



Disability Rights and Elections

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Module 1: Basic Definitions | Module 2: Legal Framework | Module 3: Electoral Cycle
Module 4: Accessible Voting | Module 5: Assistive Devices | Module 6: Voter Education | Module 7: Training Officials

Training Overview

- Duration: 2-3 hours with breaks
- Module 1 – Basic Definitions
- Module 2 – Legal Framework
- Module 3 – The Electoral Cycle
- Module 4 – Accessible Voting Processes

Break

- Module 5 – Assistive Devices
- Module 6 – Voter Education and Information
- Module 7 – Training of Election Officials
- Wrap-up and Discussion



Module 1
Basic Definitions for Elections and
Disability Rights

How does democracy make you feel?

Key Electoral Terms

- Electoral cycle: The full series of steps involved in preparation, implementation and evaluation of an election, including pre- and post-electoral activities
- Electoral Management Body (EMB): A national organization tasked with the responsibility for the conduct of elections
- Accessible: A site, facility, service or program that is easy to approach, enter, operate, participate in and/or use safely, independently, and with dignity by persons with disabilities
- Accessible formats: Print, audio, or visual information accessible to persons with disabilities – e.g., Braille, tactile, large print, sign language, easy-to-read
- Voter registration: The act of entering the names of eligible electors in a register or list of electors
- Secret ballot: A ballot in which votes are cast in secret – a fundamental principle



More Key Electoral Terms

- Inclusion: Persons with disabilities are involved in all electoral activities on an equal basis with other citizens, including leadership positions
- Twin-track approach: Mainstreaming disability throughout all activities and policies, while also providing targeted activities specifically for persons with disabilities
- Election observation: A process in which accredited observers access an electoral process to assess compliance with legal instruments and international standards
- Absentee ballot: Ballot cast by a voter unable to vote in person at the polling place on Election Day



What is Disability?

- The legal definition of disability varies from country to country, which can be problematic.
- Under the CRPD: persons with disabilities include those 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 (Article 1)
- Disability results from the interaction between a person's disability and societal barriers – not from the disability alone
- Types: physical, sensory (visual, auditory), intellectual, psychosocial
- Over 1 billion people globally live with some form of disability – approximately 15% of the world's population



Key Disability Terms

- Universal Design: Buildings, materials and processes designed to be accessible for persons with and without disabilities from their inception
- Reasonable accommodation: Provision of materials or environment that enables persons with disabilities to participate and contribute on an equal basis with others
- Mainstreaming: Process whereby persons with disabilities are integrated as equal participants and leaders in programs and society



Module 2

Legal Framework

**Do you know any laws that protect
people's right to participate in
democracy?**

International Human Rights Architecture

- Human rights are universal, inalienable, indivisible, and interdependent
- International human rights law creates obligations for states to respect, protect, and fulfil the rights of all persons
- Key instruments relevant to disability and elections operate at global, regional, and national levels
- Ratification of an international treaty creates binding legal obligations for the state
- Even where not ratified, international standards provide guidance for best practice
- Persons with disabilities are often inadequately covered by general human rights treaties – hence the need for the CRPD



Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR, 1948)

- Foundational document establishing rights for all human beings
- Article 2: Everyone is entitled to all rights without distinction of any kind
- Article 21: Everyone has the right to take part in the government of their country; the will of the people shall be the basis of the authority of government
- Article 21(3): The will of the people shall be expressed in periodic and genuine elections, by universal and equal suffrage, with secret vote
- The UDHR applies to all persons including persons with disabilities
- It provides a baseline that all states should meet



International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR, 1966)

- Legally binding treaty ratified by most states worldwide
- Article 25: Every citizen has the right and opportunity, without unreasonable restrictions, to vote and be elected in genuine periodic elections, by universal and equal suffrage
- Article 25 has been interpreted to require states to take positive measures to enable persons with disabilities to exercise their right to vote
- The UN Human Rights Committee oversees implementation
- Legal capacity restrictions on voting must be justified under Article 25
- States must ensure voting procedures, facilities and materials are appropriate and accessible



Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD, 2006)

- The primary international treaty protecting the rights of persons with disabilities
- Adopted by UN General Assembly in 2006; entered into force in 2008
- Ratified by over 180 states – one of the most widely ratified human rights treaties
- Guiding principles: dignity, autonomy, non-discrimination, full participation, accessibility, equality, and respect for difference
- Does NOT create new rights – it specifies how existing human rights apply to persons with disabilities
- Has an Optional Protocol allowing individuals to submit complaints to the CRPD Committee



CRPD: Article 29 – Political Participation

- States must ensure persons with disabilities can fully and effectively participate in political and public life on an equal basis with others
- Right to vote and be elected: voting procedures, facilities, and materials must be appropriate, accessible and easy to understand
- Right to vote by secret ballot without intimidation
- Right to stand for elections, hold office, and perform public functions at all levels of government
- Facilitating use of assistive and new technologies where appropriate
- Guaranteeing free expression of will as electors; allowing assistance in voting by a person of own choice if requested
- Promoting environment where persons with disabilities can participate in public affairs



CRPD: Other Relevant Articles

- Article 2: Defines reasonable accommodation – necessary and appropriate modifications not imposing disproportionate burden
- Article 5: Equality and non-discrimination – prohibition of discrimination on the basis of disability
- Article 9: Accessibility – states must take measures to ensure persons with disabilities access to the physical environment, transportation, information and communications
- Article 12: Equal recognition before the law – right to legal capacity on an equal basis; guardianship restrictions challenged
- Article 13: Access to justice – ensuring effective participation in legal proceedings
- Article 21: Freedom of expression and access to information in accessible formats



National Legal Frameworks

- States must translate international obligations into domestic law
- Constitutional provisions: Many constitutions guarantee the right to vote without discrimination
- Electoral laws: Should explicitly address accessibility, reasonable accommodation, and inclusion of persons with disabilities
- Disability laws: National disability legislation should align with CRPD standards
- Common gaps: Legal capacity restrictions, lack of specific accessibility requirements in electoral law, absence of penalties for non-compliance
- Best practice: Consult with OPDs in developing and reviewing electoral legislation
- Note: Ratification of the CRPD without domestic implementation is insufficient



Key Legal Concepts: Reasonable Accommodation

- CRPD Article 2 definition: Necessary and appropriate modifications and adjustments, not imposing disproportionate or undue burden, to ensure enjoyment of human rights on an equal basis
- Denial of reasonable accommodation constitutes discrimination
- Examples in elections: Accessible polling stations, tactile ballot guides, sign language interpretation, large print ballots, assistance by a person of voter's choice
- The test for 'disproportionate burden' considers cost, available resources, and the size of the organization
- EMBs have a legal obligation to provide reasonable accommodations
- Accommodations should be determined in consultation with persons with disabilities



Legal Capacity and the Right to Vote

- Historically, persons with intellectual or psychosocial disabilities were legally stripped of the right to vote
- CRPD Article 12 requires states to recognize that all persons with disabilities enjoy legal capacity on an equal basis
- CRPD Committee General Comment No. 1: All persons with disabilities have the right to vote regardless of their disability
- Many countries still restrict voting through guardianship laws, mental health laws, or judicial decisions
- These restrictions are incompatible with the CRPD
- Reform trend: Countries moving from substituted decision-making (guardianship) to supported decision-making
- EMBs should not remove voters from rolls based solely on disability or legal status



Module 3

The Electoral Cycle

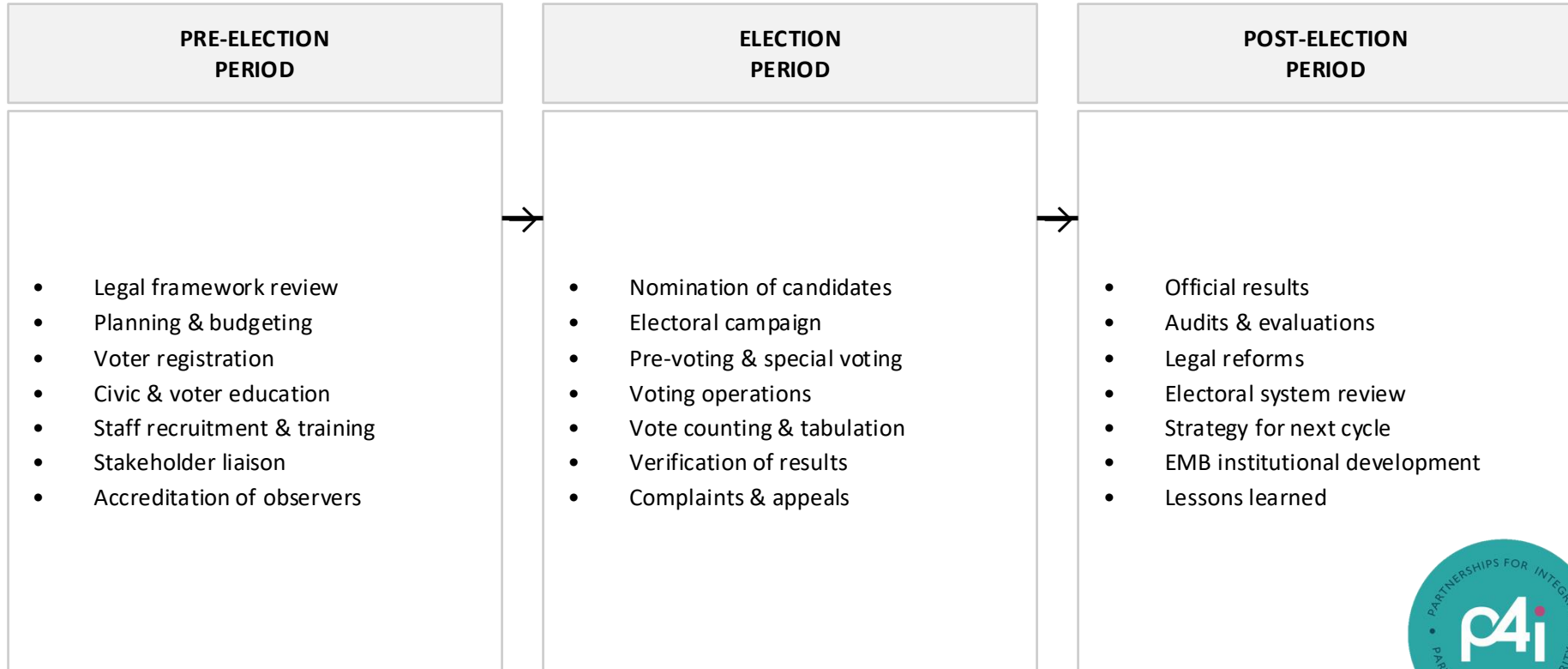
Why do elections matter?

What is the Electoral Cycle?

- Elections are not isolated events – they are part of a continuous cycle of activities
- The electoral cycle concept recognizes that election preparation begins long before election day and evaluation continues long after
- Three main phases: Pre-Election Period, Election Period, and Post-Election Period
- Each phase presents distinct opportunities for the inclusion of persons with disabilities
- Understanding the cycle helps advocates identify when and how to engage
- EMBs, civil society, DPOs, candidates, parties, media and voters all have roles throughout the cycle



The Main Three Phases of the Electoral Cycle



Pre-Election Period: Disability Inclusion Priorities

- Legal framework: Review and revise electoral law to comply with CRPD standards, including voting rights for all
- Voter registration: Select accessible registration sites; ensure all persons with disabilities have access to ID documents needed for registration
- Planning: Budget for reasonable accommodations; include disability in operational planning
- Voter education: Develop civic and voter education materials in accessible formats (Braille, easy-to-read, sign language, audio)
- Training: Train election officials on disability inclusion; include disability in poll worker manuals
- Polling station design: Select and design accessible polling station locations well in advance
- Accreditation: Accredit observers with disabilities; involve DPOs in stakeholder liaison



Election Period: Disability Inclusion Priorities

- Campaigns: Political parties and candidates should conduct campaigns in accessible formats; recruit candidates with disabilities
- Pre-voting: Develop policies for advance voting and mobile ballot boxes as alternative voting methods
- Election Day logistics: Priority queuing for persons with disabilities; accessible polling station layout
- Voting: Procure and deploy assistive devices (tactile ballot guides, magnifying glasses, large-grip pens)
- Counting: Ensure vote count procedures are accessible and can accommodate observers with disabilities
- Complaints: Ensure complaints adjudication process is accessible to persons with disabilities
- Security: Sensitize security forces to the rights and needs of voters with disabilities



Post-Election Period: Disability Inclusion Priorities

- Results: Announce and communicate results in accessible formats
- Evaluations and audits: Include specific questions on election access in post-election reviews
- OPD engagement: Involve OPDs in lessons-learned processes and evaluations
- Legal reform: Propose revisions to election law to address identified gaps in accessibility
- EMB website: Make EMB website and digital resources accessible to persons with disabilities
- Relationship building: Develop ongoing relationship between EMBs and OPDs between election cycles
- Planning: Use lessons learned to improve planning and budgeting for the next electoral cycle



Module 4

Accessible Voting Processes

**Agree or Disagree:
Candidates with disabilities should
be able to run for office.**

**Agree or Disagree:
Elections don't need to be accessible
because it is too expensive.**

Agree or Disagree:

A polling station only needs to be accessible if election officials know a persons with a disability is voting there.

Principles of Accessible Voting

- Universal: Every eligible voter has the right to participate in elections
- Independent: Voters with disabilities should be able to vote without requiring assistance unless they choose to have it
- Secret: All voters, including those with disabilities, must be able to cast a secret ballot
- Dignified: Voting processes should not demean or stigmatize voters with disabilities
- Equal: Voters with disabilities should have equivalent, not lesser, access to the voting process
- These principles are grounded in CRPD Article 29 and broader human rights standards

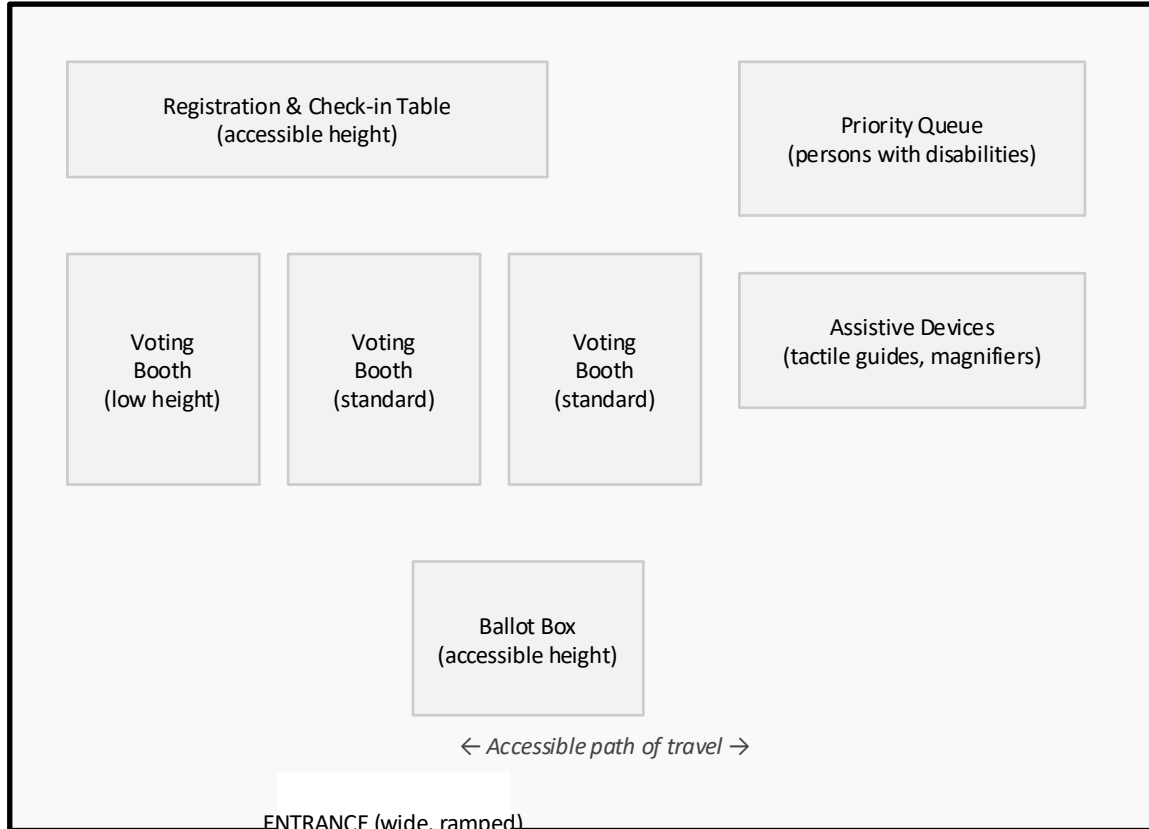


Physical Accessibility: Polling Station Requirements

- Location: Accessible route from public transport and parking; level or ramped entrance
- Entrance: Wide doorway (minimum 90cm) accommodating wheelchairs; no raised thresholds
- Interior: Sufficient space for wheelchair users to maneuver throughout the polling station
- Voter registration table: Accessible height for wheelchair users
- Voting booth: Low enough to be used by persons in wheelchairs; sufficient space inside
- Ballot box: At accessible height for wheelchair users
- Signage: Clear, large print, and pictographic signs throughout the polling station
- Priority queuing: Designated priority access for voters with disabilities, elderly voters



Accessible Polling Station Layout



Key Accessibility Features

- Wide entrance (min. 90cm)
- Ramp or level access
- Wheelchair-accessible booth
- Accessible ballot box height
- Priority queuing
- Good lighting throughout
- Clear large-print signage
- Accessible registration table
- Space for wheelchair maneuvering
- Assistive devices available





Is this accessible?

Ukraine



Is this accessible?

Nepal





Is this accessible?

Guyana

Physical Accessibility: Common Barriers and Solutions

- Barrier: Steps or raised thresholds at entrance → Solution: Install ramp or select ground-floor venue with level access
- Barrier: Narrow doorways → Solution: Select venues with wide doors; use portable ramps where possible
- Barrier: High registration or ballot box → Solution: Provide adjustable or lower alternative; ensure accessible-height stations
- Barrier: Cluttered polling station layout → Solution: Pre-survey and map polling station; ensure clear pathways for wheelchair users
- Barrier: Poor lighting → Solution: Ensure adequate lighting, particularly in voting booths, for voters with low vision
- Barrier: Long queues → Solution: Priority access for voters with disabilities, elderly voters, pregnant women
- Best practice: Conduct pre-election accessibility surveys of all polling station venues



Information Accessibility: Ballots and Materials

- Ballots: Provide in large print, and with tactile ballot guides
- Sample ballots: Distribute in accessible formats before election day so voters can familiarize themselves
- Instructions: Provide voting instructions in multiple accessible formats at each polling station
- Audio: Audio recordings or audio ballot devices for voters who are blind or have low vision
- Easy-to-read: Simplified materials for voters with intellectual disabilities
- Sign language: Sign language interpreters or video materials for Deaf voters
- Multiple languages: In multilingual contexts, ensure accessibility in all relevant languages



Alternative Voting Methods

- Advance voting: Allow voters with disabilities to vote before election day at accessible venues
- Mobile ballot boxes: Officials bring ballot to voter's home for those who cannot travel to polls
- Important note: Mobile options should complement – not replace – accessible polling stations
- Postal voting: May be appropriate in some contexts but raises concerns about secrecy of the ballot
- Electronic voting: Can improve accessibility for some disability groups if designed accessibly
- Supported voting: Voter may request assistance from a person of their own choice (CRPD Article 29)
- These options should be determined in consultation with persons with disabilities



Assistance for Voters with Disabilities

- CRPD Article 29: Where necessary, at a voter's request, a person of their own choice may assist in voting
- Key principle: The choice of assistant must be the voter's – not assigned by election officials
- The voter must retain autonomy; the assistant should follow the voter's expressed wishes
- Risks: Coercion, family members overriding voter's choice, manipulation
- Safeguards: Train poll workers to speak directly to voters with disabilities; observe for signs of coercion
- Train poll workers to provide neutral assistance as an option when *requested*
- Do not assume all voters with a particular disability need assistance – ask first



Module 5
Assistive Devices: Examples and
Global Practice

What Are Assistive Devices in Elections?

- Assistive devices are tools that enable voters with disabilities to cast their ballot independently and secretly
- They are a form of reasonable accommodation required under the CRPD
- Key types: Tactile ballot guides, magnifying glasses, large-grip pens, audio ballot devices, electronic voting machines with accessibility features
- Devices should be developed or procured in consultation with OPDs and tested with users with disabilities
- Availability of assistive devices should be communicated to voters in advance
- Poll workers must be trained on the use of each device and how to offer it without imposing



**Can you name any assistive devices
or methods that can be used to make
sure people with disabilities can vote
independently?**

Definitions: Assistive Tools

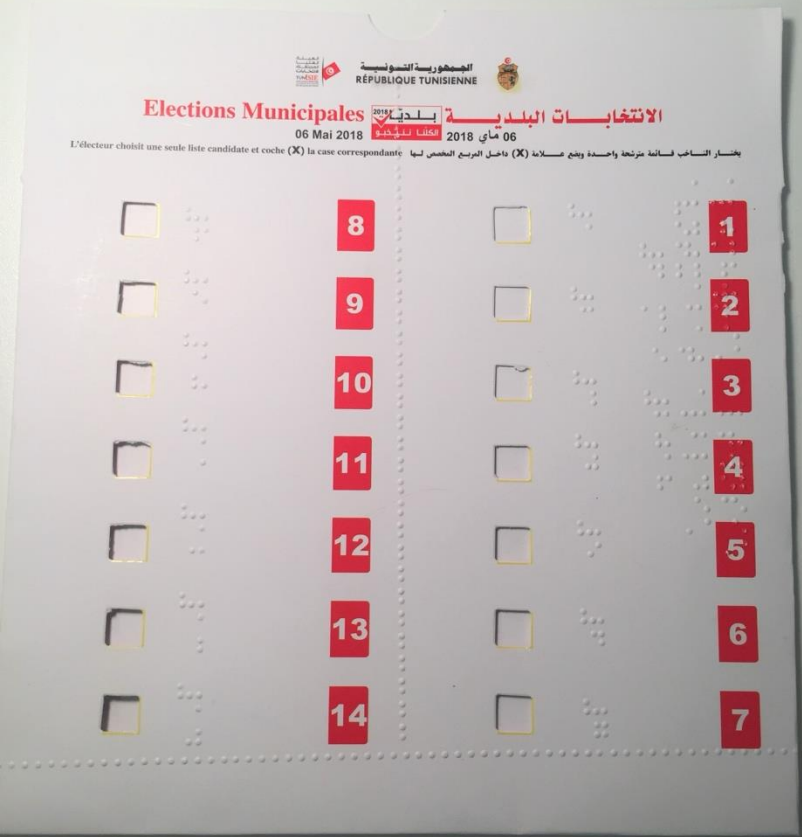
- Assistive tool: A device that aids completion of a task that might otherwise be difficult or impossible
- Tactile ballot guide: Paper or plastic sleeves with Braille or tactile symbols in which ballots are placed; allows voters who are blind or have low vision to vote independently and secretly
- Braille: A writing system comprised of raised dots used by persons who are blind or have low vision
- Tactile: Raised symbols used where persons may not be fluent in Braille
- Easy-to-read: Text where content, language, illustrations and layout are simplified for ease of use by persons with intellectual disabilities
- Electronic voting: Any method of voting using electronic means including machines, the Internet, telephones, or digital television



Tactile Ballot Guides: Overview

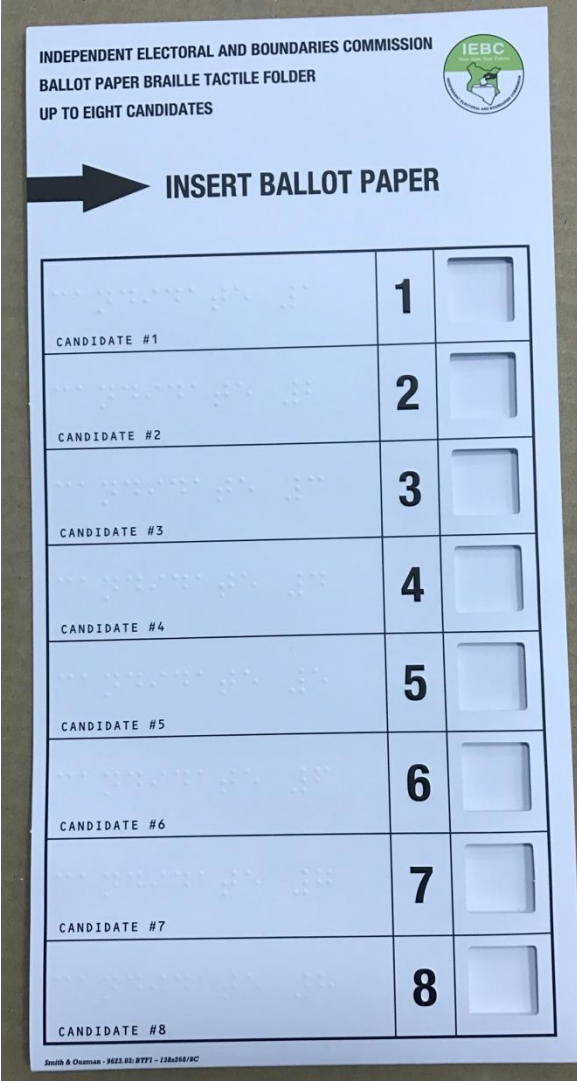
- Most widely used assistive device for voting globally
- Paper or plastic sleeve with Braille or tactile symbols that fits over the ballot
- Allows voters who are blind or have low vision to independently identify and mark their choice
- Once the sleeve is removed, the ballot is identical to any other – preserving secrecy
- Must be developed for each specific election as ballots change
- Must be tested with blind and low-vision voters before deployment
- Should be available at every polling station, not just on request




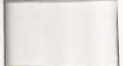

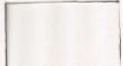

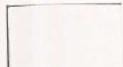

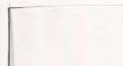

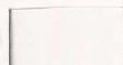

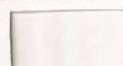



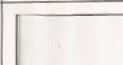

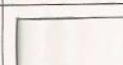

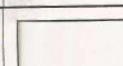


Tactile Ballot
Guide in
Tunisia
←

Tactile Ballot
Guide in
Kenya. →



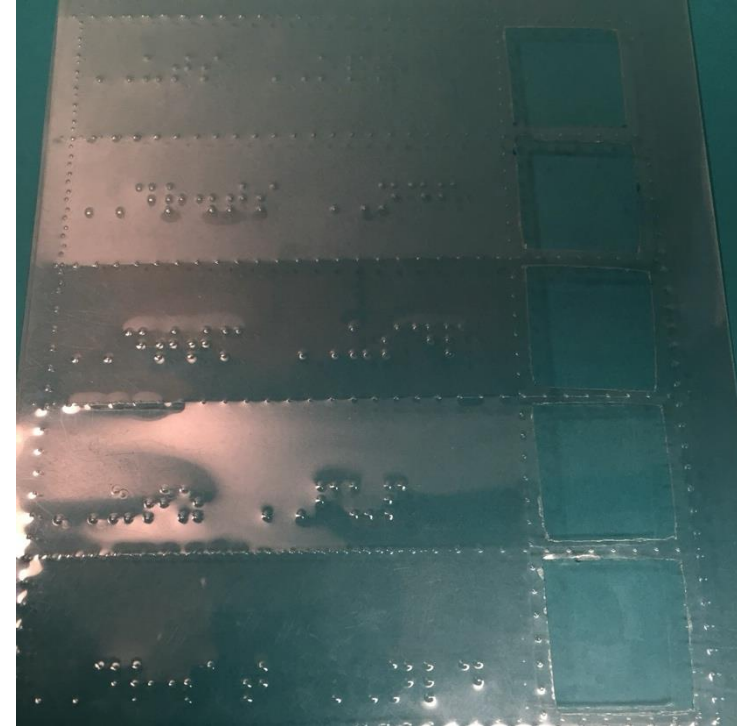
REPUBLIC OF SIERRA LEONE
PARLIAMENTARY ELECTION 2002
TACTILE BALLOT GUIDE
WEST-EAST DISTRICT

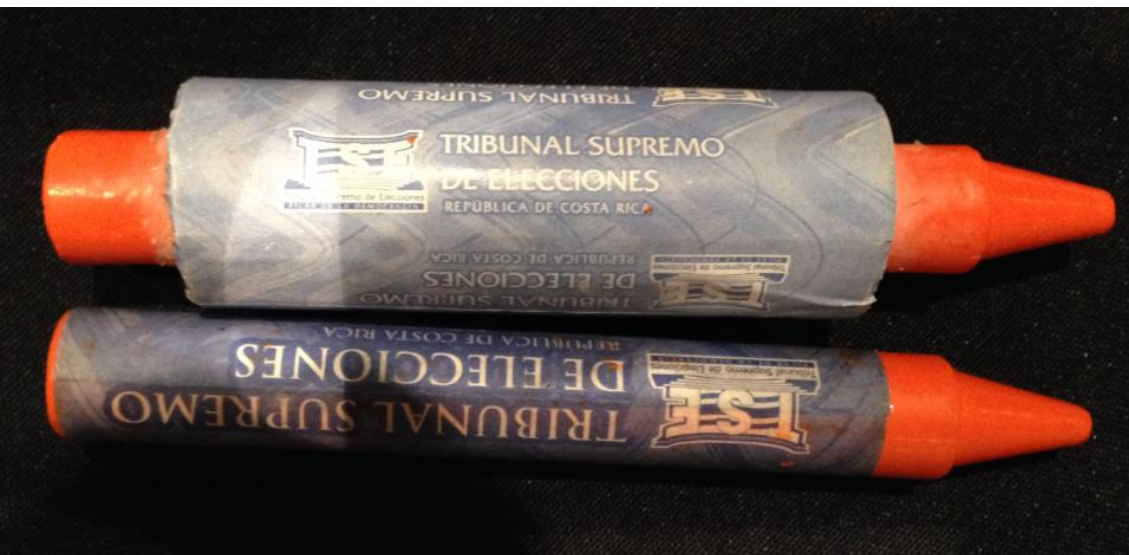
SYMBOL AND NAME OF PARTY	THUMB PRINT
 APC	
 GAP	
 MOP	
 NDA	
 PDP	
 PLP	
 RUFF	
 SLPP	
 UNPP	
 YPP	

Tactile Ballot
Guide in Sierra
Leone



Tactile Ballot Guide
in Myanmar 2025





Wide grip pen in Costa Rica



Magnifying sheet →



Other Assistive Devices: Overview

- Magnifying glasses: Low-cost device to help voters with low vision read the ballot; used in many countries
- Large-grip pens: Thick-grip pens that are easier for voters with limited dexterity to hold and use for marking
- Large-print ballots: Standard ballot printed in larger font; useful for voters with low vision
- Audio ballot devices: Electronic devices that read ballot options aloud; voter selects using buttons or keypad
- Accessible voting machines: Electronic voting machines with audio headphones, adjustable screens, Braille keypads
- Good practice: Always maintain a manual backup option in case electronic devices fail



Assistive Devices: Procurement and Deployment

- Procurement: Involve OPDs in designing and testing devices before procurement
- Quantity: Procure sufficient devices for all polling stations – avoid a single device shared across a region
- Distribution: Ensure devices are distributed to all polling stations, not just urban or high-profile ones
- Backup: Have spare devices at regional centers in case of damage or loss
- Training: Train all poll workers on each device; ensure they know how to offer devices appropriately
- Communication: Inform voters in advance which devices will be available
- Cost: Tactile ballot guides are typically low-cost; budget should be included in EMB operational budget



Voter Communication About Assistive Devices

- Voters need to know what devices are available before they go to the polls
- Include information about assistive devices in all voter education campaigns
- Use accessible formats: audio, Braille, sign language video, easy-to-read
- Partner with OPDs to distribute information about devices through disability community networks
- Sample ballots and guides should be available in accessible format so voters can practice
- Polling station signage should indicate that assistive devices are available
- Train poll workers to proactively but non-imposingly offer devices to voters who may need them



Module 6

Voter Education and Information

**What are some of the ways voters
get information about elections?**

Why Voter Education Matters for Persons with Disabilities

- Persons with disabilities are frequently excluded from voter education campaigns
- Lack of information is a major barrier to political participation – even where polling stations are accessible
- Many persons with disabilities have historically been told they cannot or should not vote
- Voter education must actively reach and include persons with disabilities, not just be 'available'
- Partnerships with OPDs are essential for effective outreach to disability communities
- Voter education for persons with disabilities should cover: right to vote, how to register, how to vote, available accommodations, complaints mechanisms



बिजया
कन्फेन्स हल
गल्फरिया, बर्दिया
फोन : ७८६-४००१९४



म त भोट गर्छु
अनि तपाईं ?
2017
#myvoteismychoice

म भोट गर्नु किराँती
संविधानको आधारभूत अधिकार हो।
संविधानको प्रारम्भिक भागमा उल्लेख गरिएको छ।

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संविधानको प्रारम्भिक भागमा उल्लेख गरिएको छ।

**MYVOTE
MYVOICE**

MY VOICE

Ukraine VE with QR Code and Video

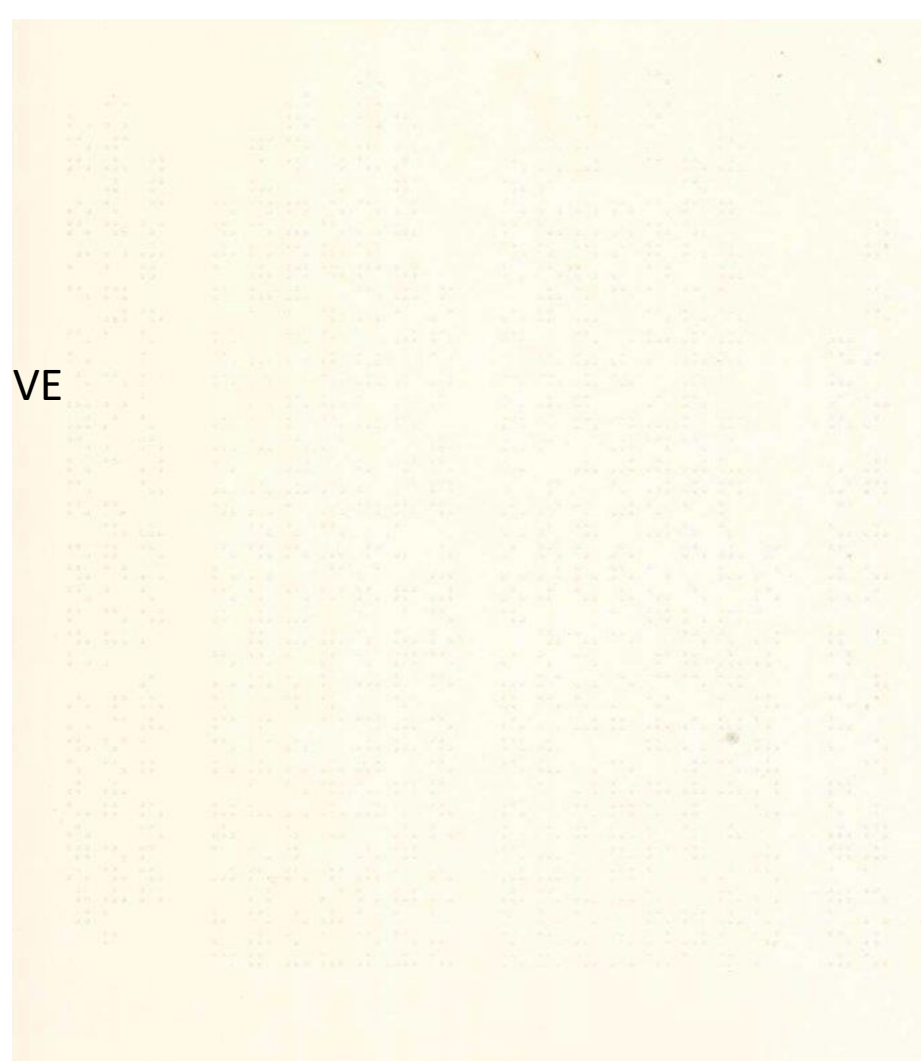




Kenya VE



Nepal Tactile VE



Show Video
Examples

What Inaccessible Voter Education Looks Like

- Text-only materials with no visual or audio alternatives
- Videos without sign language interpretation or captions
- Materials written in complex, formal language inaccessible to persons with intellectual disabilities
- Voter education events held at inaccessible venues
- Campaign materials that feature no persons with disabilities, implying voting is not for them
- Brochures only available in print – no Braille, audio, or digital alternatives
- Outreach conducted only through mainstream media – not through disability community channels
- Assuming persons with disabilities are represented by family members or caregivers



Principles of Accessible Voter Education

- Universal reach: Materials and activities should be designed for accessibility from the outset, not adapted after the fact
- Multiple formats: Same content in Braille, large print, audio, sign language video, easy-to-read, and plain language
- Inclusive imagery: Materials should feature persons with disabilities as active voters and citizens
- Plain language: Use clear, simple language that is accessible to all readers, including persons with intellectual disabilities
- Community channels: Distribute through DPOs, disability organizations, residential facilities, and community networks
- Participatory: Develop materials with input from persons with disabilities through DPOs
- Twin-track: Mainstream disability in general voter education AND develop targeted materials for specific groups



Easy-to-Read Materials: Key Principles

- Easy-to-read (ETR) materials are designed primarily for persons with intellectual disabilities but benefit all readers
- Use short sentences – one idea per sentence
- Use common, everyday words; avoid jargon and technical terms
- Use active voice: 'You can vote' not 'Voting is permitted'
- Use images (photographs or simple illustrations) to support text
- Left-align text; do not justify
- Use adequate font size (minimum 14pt) and high contrast
- Have the material reviewed and tested by persons with intellectual disabilities before publication
- Structure: Tell readers what they are going to learn; give the information; summarize



Sign Language and Deaf Voter Education

- Deaf and hard-of-hearing voters are often overlooked in voter education
- Sign language is a full, independent language – not a visual form of written language
- All video voter education materials should include sign language interpretation
- Develop dedicated voter education videos in sign language
- Ensure sign language interpretation is available at public voter education events
- Broadcast voter education programming on television with sign language interpretation
- Partner with Deaf organizations to develop and disseminate materials
- Caption all video content – both for deaf voters and for noisy environments



Digital and Online Voter Education

- EMB websites should comply with Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG 2.1 AA minimum)
- Provide voter information in audio formats for download
- Ensure online voter registration is accessible to screen readers
- Use social media platforms but ensure accessibility: describe images, caption videos, provide text alternatives
- Mobile-based voter education can reach rural areas and persons with mobility disabilities
- Online sample ballots allow voters to practice before election day
- Caution: Digital access itself is a barrier – digital voter education must not replace other formats



Discussion: How Accessible Is Your Voter Education?

- Review your current voter education materials against these questions:
- Are materials available in Braille, large print, audio, and sign language video?
- Are materials written in plain language that is accessible to persons with intellectual disabilities?
- Do materials feature persons with disabilities as active, capable voters?
- Are voter education events held at accessible venues?
- Are OPDs involved in developing and distributing materials?
- Is information about reasonable accommodations included in general voter education?
- Activity: Identify three improvements you could make to your voter education programme



Module 7

Training of Election Officials

Why is it important to train election officials on disability rights?

Why Train Election Officials on Disability Inclusion?

- Poll workers are the frontline interface between voters and the electoral process
- Attitudes and behaviors of poll workers can either enable or deny participation by voters with disabilities
- Lack of training leads to: denying voters their right to vote, patronizing or demeaning treatment, failure to offer available assistive devices
- Training builds knowledge, skills and positive attitudes
- Disability inclusion must be integrated throughout election official training – not treated as an add-on
- Training should be developed in consultation with DPOs and persons with disabilities
- Training should be delivered using accessible methods



Core Competencies for Election Officials

- Legal framework: Understanding of CRPD Article 29 and national law on the right of all persons to vote
- Disability awareness: Basic knowledge of different types of disabilities; use of respectful, non-patronizing language
- Assistive devices: How to use each device available at the polling station; how to offer devices appropriately
- Voter assistance: How to provide neutral assistance when requested; ensuring voter's own choice is respected
- Physical accessibility: Understanding what makes a polling station accessible; how to address common barriers
- Communication: How to communicate with voters with different disabilities; use of clear, simple instructions
- Problem-solving: How to handle accessibility complaints on election day; knowing who to escalate to



Best Practices in Election Official Training

- Integrate disability inclusion throughout all election official training, not just a single module
- Use experiential learning: simulations, role plays, and exercises rather than lecture-only approaches
- Involve persons with disabilities as trainers or co-facilitators
- Use accessible training materials and accessible training venues
- Include practical demonstrations of all assistive devices available at polling stations
- Use case studies and scenarios to help officials problem-solve in realistic situations
- Test knowledge and skills after training, not just at the end of the program
- Follow up with refresher training for officials who will be deployed



How to Talk with Voters with Disabilities: Key Guidelines

- Always speak directly to the voter, not to a companion or assistant
- Do not assume a voter needs assistance – ask first
- Use respectful language: 'person with a disability' or 'voter who uses a wheelchair' (person-first language)
- Get to eye level when speaking to a wheelchair user
- For voters who are Deaf, speak clearly and face the voter; do not shout
- For voters with intellectual disabilities, use simple, clear language; check understanding
- Respect a voter's decision, including their choice of assistant
- If you do not know how to help, ask the voter how you can assist



Handling Accessibility Issues on Election Day

- Polling station accessibility problem (e.g., ramp missing): Contact supervisor immediately; do not turn voter away – provide alternative access if possible
- Assistive device not working: Have backup; contact district officer for replacement
- Voter requests assistance: Ask voter who they want to assist them; do not assign a poll worker without asking
- Voter accompanied by a person who appears to be influencing their vote: Speak directly to the voter alone; report to supervisor
- Observer with a disability denied access: Ensure observers with disabilities have same access as others
- Voter turned away elsewhere due to inaccessibility: Document the complaint and escalate; provide priority access
- Key principle: Never turn away an eligible voter because of a disability



Monitoring and Accountability

- Include disability-specific questions in election observation checklists
- Checklist items: Was the polling station physically accessible? Were assistive devices available? Were poll workers trained? Were voters with disabilities treated respectfully?
- Involve DPOs in election observation: Accredite DPO members as observers
- Post-election surveys: Collect data from voters with disabilities on their experience
- Report findings: Include disability access findings in all post-election reports
- Accountability: EMBs should establish clear processes for receiving and responding to accessibility complaints
- Feedback loop: Share findings with election officials to improve future training



Wrap-Up

Key Takeaways and Discussion

Summary: Key Principles

- Disability rights are human rights – the right to vote belongs to all eligible persons without exception
- The CRPD is the foundational framework: Article 29 specifically protects political participation rights
- The electoral cycle provides multiple entry points for disability inclusion – not just on election day
- Accessibility requires proactive planning – physical, informational and procedural
- Assistive devices enable independent, secret voting for voters with sensory disabilities
- Accessible voter education must reach persons with disabilities through appropriate formats and channels
- Training election officials is essential: attitudes and behaviors matter as much as facilities
- Nothing about us without us: involve persons with disabilities in all aspects of electoral planning



Questions

Thank You

*Disability rights are human rights.
Inclusive elections are credible elections.*
