the current level of public awareness in Hanoi, Vietnam on the political participation of persons with disabilities, including their right to vote and to stand for election. Six key stakeholder groups participated in the study, including: government officials and civil society officials responsible for organizing election procedures; persons with disabilities; representatives from DPOs; media personnel; and friends, family, neighbors or citizens. The primary focus of the study is to identify both barriers to participation and effective measures in ensuring the rights of persons with disabilities, with the goal of using the findings to make recommendations to support effective advocacy tools to enhance the political participation of persons with disabilities in future elections. A second focus is on the awareness and perceptions of media personnel of the rights of persons with disabilities, and their role in raising awareness among the public to these issues.

III. Research Methodology

Data collection methods

Survey Design

All research was conducted in the city of Hanoi, Vietnam. The study was conducted using a survey with both closed and open questions to guide structured interviews. The survey questions were tailored to six different stakeholder groups with important roles in the political participation of persons with disabilities in Vietnam. The same survey questions were used for both government officials and civil society officials because both groups have formal, regulatory roles in the organization of elections in Vietnam. We collapsed these into one group for most data analyses.

In total, five different surveys were developed, one for each survey group. Each survey had approximately nine to eleven questions, most of which were open-ended. In all of the surveys, there were four identical questions, including a checklist in which respondents were asked to “check all that apply” out of a list of seven barriers. The final item on each survey was an open-ended question, asking what each group could do to ensure the rights of persons with disabilities to vote and stand for election in future elections.

Though the original intent was to survey 100 individuals in total, only 99 completed surveys were received, as one respondent from the mixed government officials/civil society officials group decided to not participate in the survey. A purposeful approach was used to secure a sample of government and civil society officials that represent the different city districts/wards and CSOs.

Purposeful sampling was also used to secure a sample of DPO leaders across city districts and organizations, as well as a sample of media personnel working in various media venues. Simple random sampling was used to gather a sample of persons with disabilities as well as a sample of the family, friends, and neighbors of persons with disabilities as well as Hanoi citizens.

Six interviewers from the Hanoi Independent Living Center (ILC) collected data. The interviewers were trained for the project during a one-day workshop held at the Hanoi ILC. The trainer was a G&H International-qualified trainer with 10 years of experience working in disability research with international NGOs in Hanoi. The day-long workshop included an overview of the research project, how to implement an effective interview using questions and listening skills, training on research ethics, role-playing a complete interview with feedback from the trainer, and a question and answer period to give advice on various interview situations.

All interviewers had previous experience interviewing and most had previously collected data for ILC projects. Interviews were distributed among the interviewers, and were scheduled at the convenience of the interviewee. Each interviewer completed 13-20 interviews, depending on their availability during the two weeks of data collection. The interview was formal and structured, with the interviewer reading each question and noting the respondent's answer on the interview form.

Data collection took place during the first two weeks of June 2015. Interviews lasted approximately 30-45 minutes. The interview data were translated from Vietnamese into English, and the data were entered into data files for analysis. Numeric data (demographics, yes/no items, and checklist items) were entered into an Excel spreadsheet for basic statistical analysis, and the qualitative responses were entered into a Word file.

Table 19 - Total sample

Informant type	Number
Government officials and CSO officials	21*
DPO officials	10
People with disabilities	19
Media officials	8
Family, friends, neighbors and Hanoi citizens	41
Total	99

*Initially 22 interviews were scheduled, but one respondent elected to not participate in the survey.

The government officials sample (n=10) included the Party Committee Secretary, People's Council Chairperson, and People's Committee Vice-Chairpersons from several wards, communes and districts in Hanoi. The civil society official interviewees (n=12) included officials from the Women's Union, Fatherland Front, Veterans Association, VN Red Cross and the Elderly Association. DPO respondents (n=10) included DPO Chairs from several districts and wards in Hanoi, Vietnam Federation on Disability, Hanoi ILC, and the Hanoi Deaf Association.

The persons with disabilities group (n=19) included persons with physical disabilities (n=12), persons who were deaf or hard-of-hearing (n=3), persons who were blind or had low vision, and a person with a psychosocial disability (n=1), as seen in Table 19.

Table 20 - Disability type of participants with disabilities

Disability type	Number
Physical disability	12
Hearing disability	3
Visual disability	3
Psychosocial disability	1
Total	19

Interviewees from the media sample (n=8) included media personnel from various news media such as VN Radio and TV, People's Newspaper, VN News Agency, Humanitarian Television, and Human Rights Magazine. Finally, the family, friends, neighbors and citizens group (n=41) included 8 family members of persons with disabilities, 10 friends, 13 neighbors, and 10 other Hanoi citizens.

The gender balance of the survey samples was nearly equal, with 48 women and 50 men.

Table 21 - Gender balance per group

Informant type	Women	Men	Total
Government officials and CSO officials	7	14	21
DPO officials	5	5	10
People with disabilities	10	9	19
Media officials	5	3	8
Family, friends, neighbors and Hanoi citizens	21	20	41
Total	48	51	99

The average age of the respondents was 44.82 years old (SD=14.97), with a range of 18-80 years.

Table 22 - Age of respondents

Age group	Total
<20	1
21-30	23
31-40	19
41-50	17
51-60	22
61-70	13
71-80	4
Total	99

IV. Findings

Perceptions and knowledge of the political rights of persons with disabilities

All respondents were asked: Should persons with disabilities participate in the election process and why? Nearly all respondents (95%) endorsed the proposition that persons with disabilities should participate in elections. Most responses mentioned that voting is a basic human right, a right and duty as a citizen, a civil right, equal right, a basic right by law, and so on. Only a few specifically mentioned the right of persons with disabilities to stand for election. The few (n=4) who answered “no” explained using the following reasons: functional difficulties in mobility or with communication, and/or a lack of services to assist persons with disabilities in participating.

As groups with greater social distance from the issues of persons with disabilities, the Media and Family groups were also asked if they had knowledge of the law guaranteeing the rights of persons with disabilities to vote. These results were mixed. For the Media group, six (75%) respondents indicated they had knowledge of these rights and two (25%) indicated they did not. For the Family group, 24 (58%) indicated that they had knowledge and 17 (42%) stated they did not.

Among the family, friends, and neighbors of persons with disabilities, 20 (67%) indicated they had knowledge of these rights, and 10 (33%) indicated they did not, and for the Hanoi citizens who did not have any relationship with persons with disabilities (n=10), only three respondents stated that they had knowledge of the formal rights of persons with disabilities. Although this is a

small sample of Hanoi citizens, it raises questions about whether the citizens of Hanoi who have little contact with persons with disabilities and who form the majority of Hanoi civil society have sufficient knowledge of these rights.

Barriers to participation and methods of accommodation

Respondents were asked to check all relevant barriers from a list of seven key barriers drawn from previous research. Most respondents checked multiple barriers to election participation for people with disabilities ($M=4.33$, $SD=2.22$). However, the Government/CSO groups listed far fewer barriers to participation than the other groups. They listed on average 2.3 barriers, whereas the other groups ranged from 5.6 barriers for the Media and Persons with disabilities groups, 5.1 barriers for the Family group, and 4.9 barriers for the DPO group. All pairwise comparisons between the mean number of barriers to participation listed by the Government/CSO groups and the four other groups are statistically significant ($p<.01$).

The groups also differed on what barriers were listed. The Government/CSO groups listed primarily physical health and functional limitations as barriers, and some also cited lack of political awareness and lack of information as barriers. No government or CSO official listed negative social attitudes and inaccessible environment as barriers to voter participation. On the other hand, among DPO leaders ($n=10$), six listed negative social attitudes and four listed inaccessible environments as barriers. In the Persons with disabilities group ($n=19$), 10 listed negative social attitudes and nine listed inaccessible environments, and among Media respondents ($n=8$), five listed negative social attitudes and 3 listed inaccessible environments as barriers. Finally, in the Family group ($n=41$), 19 listed negative social attitudes and 15 listed inaccessible environments as barriers to participation.

To summarize, approximately half of the members of the DPO, Persons with disabilities, Media, and Family groups listed negative attitudes and inaccessible environment as barriers to participation, whereas no Government or CSO officials listed these as barriers. This suggests a serious gap in understanding by public officials of



the role of social attitudes toward disability and inaccessible environment on the participation of persons with disabilities in the election process. Although the Media respondents show some awareness of these factors, the Media group as a whole also indicated that they run few stories on the rights of people with disabilities to vote and stand for election. Together, these data suggest that the media could do a better job of presenting information to the public on the rights of people with disabilities to vote and educating the public, including public officials, on the pervasiveness of negative attitudes regarding the ability of people with disabilities and the role of inaccessible environments on limiting the participation of people with disabilities in voting.

For the Government, CSO, and Persons with disabled people's organizations, survey questions 2-6 were closely parallel checklist-type items with open responses concerning the accessibility of the last (2011) elections. Survey questions for government and CSO officials asked if they served as an election organizer in the last election, and what specific actions were taken to ensure that persons with disabilities were able to participate in the election, to ensure that information reached persons with disabilities, and that polling stations and voting processes were accessible to persons with disabilities. Questions for the Persons with disabilities group asked if they had voted in the last election, and what specific actions of officials and characteristics of the polling station they observed that supported the participation of persons with disabilities.



Of the 21 Government and CSO respondents, 17 (82%) indicated they organized elections. Of these 17 respondents, all of them strongly endorsed the accessibility of the election process in the last elections, e.g. information, accessibility of polling stations and ballot boxes, and the provision of officers to assist persons with disabilities in voting. In open responses to these questions, 12 respondents stated that they directed officers to bring information about candidates and elections

to persons with disabilities, 12 stated they arranged for staff to assist persons with disabilities in voting, 13 indicated they arranged to send a mobile ballot box to a residence of a person with a disability, and two stated they arranged for an officer to transport a person with a disability to the polling place. Also, eight government or CSO officers stated they arranged for information readers to assist persons who were blind or had low vision, and three reported the provision of a sign language interpreter or video guidance for voters who are deaf or hard-of-hearing.

Regarding the basic accessibility of the polling station, nearly all of the government or CSO officials (n=16) stated that the polling station was on the first floor with a ramp for wheelchair users. One indicated that the polling station was on the first floor but without a ramp.

Of the 18 persons with disabilities who provided data on all items, 13 (72%) indicated they voted in the last elections, and five (28%) stated they had not voted. All of those who voted (n=13) stated that the elections and candidate qualifications were widely announced on mass media, and nine indicated that they learned about the election and procedures from multiple information sources, including from government and CSO officials (n=5), from family and friends (n=6), the Blind Association Information Channel, and so on. Also, six persons with disabilities stated they observed a mobile ballot box being sent to the residence of a person with a disability, and two observed the provision of an information reader for voters who are blind or have low vision.

Regarding the basic accessibility of the polling station, most persons with disabilities stated that the voting place was on the first floor, with a ramp and without steps, ensuring access to wheelchair users. In open comments, five persons with disabilities stated the polling station was on the first floor but without a ramp. Only one person with a disability indicated that there were steps, and one person with a disability indicated that the polling station was on an upper floor, without an elevator.

These data provide close comparisons of observations by two primary groups on the accessibility of the last elections. Overall, the data from both the Government/CSO and Persons with disabilities groups suggest a broad application of methods were used in the last election to ensure the participation of persons with disabilities in the election process, to ensure that information on candidates and election procedures reached persons with disabilities, that the polling station and ballot box were accessible to persons with disabilities, and that additional supports and assistance (e.g. mobile ballot box, staff to assist) were provided to ensure that persons with disabilities voted. The respondents also endorsed the basic accessibility of the polling stations, with only a few exceptions based on the observations of persons with disabilities.

The family, friends, and neighbors of persons with disabilities as well as citizens of Hanoi also provided informal but critical assistance to facilitate the participation of persons with disabilities

in elections. Ten respondents from the Family group indicated they had provided various types of assistance to persons with disabilities in the last election; however, 30 respondents said that they did not provide assistance to persons with disabilities to vote. Types of assistance included providing information on candidates (4), information on polling station location (6), transportation to the polling station (5), and assistance at the polling station (1). It is interesting that only two respondents who reported assisting persons with disabilities in these ways were family members, whereas three were friends, four were neighbors, and one was a citizen.

Ranking Barriers to Participation

In addition to checking all relevant barriers from a list of seven key barriers, respondents were also asked to rank the top three barriers to participation. For all respondents, the most frequently ranked barriers were the “physical health of persons with disabilities”, the “functional limitations of persons with disabilities”, and an “inaccessible environment”. For the #1 barrier, approximately 40% of all respondents selected “physical health”; 20% checked “functional limitations”; and 15% listed “inaccessible environment”. In addition, “functional limitation” was the most frequently second ranked barrier (35%), and “inaccessible environment” was most frequently ranked #3 (24%).

Table 23 - Frequency of Barrier Rank for All Respondents (n=99)

Barriers	Barrier Rank			Total Ranked
	1	2	3	1 st , 2 nd , 3 rd
Physical health	39	17	8	64
Functional limitation	20	34	8	62
Not enough awareness	6	6	13	25
No access to information	4	11	6	21
Not qualified to election	4	2	12	18
Negative social attitudes	10	10	11	31
Inaccessible environments	14	10	22	46

However, the pattern of responses for ranking the importance of barriers was different for respondents who did not have a disability and respondents who did have a disability. For this analysis, we merged the Persons with disabilities and DPO groups (n=28), because all the members of these two groups are persons with disabilities. For the respondents who did not have a disability, the most common barrier by far ranked #1 was “physical health” (48%), followed by “functional limitation” (19%), and “negative social attitudes” (12%).

Also among the respondents who did not have a disability, 43% ranked “functional limitation” as the 2nd most critical barrier, while “inaccessible environment” was the most frequent 3rd ranked barrier (21%). They ranked “physical health” and “functional limitation” among the top three barriers on 69% and 71% of surveys, respectively, whereas they ranked “inaccessible environment” and “negative social attitudes” among the top 3 barriers on 37% and 32% of surveys, respectively.

For respondents who had a disability, “inaccessible environment” was ranked as the #1 barrier by 29% of respondents, “functional limitation” was ranked the #1 barrier by 25%, and “physical health” was ranked the #1 barrier by 18%. “Physical health”, “no access to information on election”, and “negative social attitudes” were ranked equally as the most common 2nd most critical barrier, and “inaccessible environment” was the most common 3rd ranked barrier.

For respondents with disabilities, “physical health” and “inaccessible environment” were both mentioned among the top 3 barriers by more than 50% of respondents, and “functional limitation” was mentioned among the top 3 barriers by 43% of respondents.

It is also noteworthy that the lesser ranked barriers such as “not enough political awareness to vote”, “not enough access to information on the election”, and “not qualified to stand for election” were also endorsed as top 3 barriers by sizable (18-25%) proportions of the total sample. These findings suggest that, though ranked lower in importance than other barriers, these are also significant barriers that require attention to ensure the political participation of persons with disabilities.

Table 24 - Frequency of Barrier Rankings for Respondents without Disabilities and Respondents with Disabilities

Barriers	Respondents without disabilities				Respondents with disabilities			
	Rank			Score	Rank			Score
	1	2	3		1	2	3	
Physical health	34	10	5	1.83	5	7	3	1.14
Functional limitation	13	31	6	1.53	7	3	2	1.04
Not enough awareness	2	3	9	0.30	4	3	4	0.79
No access to information	4	5	4	0.37	0	6	2	0.50
Not qualified to election	2	1	7	0.21	2	1	5	0.46
Negative social attitudes	10	5	9	0.63	1	5	2	0.54
Inaccessible environments	6	5	15	0.61	8	0	7	1.11
The barrier score is computed by giving a score of three to the top ranked barrier, a score of two to the 2 nd ranked barrier and a score of one to the 3 rd ranked barrier. These scores are then added and divided by the number of respondents in each group.								

Role of the media in supporting election rights of persons with disabilities

The eight media representatives were unanimous in endorsing the proposition that the media has an important role in raising awareness in civil society of the rights of persons with disabilities. They specified that they view their role as disseminating information to the public on the rights of persons with disabilities and facilitating a positive view on persons with disabilities. Six media representatives reported that in the last election their media organization covered news mentioning the rights of persons with disabilities to vote at the polling station.

However, only two media personnel stated that their organization ran full stories mentioning the rights of persons with disabilities to stand for election and to vote at accessible polling stations. Regarding the lack of stories mentioning the rights of persons with disabilities to stand for election, media respondents stated that there were no candidates with disabilities standing for election and that, in the event that a person with a disability was a candidate, their media organization would cover the news. In response to why media organizations did not mention news pertaining to the accessibility of polling stations, the most common reason was they did not have enough information to write such stories. One media respondent explained that the newspapers do not consider persons with disabilities as a special subject for news stories.

Regarding whether their media organization has a plan to mention the rights of persons with disabilities to vote and stand for election and the accessibility of polling stations in the 2016 election cycle, only three respondents stated their organization planned to cover the rights of persons with disabilities and four stated their organization planned to mention the accessibility of polling stations.

The findings suggest that media representatives take seriously their key role in disseminating information on the rights of persons with disabilities to the general public, yet the media also reports that they do not have sufficient information to perform this task, particularly as related to the accessibility of polling stations.

Perspectives on supporting the electoral rights of persons with disabilities in the future

All respondents were asked an open-ended question: What can each group do – Government/CSO, DPO, Persons with disabilities, Media, and Family, friends, neighbors, and citizens – to ensure the rights of persons with disabilities to vote and stand for election in future elections? The key themes that reflect the opinions of the respondents pertaining to what each group can do in future elections are organized by group.

Government and CSO officials can:

- Create favorable conditions for accessibility of polling stations and provide alternate means of voting, such as mobile ballots, for persons with disabilities;
- Disseminate information widely to persons with disabilities and to society regarding the rights of persons with disabilities to vote and stand for election;
- Ensure that elections, election information, and polling stations are fully accessible to persons with disabilities;
- Eliminate all barriers to participation for persons with disabilities; and
- Disseminate information on election and candidates in various formats, accessible to all types of disability.

DPO leaders can:

- Arrange training sessions for persons with disabilities to share information on the election process;
- Mobilize members (persons with disabilities) to participate in elections, and recommend qualified and capable members to stand for election;
- Recommend to government and CSOs to hold training workshops for persons with disabilities, so that persons with disabilities understand their right to vote and to stand for election;
- Work with government officials who organize elections, sharing their knowledge of disability and accommodation, to ensure accessibility in election process for persons with disabilities; and
- Collaborate with media to protect the rights of persons with disabilities.

Persons with disabilities can:

- Actively seek out and learn about the candidates, issues, and their own rights, to improve their awareness and knowledge about political issues;
- Support other persons with disabilities to learn about issues and vote and encourage talented persons with disabilities to stand for election; and
- Be courageous and self-confident in exercising their rights and duties as citizens.

Media personnel can:

- Enhance dissemination as widely as possible (newspapers, radio, TV, loudspeakers, internet, posters) on the rights of persons with disabilities to participate in elections and stand for election;
- Identify and praise localities (wards) that provide accessible polling locations;
- Disseminate information on right to vote and stand for election in various formats (e.g. braille, sign language, videotape) so that persons with disabilities with various disabilities can access; and
- Write articles on the ability of persons with disabilities to participate in the election and stand for election.

Family, friends, neighbors, and citizens can:

- Provide information to persons with disabilities about their rights, the election process and the candidates;
- Provide transportation to the polling station and assistance at the polling station;
- Encourage and motivate persons with disabilities to exercise their rights and duties as citizens.

V. Conclusions and Recommendations

The findings of this research indicate that a large majority of Hanoi citizens support the rights of persons with disabilities to participate in elections and to stand for election. However, the proportion of persons with disabilities who voted in the last election was lower than the reported national norm, and many Hanoi citizens are unaware of the laws that protect the rights of persons with disabilities to participate. Election organizers made substantial progress to ensure that election procedures and polling stations are fully accessible. Various accommodations and types of assistance were utilized to permit persons with disabilities to exercise their citizenship rights, such as assistance at the polling station and the use of mobile ballots. Family, friends and neighbors of persons with disabilities as well as citizens of Hanoi also provided informal but critical assistance to persons with disabilities (e.g. transportation to polling station) to participate in elections.

On the other hand, respondents agreed that multiple barriers continue to limit the participation of persons with disabilities in elections, including limited accessibility of some polling stations in the last elections. The respondents with disabilities and the respondents without disabilities ranked the importance of these barriers somewhat differently, with persons with disabilities giving greater importance to how inaccessible environments create barriers to political participation.

Media personnel strongly endorsed the proposition that the media has a key role in raising awareness in civil society of the rights of persons with disabilities. Although most media personnel reported that their organization covered news mentioning the rights of persons with disabilities to vote at the polling station, few stated that their organization ran stories that mentioned the rights of persons with disabilities to stand for election and to vote at accessible polling stations.



Based on the findings of this study, we offer the following recommendations to enhance the dissemination of election information to persons with disabilities and ensure that persons with disabilities can vote at accessible polling stations and stand for election.

- DPOs should provide training for persons with disabilities in their districts or wards to share information on the election law and election process, and to mobilize persons with disabilities to participate in elections.
- The DPOs should also consult with government and CSO officials who organize elections in order to share their knowledge of disability and accommodations, to promote best

practices for the accessibility of election procedures, and to support the full accessibility of all polling stations in Hanoi. The DPOs should also consult with government and CSO officials to share information on the role of negative social attitudes and inaccessible environments in limiting the participation of people with disabilities in voting and to stand for election.

- Government and CSO officials should partner with DPOs to hold training workshops for persons with disabilities, so that persons with disabilities understand their right to vote and to stand for elections and officials can learn the concerns of persons with disabilities.
- Government officials, CSO officials, and DPO leaders should provide formal direction and informal assistance to the media to raise their awareness to the issues of election access and the right to stand for election of persons with disabilities, so that the media can better perform their role in disseminating information on the law, candidates and election procedures.
- The media should disseminate as widely as possible, and in multiple formats, the rights of persons with disabilities to participate in elections and stand for election, to educate and mobilize civil society to protect these rights.
- DPOs and persons with disabilities should encourage and support qualified persons with disabilities to stand for election.