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MINIMUM STANDARDS ON INCLUSION OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES (PWDS) IN POLITICAL PARTIES

**NIGERIAN OPEN POLITICAL
PARTY (NOPP) PROJECT**



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© **2025 Disclaimer:** This publication establishes the minimum standards for the inclusion of PWDs in political parties, aiming to enhance accessibility, representation, and compliance with legal frameworks. Through implementing these standards, political parties can play a pivotal role in promoting equality and strengthening democratic processes in Nigeria. While every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy and reliability of the information presented, the findings, analyses, and conclusions are intended for informational, advocacy and research purposes only and should not be construed as endorsement or critique. The Westminster Foundation for Democracy (WFD) and its partners bear no responsibility for any direct or indirect errors, omissions, or consequences resulting from the use of the information provided. This publication is intended for informational purposes only. WFD and its partners disclaim liability for any loss or damage arising from the use of this report or its contents.

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Preface

The sustained discourse on inclusive democracy in Nigeria has emphasised the critical need for a political system that reflect the diversity of the demography of the society. Fundamental pathway towards attaining this is to deliberately ensure meaningful participation of all Nigerians, particularly persons with disabilities (PWDs), in political life of the country—not as passive recipients of policy but as active agents of change. However, despite the commitments of Nigeria to inclusion and disability rights, systemic exclusion persists, especially within the very institutions where representation and participation should be guaranteed: political parties.

This report presents the findings of a study commissioned by the **Westminster Foundation for Democracy (WFD)**, in partnership with the **Centre for Ability, Rehabilitation and Employment (CARE)**. Conducted under the **Nigerian Open Political Party (NOPP) Project**, and with funding from the **Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO)**, the study establishes **minimum standards for the inclusion of persons with disabilities in political parties** in Nigeria.

Drawing on a mix of qualitative and quantitative methodologies, the study explores the barriers that hinder inclusive political participation, while also highlighting promising practices and models of disability-inclusive governance. It engages directly with persons with disabilities, political actors, civil society organizations, and other stakeholders to produce practical, evidence-based recommendations for reform.

This report is both a call to action and a roadmap to an inclusive society where every Nigerian can thrive. It affirms the principle that democracy is only truly representative when all citizens—regardless of ability—can freely participate in shaping the future of their nation. We hope that the insights and recommendations contained herein will serve as a valuable resource for political parties, policymakers, advocacy groups, and development partners committed to fostering inclusive democratic spaces in Nigeria and beyond.

We appreciate all participants who contributed their voices, experiences, and expertise to this important research. Their insights have not only enriched this report but also strengthened the broader movement for disability inclusion and robust participation in governance.

Working together, we can build a Nigeria where no one is left behind.

Adebowale Olorunmola
Country Director, Nigeria
Westminster Foundation for Democracy (WFD)

FOREWORD

At the Inter-Party Advisory Council (IPAC), we recognize that true democracy is built on inclusivity, where all citizens, regardless of ability, have equal opportunities to participate in governance and decision-making. Political parties, as the cornerstone of democracy, must take proactive steps to ensure that their structures, policies, and processes reflect this commitment to inclusion, particularly for Persons with Disabilities (PWDs).

Under my leadership, IPAC has taken historic strides to institutionalize inclusion within the political space. We have created and staffed the Directorates for Women, Youth, and Persons with Disabilities, marking the first time in IPAC's history that these groups have dedicated representation in our structure. Additionally, we have developed and adopted an inclusive Constitution that guides the affairs of IPAC, reinforcing our commitment to mainstreaming marginalized voices in politics.

Inclusion of PWDs is imperative in ensuring that they can fully access their fundamental rights and participate actively in governance, as provided for by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), the Disabilities Act 2019, and other related legislation in Nigeria. Political parties must not only comply with these legal frameworks but must also go beyond compliance to champion disability inclusion as a democratic necessity.

This Minimum Standards on Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Political Parties document, developed by the Westminster Foundation for Democracy (WFD) and the Centre for Ability, Rehabilitation, and Empowerment (CARE), is a critical step toward fostering an inclusive political system. The standards outlined in this document were developed through a participatory working session involving representatives from disability rights Civil Society Organizations, Disabled Persons Organizations, and Political Parties. Together, they identified and deliberated on the key areas political parties must focus on to improve their disability inclusion efforts. Their insights were synthesized into a framework of 14 minimum standards, serving as a benchmark for assessing political parties' commitment to disability inclusion in their structures, policies, practices, and processes.

IPAC commends WFD and CARE for their dedication to promoting inclusive democracy. We reaffirm our commitment to working with all stakeholders to implement these standards and to guarantee that political parties in Nigeria become truly inclusive and representative of all citizens. Together, we move closer to a democracy where no voice is silenced, and no citizen is left behind.

Yusuf Dantalle
Chairman, Inter Party Advisory Council (IPAC)



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Westminster Foundation for Democracy (WFD) and the Centre for Ability, Rehabilitation, and Empowerment (CARE) extend our deepest appreciation to all individuals and organizations that contributed to the development of this document, Minimum Standards on Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) in Political Parties. We sincerely thank Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) for its unwavering commitment to advancing inclusive democracy and ensuring that Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) have a meaningful place in Nigeria's political landscape. Through their steadfast support, this initiative has become a reality.

Our profound gratitude also goes to the Inter-Party Advisory Council (IPAC) and representatives of various political parties for their dedication, invaluable insights, and commitment to fostering a more inclusive political system. Your engagement and contributions have strengthened the recommendations within this document.

We acknowledge the technical expertise and leadership provided by Adebowale Olorunmola, WFD Country Director, and Dr. Chike Okogwu, Chief Responsibility Officer of CARE, with the technical coordination of Olusola Folayan, Programme Manager, WFD, and the support of Daniel James, Oluwaseun Taiwo Oladele, Bibian Igboabuchi, Samson Ajibola and James Onoja including UK Africa Programme team and WFD's Technical Advisory Unit. Their efforts, alongside the invaluable contributions of other team members, have been instrumental in shaping this report from inception to final publication.

This document is a testament to the power of collaboration and a shared vision. Together, we take a crucial step toward a Nigeria where inclusivity in democracy is not just an aspiration but a standard.



01






Background

Political parties are essential democratic institutions. Parties play an important role in aggregating and representing public interests, shaping political agendas, and developing government policies and programs. Parties are also a vehicle for contesting power and earning the right to govern through peaceful elections. In addition to governing, parties serve as opposition and have the power to hold ruling parties accountable. Political parties are the medium for citizens to participate in politics and public decision-making. Parties significantly influence how citizens are represented in political processes and participate in decision-making.

However, party mobilisation and recruitment strategies are often not inclusive or effective in addressing the needs of marginalised communities, such as Persons with Disabilities (PWDs). Political parties often lack a basic understanding of PWDs and how to create inclusive campaigns, platforms, and accessible physical and digital spaces.

An estimated 1.3 billion people experience significant disability. This represents 16% of the world's population or 1 in 6 of every human on earth, (WHO 2023). In Nigeria, it is estimated that there are over 35.1 million PWDs, and their effective and meaningful political participation in the national decision-making processes is an issue of interest. More recently, it has become a frequent topic of debate at the international and national levels. In the context of the right to political participation and pursuant to international human rights standards, political participation (access to and full participation in the decision-making process) is one of the key elements for protecting the rights of persons with disabilities.

The right to participate equally in political processes – to be voters, candidates, campaign staff, observers, political candidates and elected leaders – is especially important for persons with disabilities. Engaging in political processes through political parties and parliaments is an empowering opportunity for men and women with disabilities to voice their opinions on issues that are important to them, and to become leaders themselves. Such engagement also creates ideal opportunities for political institutions to remove barriers and become more inclusive, accessible and truly representative of all citizens.



Nigeria ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) on 30 March 2007 and its Optional Protocol on 24 September 2010. Further demonstrating its commitment, the country enacted the Discrimination Against Persons with Disabilities (Prohibition) Act in 2018, which prohibits discrimination against PWDs and mandates accessibility in public buildings and services.

Despite these legislative strides, PWDs in Nigeria continue to encounter systemic barriers that impede their full participation in political processes. These obstacles include limited accessibility to political infrastructures, inadequate representation within political party structures, and pervasive societal stigmatization. Such exclusion not only undermines the principles of democracy but also deprives the nation of the diverse perspectives and contributions that PWDs can offer to governance and policy development.

The National Commission for Persons with Disabilities was established in 2020 with the mandate to coordinate and implement activities that guarantee full inclusion of Persons with Disabilities into society in areas of education social economic and civil rights and related matters, including political participation as entrenched in Discrimination Against Persons with Disabilities (Prohibition) Act, 2018. Additionally, organisations of persons with disabilities such as the Joint National Association of Persons with Disabilities (JONAPWD), founded in 1992, play vital roles in advocating for the rights and integration of PWDs into national public life.

Recognising the influential role of political parties in shaping governance, it becomes imperative to establish minimum standards for the inclusion of PWDs in this space. The standards would serve as benchmarks for political parties to assess and enhance their disability-inclusive practices, and ensure that PWDs are not only represented but also participate actively in decision-making processes. By adopting and implementing these guidelines, political parties align with national and international legal frameworks and contribute to creating a more inclusive and representative democracy where the voices of PWDs are effectively heard with their rights upheld in the political sphere. It will also foster a political environment where every citizen, regardless of ability, can engage fully and meaningfully in the democratic process.



02



Introduction



In Nigeria, the active participation of all citizens, including Persons with Disabilities (PWDs), is a matter of right as contained in the Discrimination Against Persons with Disabilities (Prohibition) Act (2018) and is crucial for a robust democracy. Despite constituting a significant portion of the population, PWDs often encounter substantial barriers that limit their involvement in political parties and governance. To address these challenges, this document establishes minimum standards for the inclusion of PWDs in the political parties, aiming to enhance accessibility, representation, and compliance with legal frameworks. Through implementing these standards, political parties can play a pivotal role in promoting equality and strengthening democratic processes in Nigeria.

This document is developed through comprehensive methodology including reviews of national and international legal frameworks, best practices from political systems that have successfully integrated PWDs, reports and case studies from disability rights organizations, electoral bodies, and input from stakeholders such as PWD advocacy groups, and political parties. Consequently, these guidelines offer practical recommendations to promote an inclusive political environment. The expected outcomes encompass the establishment of inclusive policy frameworks, practical guidelines for implementation, proposals for legislative amendments, and nationwide awareness campaigns to promote the rights and active participation of PWDs.

When political parties in Nigeria adopt these standards, they can ensure that PWDs are not only represented but also actively participate in decision-making processes, thereby enriching the democratic fabric of the nation.



03



Overview of Key Legislations and Policy Frameworks on Participation and Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Political Parties



In Nigeria, the active participation of all citizens, including Persons with Disabilities (PWDs), is vital for a robust democracy. The legal frameworks for the participation of PWDs in Nigeria's political process encompass a range of international and national laws, policies, and regulations aimed at ensuring their full inclusion and equal participation in democratic activities. Key components of this framework include:

UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) (Ratified 2007)


The UNCRPD, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in December 2006, is an international human rights treaty, which promotes, protects, and ensures the full enjoyment of human rights by people with disabilities¹. The UNCRPD made a large step towards transforming people with disabilities from passive recipients of aid to fully empowered citizens who enjoy equal rights and protections under national and supranational laws.²

The CRPD elaborates on the right to participate in political and public life in the context of disability and specifies certain measures to be taken to ensure that PWDs can effectively and fully participate in political and public life on an equal basis with others. Nigeria ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) on 30 March 2007 and its Optional Protocol on 24 September 2010. Nigeria is committed to ensuring the political rights and participation of PWDs on an equal basis with others by the ratification of the UNCRPD.

- » Article 12, on "Equal recognition before the law", notes that State Parties shall recognise that persons with disabilities enjoy legal capacity on an equal basis with others in all aspects of life."
- » Article 29 of the CRPD guarantees the political rights of persons with disabilities. It notes that states should ensure the right of persons with disabilities to "stand for elections, to effectively hold office and perform all public functions at all

¹ International Foundation for Electoral Systems. 2012a. "The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the Optional Protocol."

² National Democratic Institute. 2012. "Civic Update: Mainstreaming Persons with Disabilities."



levels of government, facilitating the use of assistive and new technologies where appropriate.

- » Article 29 also specifies that states actively promote “an environment in which persons with disabilities can effectively and fully participate in the conduct of public affairs, without discrimination and on an equal basis with others, and encourage their participation in public affairs,” including in “the activities and administration of political parties.”
- » Other CRPD articles also influence the implementation of Article 29, notably Articles 6 and 12. Article 6 of the CRPD acknowledges that women and girls with disabilities are subject to multiple discrimination and that states “shall take all appropriate measures to ensure the full development, advancement, and empowerment of women” when implementing the other rights outlined in the CRPD.



African Union Protocol on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (AUPRPD)

The Africa Union Protocol on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (AUPRPD) is a legal framework adopted by the African Union (AU) in 2018 to promote and protect the rights of persons with disabilities across the continent. It complements the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) by addressing Africa-specific challenges, including poverty, harmful practices, and discrimination.

The Protocol emphasises non-discrimination, accessibility, inclusive education, healthcare, employment, and participation in political and public life. It also recognises specific protections for women, children, and persons with albinism.

Sustainable Development Goals

In 2015, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were adopted by the United Nations. The SDGs are part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development,²¹ which aims to reduce poverty, combat inequality and address climate change globally. SDG Goal 10, entitled “Reducing Inequality Within and Among Countries”, sets the following target: “By 2030, empower and promote the social, economic, and political inclusion of all, irrespective of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion, or economic or other status,”.



Persons with disabilities are disproportionately affected by poverty, inequality and conflict. As countries actively seek to address the root causes of these issues, it is vital to ensure that persons with disabilities are able to have an equal voice in their government and political structures – and to have a chance at changing these patterns for the better.

Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999 (As amended)

The Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999 (as amended) guarantees the rights of PWDs to participate in political processes, particularly through its provisions on fundamental rights and equality. The Constitution prohibits discrimination based on disability.



Section 42(2) explicitly states that no citizen of Nigeria shall be subjected to any disability, liability, or restriction solely by reason of their disability. This provision ensures that PWDs have the same rights as other citizens, including the right to participate in the electoral process.

Similarly, the Constitution provides the right to participate in government as section 14(2)(c) of the Constitution emphasises the promotion of the participation of all citizens in the governance of the country. This provision recognises that PWDs have the right to participate in the political process and contribute to decision-making at all levels of government.

Sections 39 and 40 of the Constitution guarantee the rights to freedom of expression and association, respectively. These rights enable PWDs to express their political opinions, form associations or political parties, and participate in electoral activities without fear of discrimination or reprisal.

Furthermore, the Constitution affirms the right of every Nigerian citizen who is of voting age to vote and be voted for in elections. This includes PWDs, who have the same rights as other citizens to stand for elective offices and to cast their votes in elections without any form of discrimination or hindrance.

Section 42(2) prohibits discrimination on the grounds of disability, ensuring equal treatment before the law. Additionally, Section 14(2)(c) emphasises the promotion of the welfare of all citizens, including PWDs.

Discrimination Against Persons with Disabilities (Prohibition) Act, 2018

In January 2019, Nigeria enacted the Discrimination Against Persons with Disabilities

(Prohibition) Act, also known as the National Disability Act. This landmark legislation prohibits discrimination against PWDs in all aspects of life, including political participation. It mandates the provision of reasonable accommodations to ensure equal access to electoral processes for PWDs.

PART I — PROHIBITION OF DISCRIMINATION AND AWARENESS PROGRAMMES

-Prohibition of discrimination and penalty.

PART VI — OPPORTUNITY FOR EMPLOYMENT AND PARTICIPATION IN POLITICS AND PUBLIC LIFE

- » -Equal right to work.
- » -Opportunity for employment.
- » -Participation in politics.

Electoral Act 2022 (As Amended)

Nigeria's Electoral Act provides specific provisions to facilitate the participation of PWDs in elections. For instance, Section 56(2) mandates the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) to ensure that polling stations are accessible to all voters, including those with disabilities.

Furthermore, the Act allows for reasonable accommodations to be made to assist voters with disabilities, such as providing braille materials or allowing assistance from a trusted person. The implementation involves election monitoring, enforcement of accessible voting facilities, voter education campaigns, and compliance reporting, with INEC, political parties, and civil society organisations playing key roles. Relevant sections include:



a. Section 9 (National Register of Voters and voters' registration)

9.(1) The Commission shall compile, maintain, and update, on a continuous basis, a National Register of Voters (in this Act referred to as "the Register of Voters") which shall include the names of all persons —

- (a) entitled to vote in any Federal, State, Local Government or Federal Capital Territory Area Council elections; and*
- (b) with disability status disaggregated by type of disability.*

b. Section 14 (Demand for information regarding registration)

14. In the performance of his or her duties under this Act, a registration officer and an update officer shall—

- (a) demand from any applicant the information necessary to enable him or her to ascertain whether the applicant is qualified to be registered as a voter in accordance with the provisions of this Act ; and*
- (b) require any voter or applicant to complete an application form for the purpose of the*

registration, but in the case of an illiterate or disabled person such application form may be completed by the registration officer on the applicant's request.

c. Section 54 (Visually impaired and incapacitated voters)

54 (1) A Voter with visual impairment or other form of disability who is otherwise unable to distinguish symbol or who suffers from any other physical disability may be accompanied into the polling unit by a person chosen by him or her and that person shall, after informing the Presiding officer of the disability, be permitted to accompany the voter into the voting compartment and assist the voter to make his or her mark in accordance with the procedure prescribed by the Commission.

(2) The Commission shall take reasonable steps to ensure that persons with disabilities, special needs and vulnerable persons are assisted at the polling place by the provision of suitable means of communication, such as Braille, large embossed print, electronic devices, sign language interpretation, or off-site voting in appropriate cases.

INEC Regulations and Guidelines for the Conduct of Elections, 2022

a. Regulation 7 (Location of Polling Units)

Whenever practicable, Polling Units shall be located within enclosures in public places accessible to every voter, including Persons with Disability (PWDs). Where they are in open spaces, canopies may be provided.

b. Regulation 19(e)(iv) and (v) contain further inclusive provisions such as assistive material to PWDs in accordance with their respective disability status and documenting the status of the voter through the completion of a PWD Form. It is further required that the voting cubicle and ballot box are accessible to Persons with Disability so that they can complete the voting process independently.



National Gender Policy (Revised 2021)

This policy advocates for the inclusion of women and marginalised groups, including women with disabilities, in politics. Implementation involves gender-focused leadership development programs, monitoring and evaluation of party policies, and targeted political mentorship initiatives, with the Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and political parties leading these efforts.

Framework On Access and Participation Of Persons With Disabilities (PWDs) In The Electoral Process

The INEC Framework on Access and Participation of Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) in the electoral process is a policy document aimed at the inclusion of PWDs in all aspects of the electoral process, as well as reducing the barriers they face as voters,

aspirants, candidates, party officials and staff within the Commission.

Some of the key objectives of the framework are to:

- » Work with relevant stakeholders to facilitate the development of accessible electoral facilities and infrastructure.
- » Encourage the participation of PWDs in all aspects of the electoral process.
- » Establish strong partnerships with relevant stakeholders to promote access and participation of PWDs in the electoral process.
- » Encourage Political Parties on access and participation of Persons with Disabilities in the electoral process.

Code Of Conduct for Political Parties

INEC regulations require political parties to adopt disability-inclusive policies, mandating accessible campaign materials and venues. Enforcement includes regular party audits, the establishment of PWD inclusion offices within parties, training programs, and penalties for non-compliance, with INEC and political parties accountable. Of particular note is the section on the rule of law which states that all Political Parties shall at all times uphold the rights and freedoms of the Nigerian people, as guaranteed by law. In this context, every Political Party shall provide equal opportunity to qualified persons to participate in electoral activities.



The Persons with Disabilities (Accessibility) Regulations, (2023)



The Persons with Disabilities (Accessibility) Regulations, 2023, was enacted to operationalise the Discrimination Against Persons with Disabilities (Prohibition) Act, 2018 in Nigeria. These regulations provide a legal framework to enforce accessibility standards across public and private institutions, ensuring the full inclusion of persons with disabilities (PWDs) in all aspects of life. The regulations apply to all public and private facilities, including government institutions, corporate bodies, transportation systems, and digital platforms, mandating compliance with accessibility standards.

The National Commission for Persons with Disabilities (NCPWD) is responsible for monitoring and enforcing compliance. Non-compliance attracts penalties, including fines and revocation of operational licenses where applicable. An Accessibility Compliance Certificate is required for new buildings and transportation services.



04





Obstacles to Equal Political Participation

Despite international standards, obligations and existing good practices supporting the right to political participation, men and women with disabilities still encounter numerous barriers to joining political parties or parliaments. While this section provides a brief overview of some of these barriers, it is important to remember that Despite international standards, obligations and existing good practices supporting the right to political participation, men and women with disabilities still encounter numerous barriers to joining political parties or parliaments. While this section provides a brief overview of some of these barriers, it is important to remember that all the obstacles described can be resolved with strong support from political parties and parliaments, in cooperation with disability rights organisations and election management bodies.



Lack of Societal Support

One of the most widespread obstacles for persons with disabilities in political life is a common belief that they are either uninterested in politics or that they are unable to participate in politics. Both men and women with disabilities are rarely encouraged to participate in politics at any level, whether as voters, party members, candidates, observers or elected officials. When they do express an interest in voting or running for office, they are often actively discouraged by friends, family and/or community members.³



Education Gaps

Since it is often presumed that persons with disabilities are uninterested or unable to participate in political life, men and women with disabilities are rarely provided with opportunities to participate in civic or political education programmes, and materials for civic and voter education campaigns are often inaccessible. General education also continues to present accessibility and inclusion challenges, and many children and adolescents with disabilities struggle to gain an equal educational experience. These general and civic education gaps can lead to little or no understanding of the basics of democratic decision-making structures, policies, branches of power

³ IFES and NDI, "Equal Access: How to Include Persons with Disabilities in Elections and Political Processes" (Washington, 2014), p.34 <<https://www.ifes.org/publications/equal-access-how-include-persons-disabilities-elections-and-political-processes>>

and mechanisms for creating legislation. As a result, it becomes more difficult to effectively engage in public or political life, and to build up the experience and qualifications needed for leadership roles.



Inaccessible Physical Environments

Many existing structures were built at a time when there were no architectural codes to support accessibility. Unless they have been retrofitted correctly, they are often physically inaccessible or difficult to navigate if using a mobility device, such as a wheelchair or crutches. Unfortunately, even some modern buildings have been built

without fully assessing whether ramps, elevators, hallways, doorways or even nearby roads and sidewalks are safe and easy to use by persons with physical or visual disabilities. Furniture can pose difficulties if it is not set at the correct height or if it creates an awkward space for movement. Likewise, rooms are often not optimised for people who use hearing devices. If older buildings are used as locations for polling stations, town halls, debates, parliamentary meetings or offices for staff, it is essential to take physical accessibility into consideration, and to determine how architectural barriers could be mitigated or eliminated entirely.

Transportation is another common barrier. Many public transportation options and vehicles have not been designed with the needs of persons with physical, visual, intellectual or certain types of psychosocial disabilities in mind. Accessibility can also vary widely depending on location; rural or suburban areas are likely to have fewer accessible transportation options than urban areas.



Inaccessible Communication Methods

Persons with disabilities are rarely included in outreach strategies or civic education campaigns. Even when they are targeted, the communication methods are often both inaccessible and non-inclusive. This can pose several challenges for persons with disabilities. For example:

- a. If they are interested in joining a political party, but the website is inaccessible for screen readers (a technology commonly used by persons with visual disabilities), then finding accurate information is nearly impossible;
- b. If a video advertisement for a political candidate is shown on television or online, people who are deaf or hard-of-hearing will struggle to understand it if captions or sign language interpretation is not provided; and
- c. Easy-read materials are rarely available for persons with intellectual or developmental disabilities.
- d. Furthermore, if persons with disabilities are not shown or referenced anywhere in communications materials, it sends a signal to persons with disabilities that they are not regarded as part of the target group.



Low Incomes and Unemployment

As a result of many of the obstacles already described, it is not unusual for persons with disabilities to be unemployed. With lower incomes, the expenses involved in running for office or becoming a member of a political party can be particularly challenging. The costs of reasonable accommodations can also sometimes be prohibitive, especially if it is an ongoing accommodation, such as sign language interpretation. This is a key area where strategic support from the state, political parties and parliaments can make a significant difference.



Inadequate Staff Training

Political party and parliamentary staff are rarely trained on how to thoughtfully interact with persons with disabilities or support their accommodation needs. At best, persons with disabilities are provided with inadequate and inefficient services; at worst, they are insulted or pushed aside. This contributes to an overall political environment in which persons with disabilities are given low priority or disregarded completely. Unclear accessibility and reasonable accommodations processes (e.g., understanding who fulfils accommodation requests) can also result in inefficient and unsupportive systems.



Multiple Layers of Discrimination

Aside from disability-specific barriers, it is important to be aware that there are often additional challenges for persons with disabilities who are also members of other under-represented communities. For example, women with disabilities may be concerned about childcare coverage or care for older parents.

Youth with disabilities may be eager to participate in politics, but not have much guidance on how to navigate political institutions and systems. Members of indigenous communities, religious groups or ethnic minorities can encounter harsh discrimination based on their identities.



05





The Minimum Standard for Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Political Parties in Nigeria



In Nigeria, ensuring that Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) can electively and meaningfully engage in political party activities requires adherence to established minimum standards. These standards are not prescriptive “how-to” guides but rather outline the essential elements that must be in place to facilitate the active participation of PWDs in political processes.

The minimum standards serve to promote a consistent approach to inclusion within political parties and are informed by evidence and experiences from parties that have successfully integrated PWDs. While these standards represent best practices based on broad consensus, it is crucial for each political party to consider, monitor, and analyse their specific operational context to apply them electively.

Structure of the Standards:

- a. Standard/Commitment: A universal, qualitative statement defining the minimum achievement required.
- b. Key Performance Indicators: Metrics that serve as signals to measure whether the standard is being met and also capture results against the standard over time.
- c. Key Actions: Practical steps to be undertaken to achieve the targeted standard. These are suggestions and may not be applicable in all contexts; thus, political parties should select the most relevant actions for their specific situations.
- d. Guidance Notes: Additional information and references for further reading to support the implementation of the standards.

Implementing the Standards in Nigeria:

Adherence to these minimum standards is voluntary and aims to encourage widespread use and ownership among political parties. Conforming to the standards does not necessitate implementing all key actions or meeting all key indicators for every standard. The extent to which a political party can meet these standards will depend on various factors, some of which may be beyond their control.

Key considerations for implementing the minimum standards include:



Accessibility: Ensuring that political party structures, meetings, campaigns, and materials are accessible to PWDs. This includes removing physical, communication, and attitudinal barriers to their access and participation.



Data Disaggregation: Collecting and analyzing data disaggregated by disability types, as well as by sex and age, is important to understand the impact of actions on different groups. This practice helps identify who has been excluded and where more efforts are needed to improve inclusion.



Financial Accountability: Allocating funds to support programs for PWDs and ensuring transparent accounting for the sources and uses of these funds.




Disability Wings: Establishing structures within political parties aimed at promoting inclusion. These wings represent the interests of PWDs through structured relationships with party organs and leadership, while also engaging in external political governance and policy dialogues.



From Policies to Practices: Ensuring that efforts to include PWDs are reflected in all party documents and coordination mechanisms. Party leadership has a responsibility to translate principles of inclusion, diversity, access, and equity into actions at both national and sub-national levels.

The Minimum Standards for the Inclusion of PWDs in the Nigerian Political System include but not limited to:

S/N	Description of the Standard	Key Performance Indicators (KPI)	Key Actions and Party Responsibilities
1.	Legal and Policy Framework	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Compliance with the Discrimination Against Persons with Disabilities (Prohibition) Act and the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD). - Integration of disability inclusion in party constitutions and policies. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Amend party constitutions to enshrine disability inclusion as a core principle. - Collaborate with the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), National Commission for Persons with Disabilities (NCPWD), and Organization of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs) for policy implementation. - Conduct annual legal compliance audits on disability inclusion.
2.	Accessibility in Political Parties	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Availability of accessible facilities in all party offices. - Accessible digital platforms aligned with Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG). - All campaign venues and event centres meet Persons with Disabilities (Accessibility) Regulations, 2023 standards. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ensure physical accessibility (ramps, elevators, adapted seating, and accessible restrooms) according to Persons with Disabilities (Accessibility) Regulations, 2023. - Provide sign language interpreters, Braille materials, and screen-reader-friendly content. - Establish internal disability affairs committees to monitor accessibility policies.
3.	Representation and Participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reserved leadership positions for PWDs. - Inclusion of PWD candidates in elections. - Annual review of PWD participation across all party levels. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Implement affirmative action policies ensuring reserved positions for PWDs. - Establish PWD advocacy wings to amplify their voices and concerns. - Conduct internal reviews and publicise PWD participation outcomes.




4.	Capacity Building and Awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Number of training and sensitisation programmes conducted annually. - Participation rate of PWDs in leadership and political processes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Organise regular leadership and advocacy training programmes for PWDs. - Conduct PWD awareness sessions for party members to foster inclusive attitudes. - Partner with disability organisations to deliver expert-guided training.
5.	Inclusive Campaign Strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - All campaign materials available in accessible formats. - Accessibility at all major party events (rallies, debates, town halls). - Documented involvement of PWDs in policy formulation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ensure all campaign materials are in Braille, audio, large print, and accessible digital formats. - Provide real-time captioning and sign language interpreters at all public engagements. - Include PWDs in policy committees and campaign strategy formulation.
6.	Funding and Support Mechanisms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Allocation of party budgets for PWD support. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Establish a dedicated PWD campaign support fund.
7.	Monitoring, Evaluation, and Accountability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Annual disability inclusion report published. - Compliance with the Discrimination Against Persons with Disabilities Act across all states and the FCT. - Action taken on non-compliance cases. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provide waivers on nomination fees for PWD candidates.
8.	National and State-Level Domestication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Discrimination Against Persons with Disabilities Act adopted and enforced in all 36 states and the FCT. - Annual review of state-level implementation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ensure funding for assistive devices, transport subsidies, and personal assistants.

9.	National Commission for Persons with Disabilities Compliance and Enforcement Mechanisms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Functionality and effectiveness of the NCPWD in enforcing compliance. - Secure and increase funding for accessibility and participation programmes. - Number of enforcement actions against non-compliant parties. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ensure the NCPWD enforces compliance with disability inclusion mandates. - Implement penalties for non-compliance with accessibility standards.
10.	Data Collection and Research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Centralised PWD participation database established. - Regular reporting on disability inclusion progress. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Conduct periodic research and data collection on PWDs in politics. - Publish annual reports with insights and recommendations for improvements.
11.	Disability Mainstreaming in Party Policies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Integration of disability inclusion in party policies. - Inclusion of PWD-specific action plans in party manifestos. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ensure disability inclusion is considered in all party policy discussions. - Train party leadership on disability-inclusive governance.
12.	Legal Assistance and Advocacy for PWD Candidates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Legal aid desks established in major political parties. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Train party leadership on disability-inclusive governance.
13.	Youth and Women with Disabilities in Politics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Representation of youths or women among PWD candidates. - Increased participation of women with disabilities in party leadership. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Create mentorship programmes for young PWD politicians. - Establish leadership development initiatives for women and youth with disabilities.
14.	Technology and Innovation for Inclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Accessibility of party digital platforms. - Number of PWDs trained on digital political engagement. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Invest in assistive technology to enhance PWD political participation.

Framework for Tracking Achievements

S/N	Standard Area	Performance Indicators	Responsible Entities	Data Collection Methods	Reporting Frequency	Enforcement Mechanisms
1	Legal and Policy Framework	- % of political parties with disability inclusion in constitutions and policies.	INEC, NCPWD, Political Parties	Policy reviews, compliance reports	Annual	Sanctions for non-compliant parties, public accountability reports
2	Accessibility in Political Parties	- % of party offices and events meeting accessibility standards.	Political Parties, NCPWD INEC, Disability Groups	On-site accessibility audits, feedback from PWDs	Bi-annual	Revocation of party privileges for non-compliance
3	Representation and Participation	- % of leadership positions and candidates reserved for PWDs.	Political Parties, INEC	Party election reports, independent verification	Annual	Quotas and incentives for compliance
4	Capacity Building and Awareness	- Number of PWDs trained in leadership and advocacy.	Political Parties, INEC, NCPWD, NGOs, Disability Groups	Training attendance records, evaluation surveys	Quarterly	Withholding of party funds for non-compliance
5	Inclusive Campaign Strategies	- % of campaign materials and events that are accessible to PWDs.	Political Parties, INEC	Document reviews, event monitoring reports	During campaign periods	Mandatory accessibility certification for campaign approvals
6	Funding and Support Mechanisms	- % of party budgets allocated for PWD inclusion.	Political Parties, INEC, Donors	Financial audit reports, party expenditure reviews	Annual	Fines for parties failing to meet budgetary obligations
7	Monitoring, Evaluation, and Accountability	- Publication of annual disability inclusion report.	INEC, NCPWD, Political Parties	Independent reviews, media publications	Annual	Public reporting and name-and-shame mechanisms

8	National and State-Level Domestication	- Number of states that have adopted and implemented the Disability Act.	State Governments, NCPWD	Legal policy tracking, compliance assessments	Annual	Legal action against states failing to implement the Act
9	National Commission for Persons Disabilities' Compliance and Enforcement Mechanisms	- % of disability-related policies enforced by NCPWD.	NCPWD, Political Parties	Enforcement reports, stakeholder engagement	Annual	Budget cuts for non-compliance
10	Data Collection and Research	- Availability of centralized PWD participation data.	INEC, NCPWD, Research Institutions	Surveys, registration databases, party membership records	Annual	Mandatory data submission requirements
11	Disability Mainstreaming in Party Policies	- % of party policies explicitly addressing disability issues.	Political Parties, INEC	Policy document analysis, party manifesto reviews	Election cycle	Suspension of non-compliant party programs
12	Legal Assistance for PWD Candidates	- Number of legal aid desks established in political parties.	Political Parties, Legal Aid Organizations	Party reports, legal aid service records	Annual	Legal penalties for parties denying PWDs their rights
13	Youth and Women with Disabilities in Politics	- % increase in young and female PWD political participants.	Political Parties, Disability Organizations	Membership statistics, election participation reports	Every election cycle	Additional funding incentives for compliance
14	Technology and Innovation for Inclusion	- % of digital platforms meeting accessibility standards (WCAG).	Political Parties, INEC, Tech Companies	Digital accessibility audits, user feedback from PWDs	Annual	Mandating accessibility compliance for digital platforms



15	Security and Protection for PWD Politicians	- Number of reported and resolved cases of political violence against PWDs.	Law Enforcement Agencies, Political Parties	Incident reports, legal case reviews	Ongoing	Security provisions for PWD politicians, strict legal actions
16	International Best Practices and Collaboration	- Number of global partnerships on disability-inclusive governance.	Political Parties, Government Agencies	Participation records, signed MoUs with international bodies	Annual	Rewards for parties adopting best practices
17	Economic Empowerment for PWD Politicians	- % of PWDs benefiting from economic support programs.	Political Parties, Donors, Private Sector	Financial assistance records, employment statistics	Annual	Additional funding for parties meeting empowerment targets

Transitioning from Policies to Practices:

In Nigeria, translating policies into actionable practices is essential to ensure the effective inclusion of Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) in political parties. Party leadership must embed principles of inclusion, diversity, access, and equity into all party documents and coordination mechanisms, ensuring these values are reflected at both national and sub-national levels. Regular internal reviews are crucial to align policies and practices with these principles, fostering an environment that promotes the meaningful participation of PWDs and enriches the democratic process. Several countries offer exemplary models of integrating PWDs into political spaces:



Kenya: The constitution mandates the representation of PWDs in parliament and local government to ensure that their voices are part of the legislative process.



South Africa: Through its Electoral Act, the country mandates assistive voting mechanisms to enhance electoral accessibility for PWDs.



United States: The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requires full accessibility in electoral processes to safeguard the rights of PWDs to participate in elections.



India: Special voting arrangements, including home voting options, are provided to accommodate PWDs to ensure their electoral participation.



Brazil: The country enforces mandatory accessibility measures for all election-related processes to promote inclusive participation for PWDs.

Adopting global best practices and implementing concrete strategies will enhance the inclusion of persons with disabilities (PWDs) thereby strengthening Nigeria's democratic framework.



06






Recommendations

Political parties play a critical role in ensuring the inclusion, participation, and representation of Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) in Nigeria's political space. To ensure the effective implementation of the Minimum Standards for Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) in Nigeria's Political Space, stakeholders must adopt a multi-sectoral approach that guarantees full political participation and representation of PWDs. The following recommendations outline key actions to achieve this goal:

Political Parties:

- ◆ Review and amend party constitutions to explicitly recognise and guarantee the rights of PWDs to participate fully in all party activities.
- ◆ Include affirmative action provisions that ensure PWDs are represented in leadership positions and election candidacies.
- ◆ Include affirmative action provisions that ensure PWDs are represented in leadership positions and election candidacies.
- ◆ Create a Disability Affairs Office within party structures to address the concerns of PWD members.
- ◆ Reserve a percentage of executive positions within the party structure for PWDs.
- ◆ Work with organizations of persons with disabilities, partners to develop and lead appropriate disability-sensitive training for staff.
- ◆ Ensure that at least one PWD is represented at the National, State, and Local

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- ◇ Government levels of party leadership.
 - ◇ Waive or significantly reduce nomination fees for PWD aspirants to encourage their participation in elections.
 - ◇ Ensure fair and transparent primary election processes that do not discriminate against PWD aspirants.
 - ◇ Political parties should develop voter education materials in accessible formats to educate PWDs on their voting rights.
 - ◇ Conduct outreach programs targeting PWD communities to encourage political participation.
 - ◇ Organize regular capacity-building programs to educate PWDs on party policies, governance, and electoral processes.
 - ◇ Political parties should allocate a special fund to support PWD candidates in running for office.
 - ◇ Collaborate with National Commission for Persons with Disabilities (NCPWD), CSOs, and advocacy groups to strengthen disability inclusion strategies.
 - ◇ Engage with the National Assembly and State Legislatures to push for laws that enhance PWD representation in governance.
 - ◇ Support the full implementation of the Discrimination Against Persons with Disabilities (Prohibition) Act, 2018 and the Africa Protocol on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

The National Assembly



- ◇ The National Assembly should adopt Post-Legislative Scrutiny (PLS) as a formal mechanism to assess the implementation and impact of the Disability Act. This should involve periodic reviews of the law's enforcement, effectiveness, and areas requiring amendment to strengthen compliance. PLS should include public hearings, engagement with OPDs (Organizations of Persons with Disabilities), and oversight visits to ensure accessibility standards are being upheld.
- ◇ The National Assembly should further strengthen the legal framework governing the inclusion of Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) by amending and expanding legislation on the Discrimination Against Persons with Disabilities (Prohibition)

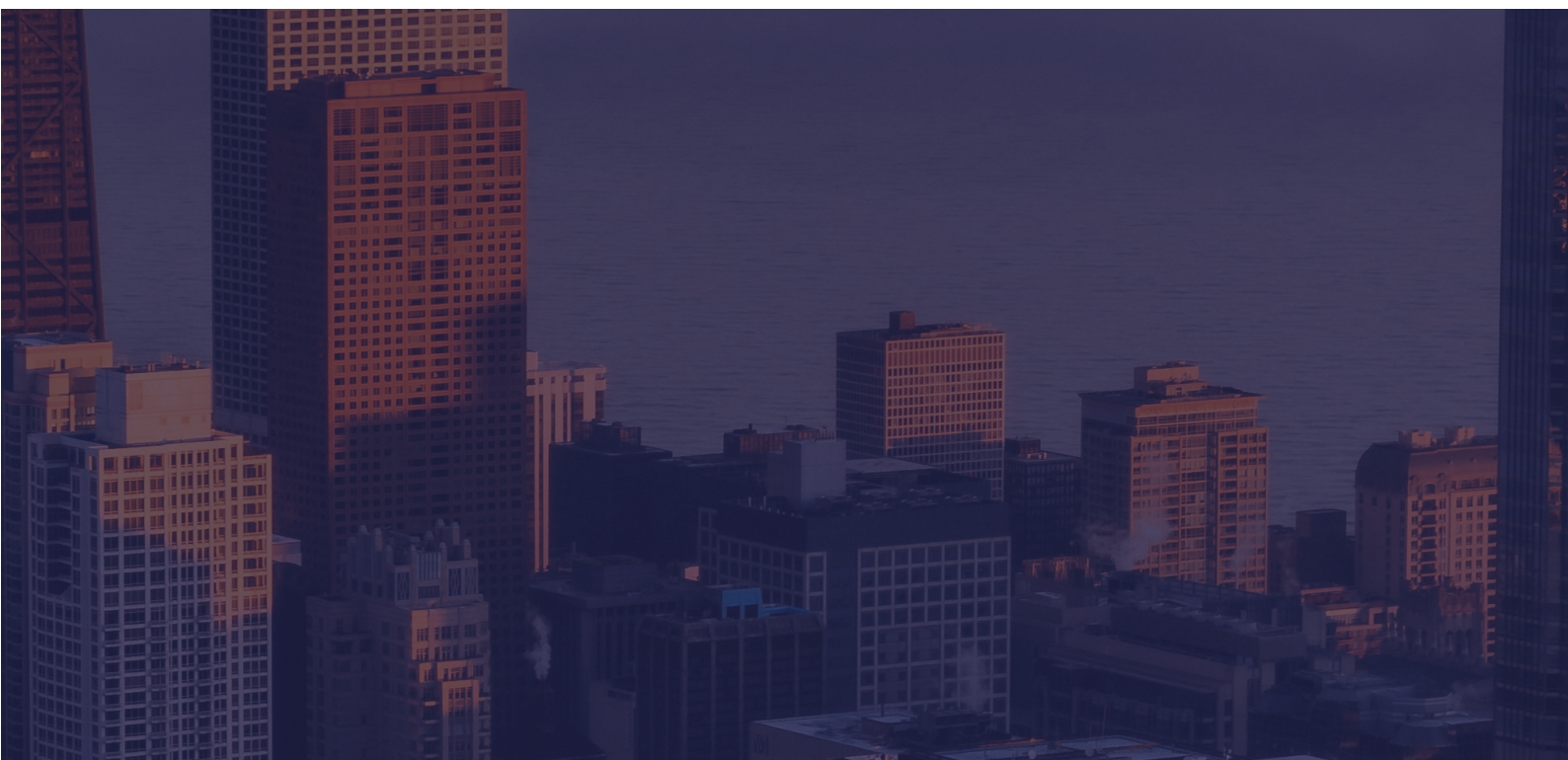


Act, 2018. This should include provisions that enhance the mandate of the National Commission for Persons with Disabilities (NCPWD). These provisions should establish clear enforcement mechanisms, mandate accessibility standards for electoral processes, and promote affirmative action policies to guarantee the full and effective participation of PWDs in governance.

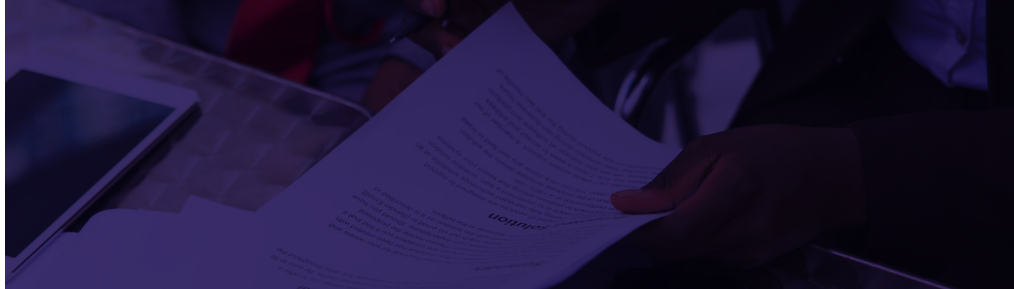
- ♦ New policies addressing disability inclusion should include sunset clauses to ensure they are periodically reviewed and revised based on emerging needs and effectiveness. This approach will prevent outdated provisions from hindering progress and promote continuous legislative adaptation to best practices. In addition, a sunset clause should be introduced to require states to adopt and implement the Act within a specified timeframe, after which intervention or sanctions could apply.
- ♦ There is a need for parliaments to review electoral legislation in order to identify and mitigate barriers to political participation for persons with disabilities. In particular, parliaments should examine legislation that restricts or prohibits political participation for persons with disabilities who have a court-appointed legal guardian or support person.
- ♦ The National Assembly should mandate political parties to adopt minimum standards for the inclusion of Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) in their structures, leadership, and decision-making processes. Regular oversight hearings should be conducted to assess political party compliance, and parties failing to meet inclusion benchmarks should face sanctions or funding restrictions.
- ♦ Legislators should work closely with the National Commission for Persons with Disabilities (NCPWD) to ensure full implementation and monitoring of the Act. House Committee on Disabilities should set up a mechanism to track progress and recommend necessary legislative actions

Conclusion

Political parties are central to Nigeria's democracy and must take the lead in ensuring the full political inclusion of PWDs. Political participation is the engine that powers democracy. The participation of PWDs from a multitude of backgrounds – young people, women, older people, men, ethnic minorities is essential for thriving, legitimate and representative democracies. As more PWDs from all backgrounds join political parties, engage with parliaments, run for elected office, and succeed in becoming political leaders and MPs, the more their voices and partnerships will lead the way into an inclusive, accessible and equitable tomorrow. Also, by adopting these recommendations, political parties can create a more inclusive, diverse, and representative political environment where PWDs can exercise their right to vote, contest for office, and participate in governance without barriers.



References



- » *National Disability Act (Nigeria, 2018) – A legal framework that guarantees the rights of Persons with Disabilities, including their right to participate in political and public life.*
- » *United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), 2006 – An international treaty promoting the full inclusion of PWDs in all aspects of society, including politics.*
- » *African Charter on Democracy, Elections, and Governance (2007) – A regional policy that emphasizes inclusive democratic participation for marginalized groups, including PWDs.*
- » *Electoral Guidelines on Disability Inclusion (INEC Nigeria, 2023) – Official guidelines from Nigeria's electoral commission outlining measures to enhance accessibility for PWDs in elections.*
- » *The 2013 Marrakesh Treaty led by The World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) and The World Blind Union (WBU) international campaigns.*
- » *Disability-Inclusive Political Participation Report (International Foundation for Electoral Systems, 2021) – A study highlighting best practices and challenges in increasing PWD participation in politics worldwide.*
- » *Political Participation and Equal Representation for Persons with Disabilities (UNDP, 2022)– A global review of disability-inclusive political systems and recommendations for policy reforms.*
- » *World Report on Disability (WHO & World Bank, 2011) – A comprehensive assessment of disability rights, including political participation, accessibility, and policy frameworks.*
- » *Global Disability Rights Now! (2020) – A resource hub that provides insights into global best practices for disability inclusion in governance and political institutions.*
- » *European Union Guidelines on Disability Rights (2019) – A framework adopted by the EU to promote the inclusion of PWDs in political and public decision-making.*
- » *Reports from National and International Disability Advocacy Organizations – Publications from organizations such as the Centre for Ability, Rehabilitation, and Empowerment (CARE), Disability Rights Fund (DRF), and Human Rights Watch on PWD participation in politics.*

Glossary



Accessibility: The design of products, devices, services, or environments to ensure they are usable by people with disabilities. This includes physical access (e.g., ramps, elevators) and digital access (e.g., websites compatible with screen readers).

Affirmative Action: Policies that support members of disadvantaged groups, including persons with disabilities, in areas like employment and education to promote equal opportunities.

Capacity Building: Activities aimed at strengthening the abilities of individuals or organizations, such as training programs for persons with disabilities to enhance their participation in political processes.

Disability: A physical, mental, intellectual, or sensory impairment that, in interaction with various barriers, may hinder full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.

Disability Inclusion: The practice of ensuring persons with disabilities have equal access to opportunities and resources, including political participation, employment, and education.

Disability Mainstreaming: The process of integrating disability perspectives into all aspects of organizational policies and practices to promote equality.

Equal Opportunity: The principle that all individuals, including those with disabilities, should have the same chances to participate in various aspects of life, such as employment and political activities.

Funding Mechanisms: Financial strategies or policies implemented by political parties to support the participation of persons with disabilities, such as allocating specific budget percentages to disability-related initiatives.

Inclusive Campaign Strategies: Approaches in political campaigning that ensure materials and events are accessible to all, including persons with disabilities, by providing resources like sign language interpreters and accessible venues.

Key Performance Indicators (KPIs): Measurable values used to evaluate the success of an organization or initiative in achieving objectives, such as the percentage of leadership positions held by persons with disabilities.

Legal Framework: The system of laws and regulations that govern the inclusion of persons with disabilities in political parties, ensuring their rights are protected and promoted.



Monitoring and Evaluation: Processes that assess the effectiveness of initiatives aimed at including persons with disabilities in political activities, ensuring accountability and continuous improvement.

National Commission for Persons with Disabilities (NCPWD): A governmental body responsible for promoting and protecting the rights of persons with disabilities, ensuring their inclusion in various sectors, including politics.

Persons with Disabilities (PWDs): Individuals who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual, or sensory impairments which, in interaction with various barriers, may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.

Representation: The presence and participation of persons with disabilities in decision-making roles within political parties, ensuring their perspectives and needs are considered.

Sensitization Programs: Initiatives aimed at raising awareness and understanding among political party members about disability issues, promoting inclusive attitudes and behaviors.

Universal Design: The concept of designing products, environments, programs, and services to be usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialized design.

Washington Group Questions: A set of standardized questions developed to identify persons with disabilities in surveys and censuses, facilitating data collection and analysis.

Westminster Foundation for Democracy (WFD) is the UK public body dedicated to supporting democracy around the world. Operating internationally, WFD works with parliaments, political parties, and civil society groups as well as on elections to help make political systems fairer, more inclusive and accountable.

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