

Disability-inclusive elections in Africa:

a qualitative systematic review

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Sightsavers

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Authors

Bhavisha Virendrakumar, Emma Jolley, Eric Badu, Rachel Murphy, Elena Schmidt

Acronyms

Acronym	Description
AACODS	Authority, Accuracy, Coverage, Objectivity, Date, Significance
BVR	Biometric voter registration
CASP	Critical Appraisal Support programme
CSO	Civil society organizations
CODEO	Coalition of Domestic Election Observers
DA	District Assembly
DIFID	Department for International Development
DPO	Disabled people's organisation
DRC	Democratic Republic of the Congo
EC	Electoral Commission
EISA	Electoral Institute for Sustainable Democracy in Africa
EPPSP	Electoral and Political Processes Strengthening Program
FAQ	Frequently asked questions
GAB	Ghana Association of the Blind
GESP	Ghana Electoral Support Programme
GFD	Ghana Federation of the Disabled
ID	Identification
IFES	International Foundation for Electoral Systems
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
NDB	National Disability Board
NEC	National Electoral Commission
NDI	National Institute for International Affairs
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
SADC	The Southern African Development Community
STAR	Strengthening Transparency, Accountability and Responsiveness in Ghana
UN	United Nations
Voice Ghana	Voice of People with Disability Ghana

Abstract

Introduction

The right to vote is critical to democracy and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) underscores the equal right of people with disabilities to participate in political life. Yet, in many low income countries, including those in Africa, people with disabilities are often unable to cast their vote or stand for political election in their local institutions. They are therefore excluded from political and social engagement and cannot fully exercise and enjoy their guaranteed rights.

Aim

This systematic review aimed to identify, appraise and synthesise all available evidence to understand:

1. what experiences and practices have already taken place in African countries to support political participation of people with disabilities and;
2. what effect they have had on the political inclusion of people with disabilities at local and national levels across the continent.

Methods

We searched relevant electronic databases and websites of service providers and donor organisations working in this field. We also contacted authors and organisations for relevant reports, and reviewed reference lists of included documents. Sources containing empirical primary data (written in English, French and Portuguese, primarily or substantively focusing on the political participation of people with disabilities in Africa, and published from 2006 onwards) were included in the review. Titles and abstracts were reviewed by one author against the predefined inclusion criteria. Two authors independently extracted data and assessed the quality of the documents meeting the inclusion criteria. The data extraction and appraisal forms were developed by the authors.

Results

In total, 54 documents were included in the review. Nine documents focused on the global level; the remaining ones were country-specific with the majority of documents providing information on Ghana and Nigeria. Overall, the documents identified were diverse in their design, scope and content. The findings show that although most African countries ratified important disability-focused legislation and proclaimed equal opportunities, the implementation of the legislation varies greatly, and the practices are not homogenous across the continent. Political participation challenges experienced by people with disabilities can occur at any stage, including pre-electoral, electoral and post-electoral processes, and can be broadly categorised into three groups:

1. lack of education and financial resources;
2. stigma and negative social attitudes and;
3. inaccessible physical infrastructure.

The majority of the documents included information on strategies to support inclusive electoral and political processes. However, the impact of these on political participation of people with disabilities remains unclear. The majority of the sources were descriptive in nature; and although they suggested that a number of countries in Africa and their international partners are working towards removing barriers to political participation of people with disabilities, the theory of change underpinning these strategies was generally poorly articulated and the effect of the tested interventions was not reported in any quantifiable way. In addition, the included documents were mainly grey literature, such as observation reports, case studies, press releases, dissertations and manuals, and as such these were attributed low confidence and high risk of bias. It is therefore unclear whether the findings reported are a reasonable representation of the phenomenon of interest.

Conclusion

Limitations of the literature included in this review suggest that activities aiming at increased political participation of people with disabilities in Africa are poorly documented. Most of the sources identified were of low quality, and it is impossible to draw any definitive inferences on which interventions work, where and for whom. This systematic review identifies an urgent need for high quality impact evaluations and research to assess the existing and newly proposed policies and programmes on political inclusion of people with disabilities in Africa.

Introduction

Voting is a fundamental aspect of the democratic process. This provides individuals with a voice to influence decisions that affect their lives. However, people with disabilities have often been discriminated against in this regard. In response to the historical exclusion of people with disabilities from social and political processes, the United Nations (UN) General Assembly adopted the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) in December 2006¹. The CRPD report is an international human rights treaty, which promotes, protects, and ensures the full enjoyment of human rights by persons with disabilities. The UNCRPD was a landmark document for the UN; it was the first comprehensive human rights treaty of the 21st century, which 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 laws². The UNCRPD is the guiding international standard in disability inclusion. As mentioned in Article 1, the rights described in the Convention apply to everyone with a disability, including “those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments.” Article 29 of the treaty focuses on participation in political and public life. It calls on States to “ensure that persons with disabilities can effectively and fully participate in political and public life on an equal basis with others, directly or through freely chosen

representatives, including the right and opportunity for persons with disabilities to vote and be elected”^{1,3}. Article 12 focuses on legal capacity, an issue that often affects the right to vote of persons with intellectual or psychological disabilities. It calls to ensure that “persons with disabilities have the right to recognition everywhere as persons before the law,” they “enjoy legal capacity on an equal basis with others” and they have support in exercising these rights. In the context of elections and political processes, this means election laws should be void of provisions that restrict the right to vote of persons under guardianship, and if a voter requires support, he or she should be provided assistance.

Aligned with the UNCRPD, the African Charter on democracy, elections and governance (established in 2007) specifies that State Parties “shall eliminate all forms of discrimination and shall adopt legislative and administrative measures to guarantee the rights of people with disabilities and other marginalised groups” (Article 8). Additionally, The Southern African Development Community (SADC) principles and guidelines governing democratic elections (2004) state that SADC member states shall adhere to full participation of citizens in the political process; and they are responsible for encouraging participation of people with disabilities in all aspects of the electoral process in accordance with the national laws.

In response to the systematic exclusion and discrimination of people with disabilities in electoral and political processes, and in line with its empowerment and inclusion strategic framework (published in 2015), Sightsavers is keen to start a programme to promote the political participation of people with disabilities in sub-Saharan Africa through inclusive elections. Sightsavers' empowerment and inclusion strategy⁴ states:

“The right to vote is critical to democracy and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Person with Disabilities (UNCRPD) underscores the equal right of people with disabilities to participate in political life. Yet, in many countries people with visual impairment, for example, are not able to cast their vote independently because the mechanisms are not inclusive. Sightsavers will consolidate our learning from experiences in Africa as well as that of other Actors. Then, building on best practice we will work with electoral commissions and partners to ensure that future national, district and local elections are inclusive of people with disabilities.”

In order to understand the best way to approach this work, this systematic review aims to identify, appraise and combine all available evidence to understand (a) what experiences and practices have already taken place in Africa and (b) what effect they have had on the participation of people with disabilities in political life at local and national levels across the continent.

The questions we sought to answer are:

1. What laws and policies exist in countries in Africa to ensure the participation of people with disabilities in national, district and local elections?
2. What are the barriers and enablers of participation of people with disabilities in national, district and local elections in Africa?
3. What approaches and interventions have been employed in Africa to increase the participation of people with disabilities in national, district and local elections?
4. What impact has been measured on the participation of people with disabilities in national, district and local elections in Africa as a result of the identified interventions?

Methods

Search strategies

We searched for peer-reviewed literature from electronic databases including EBSCO, Ovid, Web of Science (core module), Science Direct, ProQuest, IDEA, ELDIS, African Portal, The Campbell Collaboration and EPPI Centre, drawing on thesaurus and non-thesaurus words as appropriate (Appendix 1). In addition, we supplemented this data with grey literature through a search of the electoral commission (EC) websites, service providers and donor organisations working on related issues. We also contacted authors and organisations, including ECs such as the African Union, The European Union External Action and Disabled Peoples' International for relevant reports (Appendix 2). Additionally, as part of the search strategy we also reviewed reference lists of included reports.

Sifting and selection

Titles and abstracts were reviewed by one author against the predefined inclusion criteria. Documents containing empirical primary data written in English, French and Portuguese, primarily or substantively focusing on the political participation of people with disabilities in Africa, were included. In this systematic review, Africa Region is defined as 54 countries of the African continent from Eastern Africa, Middle Africa, Northern Africa, Southern Africa and Western Africa. Documents published from 2006 onwards were included as this is when the UNCRPD was signed, and when most governments undertook to improve the political participation of their citizens with disabilities. Reports written in languages other than English, French or Portuguese, those that were not focused on disability inclusive elections, those that were from outside Africa, and those published before 2006, were excluded. Searching and screening was undertaken in March 2016.

Data extraction and quality assessment

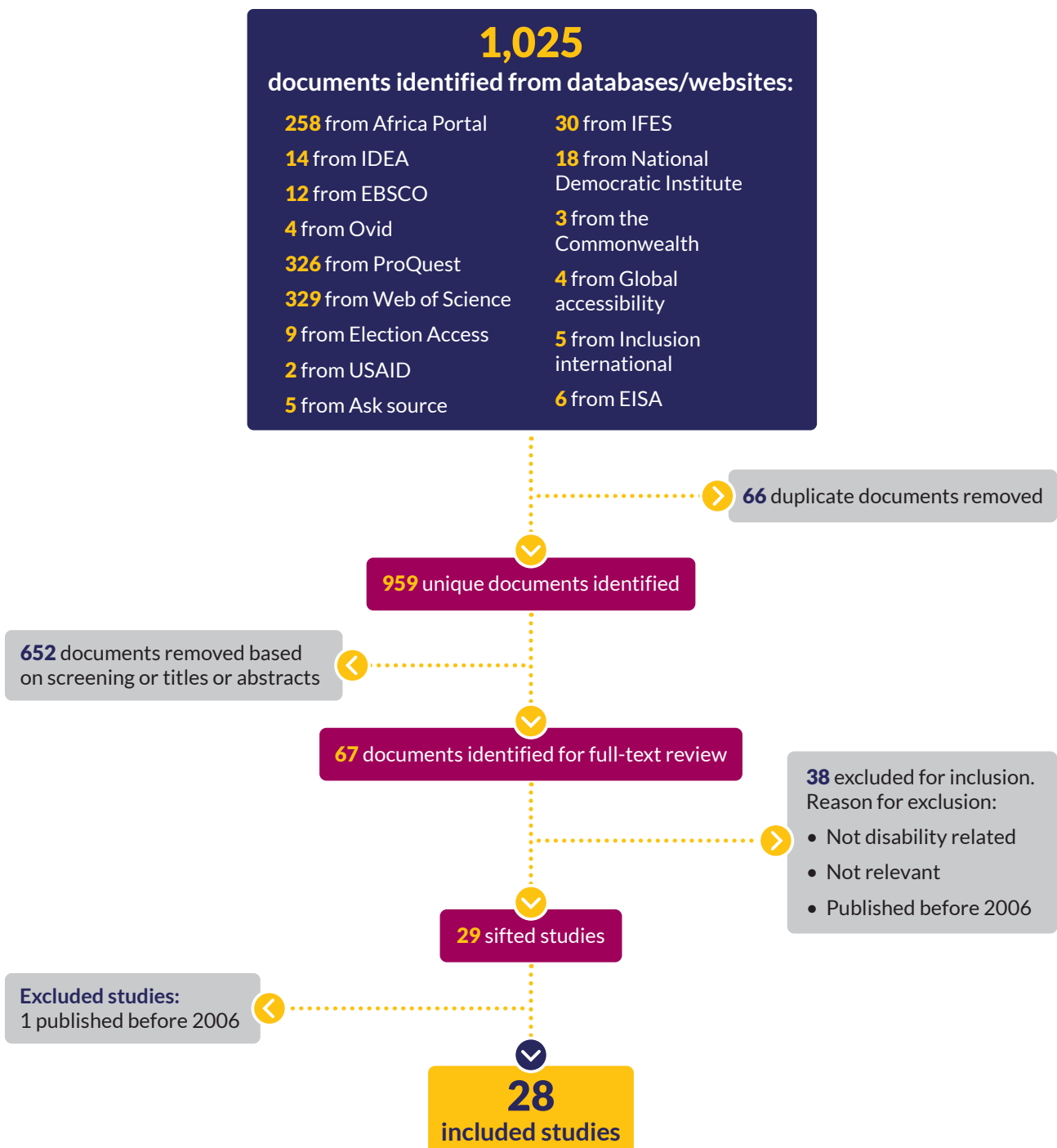
Two authors independently extracted data and assessed the quality of the documents meeting the inclusion criteria. The data extraction and appraisal form was developed by the authors (appendix 3). The data extraction form was organised in a qualitative manner according to the research questions. The appraisal checklist developed was based on three validated tools: the CERQual approach, Critical Appraisal Skills Programme (CASP) tool and Authority, Accuracy, Coverage, Objectivity, Date, Significance (AACODS) tool. Quality assessment of each study was based on the following criteria: reliability, accuracy, methods, relevance and coherence. A study was attributed 'high confidence' if authors reported details for all the criteria mentioned above and therefore **it is highly likely** that the review finding is a reasonable representation of the phenomenon of interest. 'Moderate confidence' was attributed if the authors 'partially' reported the methods used to conduct the study, if the findings were applicable to the context specified within the study and if the authors discussed how findings compared and contrasted to other research findings from other studies in the same field, therefore **it is likely** that the review finding is a reasonable representation of the phenomenon of interest. 'Low confidence' was attributed to a study if the authors did not report most of the criteria noted above, implying that **it is not clear** whether study findings are a reasonable representation of the phenomenon of interest. It should be noted that all legal documents included were not critically appraised.

Results

Search results

We retrieved 54 unique documents that met our inclusion criteria. Of these, 28 documents were identified through databases (figure 1), 24 documents were identified through the review of references, and two were sent by a member of the National Democratic Institute (NDI).

Figure 1: Documents identified through database search (conducted Mar 2016) shown in a flow chart indicating the database search results.



Characteristics of documents identified

Documents identified were diverse. Nine papers identified consisted of legal documents; the majority of documents reported on frequently asked questions (FAQs) produced prior to elections; and the remaining documents reported on different aspects of the participation of people with disabilities in electoral and political processes (eg electronic voting, registration). All documents (excluding legal documents) were attributed low confidence as it was not

clear whether the findings reported in each document were a reasonable representation of the phenomenon of interest, as described above. In addition, the documents did not provide information on the methods used to conduct the study, it was not clear if the findings were applicable to the context specified within the study, and the study did not discuss how findings compared and contrasted to other research findings from other studies in the same field (table 1).

Table 1: Characteristics of documents included in the review

Thematic Area	Title	Country	Confidence
FAQ documents produced prior to elections	Elections in Sierra Leone FAQ	Sierra Leone	Low
	Elections in Tanzania FAQ	Tanzania	Low
	Elections in Ghana FAQ	Ghana	Low
	Elections in Zimbabwe FAQ	Zimbabwe	Low
	Elections in Guinea FAQ	Guinea	Low
	Elections in Kenya FAQ	Kenya	Low
	Elections in Mali FAQ	Mali	Low
	Elections in Nigeria FAQ	Nigeria	Low
	Elections in Liberia FAQ	Liberia	Low
	Elections in Burundi FAQ	Burundi	Low
	Elections in Cote D'Ivoire FAQ	Cote D'Ivoire	Low
Policy and/or Legislation on the participation of people with disabilities in political life	The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the Optional Protocol	Global	Not applicable
	Compendium of International Standards for Elections	Global	Not applicable
	Abridgement of Public Elections Act 2012	Sierra Leone	Low
	Summary of Persons with Disabilities Act 2010	Tanzania	Not applicable
	CRPD compliance note: Kenya – A country-level review of compliance with CRPD Article 29	Kenya	Low
	Communication policy/strategy for INEC	Nigeria	Low

Thematic Area	Title	Country	Confidence
Policy and/or Legislation on the participation of people with disabilities in political life	Mauritania thematic study on participation in political and public life by people with disabilities	Mauritania	Low
	My voice matters! Plain-language guide on inclusive civic engagement :a guide for people with intellectual disabilities on the right to vote and have a say on the laws and policies in their country	Lebanon, Kenya and Zanzibar	Low
	Response: Burkina Faso thematic study on participation in political and public life by people with disabilities	Burkina Faso	Not applicable
	Response: Mauritius thematic study on participation in political and public life by people with disabilities	Mauritius	Not applicable
	Response: Niger thematic study on participation in political and public life by people with disabilities	Niger	Not applicable
	Response: Zimbabwe thematic study on participation in political and public life by people with disabilities	Zimbabwe	Not applicable
Election observation focusing on in-country practices and approaches	EISA Technical assessment team and election observer mission report: Liberia	Liberia	Low
	Nigeria presidential and national assembly elections	Nigeria	Low
	EISA observer mission report: Democratic Republic of the Congo	Democratic Republic of the Congo	Low
Electoral manual on how to include people with disabilities in elections and political process	Equal access: How to include persons with disabilities in elections and political process	Global	Low
	Election agent's manual	Kenya	Low
Press release drawing on individual experiences	As it happened: South Africa election	South Africa	Low
	Updated: Sierra Leone's peaceful election is another step forward	Sierra Leone	Low
	De-registration of 28 political parties	Nigeria	Low
Context analysis on the disability situation in Ghana	Contextual analysis of the disability situation in Ghana	Ghana	Low

Thematic Area	Title	Country	Confidence
Election evaluation looking at the electoral and political processes	Evaluation of the Ghana electoral support programme	Ghana	Low
	Liberia elections and political processes programme evaluation	Liberia	Low
Dissertation analysing the political role of people with disabilities	Electoral participation as a fundamental political right of persons with disabilities in Ethiopia: critical examination of the law and the practice.	Ethiopia	Low
Media code coverage report documenting the responsibility of media organisations towards people with disabilities	The Nigerian media code of election coverage	Nigeria	Low
Position/concept papers to understand the level of inclusion and participation of people with disabilities in electoral processes	Inclusive civic engagement: an information toolkit for families and people with intellectual disabilities	Global	Low
	Position paper establishing baseline for people with disabilities' inclusion and participation in the electoral processes in the Agortime-Ziofe and Adaklu districts	Ghana	Low
	Uganda's disability journey: Progress and challenges	Uganda	Low
Case studies promoting knowledge through the realities and lessons learned from different countries	Accessing the ballot box: inclusive civic engagement for people with intellectual disabilities – an information toolkit for governments	Kenya and Tanzania (Zanzibar)	Low
	Improving electoral practices: case studies and practical approaches	Global	Low
Peer-reviewed papers analysing disability and political participation	Disability and political participation in Ghana: an alternative perspective	Ghana	Low
	Facilitating an Equal Right to Vote for Persons with Disabilities	South Africa	Low

Thematic Area	Title	Country	Confidence
Reporting on different aspects on the participation of people with disabilities in elections such as electronic-voting and registration systems;	Introducing electronic voting: essential considerations	Global	Low
	Voter registration in Africa: a comparative analysis	Africa	Low
	Mainstreaming persons with disabilities	Kenya and Mali	Low
	Desk review report on participation of people with disabilities	Nigeria	Low
	Deepening democracy: A strategy for improving the integrity of elections worldwide	Global	Low
	Strengthening transparency, accountability and responsiveness in Ghana: election call roundtable discussion (summary report)	Ghana	Low
	Thematic study by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on participation in political and public life by persons with disabilities	Global	Not applicable
	Reponse du gouvernement sur la mise en oeuvre et l'application de la resolution 16/15 du conseil des droits de l'homme relative aux droits des personnes handicapees	Cameroon	Not applicable
	Accessing the ballot box: inclusive civic engagement for people with intellectual disabilities – an information toolkit for governments	Global	Low
	Election 2012 situation room report	Ghana	Low

30 documents contained information on strategies to support inclusive electoral and political processes, and 20 documents identified focused on legislation and policy to allow participation of people with disabilities in national, district or local elections. 14 reports detailed barriers faced by people with disabilities in electoral and political processes, and only five reports included information on approaches and interventions that have been employed to increase the participation of people with disabilities in electoral procedures. Most of the data contained within the documents was descriptive, with little (if any) data on the impact of interventions on the participation of people with disabilities in elections.

Nine documents identified focused on a global level. We found more information on Ghana (eight documents) and Nigeria (seven documents) than other countries. Five documents included information from Kenya; three reports each focused on Sierra Leone, Liberia and Tanzania; two documents each focused on Zimbabwe, South Africa, and Mali; and one each reported information from the Africa region without a specific country focus: Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Mauritius, Mauritania, Cote D'Ivoire, Ethiopia and Uganda. One document focused on several countries including Kenya and Zanzibar in Africa. Global focused documents explored practices/approaches on how to support people with disabilities to access electoral and political processes. Additionally, these analysed compliance and relevant provisions of the UNCRPD and international standards in assessing the conduct of elections.

For Ghana, identified documents mostly analysed the context within which people with disabilities strive for political inclusion into the local government system, and examined the factors impeding the participation of people with disabilities in local politics. Other documents described experiences of people with disabilities in accessing electoral and political processes and electoral support programmes.

For Nigeria, documents consisted of an election observation report, a review on electoral and political processes and practices, legal and policy frameworks, a communication policy/strategy providing guidance on standards for commissioning purposes, a news release describing adaptations in place for people with disabilities, and a media code of coverage reporting the responsibilities of media organisations towards people with disabilities.

For Kenya, included documents analysed UNCRPD compliance, provided insight on NDI's work to promote the political participation of people with disabilities, and described individual experiences in accessing political life.

A press release from Sierra Leone reported observations made by the regional director on election day and its aftermath. Additionally, the legislation document sifted for inclusion in the review included information on the political and electoral processes and procedures.

Legislation documents identified for Tanzania included information on the rights of people with disabilities. For Zimbabwe, Nigeria, Mauritius and Burkina Faso there were government reports responding to UN enquiries including relevant information on policy and legislation. Documented frequently asked questions described the political processes and procedures that people with disabilities should follow on the day of the election focusing on Sierra Leone, Tanzania, Ghana, Zimbabwe, Guinea, Kenya, Mali, Nigeria, Liberia, Burundi and Cote D'Ivoire. For the African continent as a whole, the identified document provided an overview of various voter registration systems used. For Ethiopia, we identified a thesis addressing the extent of the exclusion/inclusion of people with disabilities in the political arena. For Uganda, the document identified reported on the country's disability election journey, specifically on progress and challenges.

Three observation reports were identified for Liberia, Nigeria and DRC. For Liberia, this consisted of a final evaluation report on the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) Electoral and Political Processes Strengthening Program (EPPSP). For Nigeria, this consisted of an observation of the Presidential and National Assembly elections. For DRC, the document outlined the Electoral Institute for Sustainable Democracy in Africa (EISA) election observer mission's assessment, findings and analysis of the electoral process in the first and second round presidential elections, as well as elections for national and provincial assemblies.

National legislation

Sierra Leone

In Sierra Leone, the Abridgement Act 2010 states that where a voter is physically disabled, he/she will be allowed to be accompanied by another voter of his/her choice, especially in the case where a voter is blind. The person accompanying the physically disabled person will ensure that he/she follows the will of the person with disability and must keep it a secret. The Act also states that people with disabilities should be given preferential treatment to go to the front of queues at polling stations⁶.

Tanzania

In Tanzania, the Persons with Disability Act 2010, Article 51 states that every person with a disability who is aged 18 years and above is entitled to enjoy and exercise political rights and opportunities as any other citizen without any form of discrimination; and have the right to vote, hold public office, and otherwise participate in the political rights and opportunities. The Responsible Minister shall ensure that these rights and opportunities for people with disabilities are guaranteed by certifying: a) that voting materials, facilities and polling stations are accessible; b) training is provided for poll workers on the rights of people with disabilities and the practical means; c) that people with disabilities are encouraged to stand for elections; d) free expression of will and that voting is assisted by a person of their own choice; and e) setting up criteria and procedures to be applied in appointing qualified people with disabilities to be elected or to be appointed to represent them^{7,8}.

Kenya

The Constitution of Kenya, Article 38, states that every citizen has the right to be involved in any political matter. The Persons with Disabilities Act 2003, section 29, specifies that people with disabilities have the right to vote and may have a personal assistant whose duty it is to follow their instructions in voting in civic, parliamentary and presidential elections.

Despite these provisions, Article 83 (b) of the Constitution, the Election Act of 2011 which regulates the national elections, and the Local Government Act of 2010 which regulates local elections, state that a person of “unsound mind” may not vote. Additionally, Article 99 (e) of the Constitution of Kenya also states that a person of “unsound mind” may not be elected as a member of parliament. The terms “unsound mind”, “mental infirmity” and “mental capacity”, despite their use in several provisions, are not defined anywhere in the law and may be used to restrict people with intellectual disabilities from political and civic participation.

The Constitution also indicates that if the President becomes mentally or physically incapacitated, they may be removed from office. In the same instance, the National Land Commission Acts 2012 states that the Secretary of the Commission may be removed from office. Additionally, the Commission for the Implementation of the Constitution Act 2010 states that the Chair or a member may be removed from office if they have a physical or mental infirmity. As such, these provisions exclude people with intellectual disabilities from being eligible to fill one of the dedicated representative positions for persons with disabilities. These laws potentially contradict Article 29 of the UNCRPD⁹.

In Kenya, a first-past-the-post system is used to translate votes into seats, and 12 seats are reserved for marginalised groups. In the National Assembly, the allocation of the seats is, in principle, meant to give historically underrepresented groups (including people with disabilities) a voice in the political system. In the Senate, two seats are reserved for members to represent people with disabilities¹⁰.

Burkina Faso

In Burkina Faso, legislation protects and promotes the rights of all its citizens, including people with disabilities. Burkina Faso adopted most international and regional instruments related to human rights. On the national level, there are several legislative texts and rules related to the rights of people with disabilities. Under article 40 of law #012-2010/AN, it is noted that every person with a disability has the same civil and political rights including the right to vote and stand for office, unless they fall in to the category legally declared as "incapacitated". Under the same law, it is noted that equipment and electoral material must be appropriate and accessible to people with disabilities. In the case where they cannot express themselves autonomously, they're allowed the assistance of a person of their choice or a member of the electoral office to cast their vote¹¹.

Niger

In Niger, legislation does not restrict people with disabilities from voting or being elected. Legislation provisions note that states should support the elimination of all forms of discrimination, and support the equality of opportunities for people with disabilities. Authors noted that no specific measure is taken to ensure their political participation by the government –there are no quotas (whereas there is a 5 per cent quota for jobs that should be filled by people with disabilities, although this is not always respected)¹².

Zimbabwe

In Zimbabwe, the Constitution includes disability in the non-discriminatory clauses. The government enacted the Disabled Persons' Act in 1992. To fulfill the provision of self-representation for people with disabilities, a National Disability Board (NDB) was established after the Disabled Persons' Act¹³.

Mauritania

Mauritania's 1991 Constitution guarantees the protection of human rights to everyone. In particular, it guarantees the right to equality, the freedoms and fundamental rights of humans, property rights, political and union rights, economic and social rights, and family rights. Article 6 of the 2006-043 ordinance notes that the State must take appropriate measures to allow people with disabilities to access and benefit from society. Article 13 of the same ordinance notes that the State accords the designation of Public Utility to Disabled People's Organisations (DPOs). Under the same law, Article 11, the importance of having actively involved DPOs in decision-making processes on behalf of people with disabilities is recognised¹⁴.

Other Countries

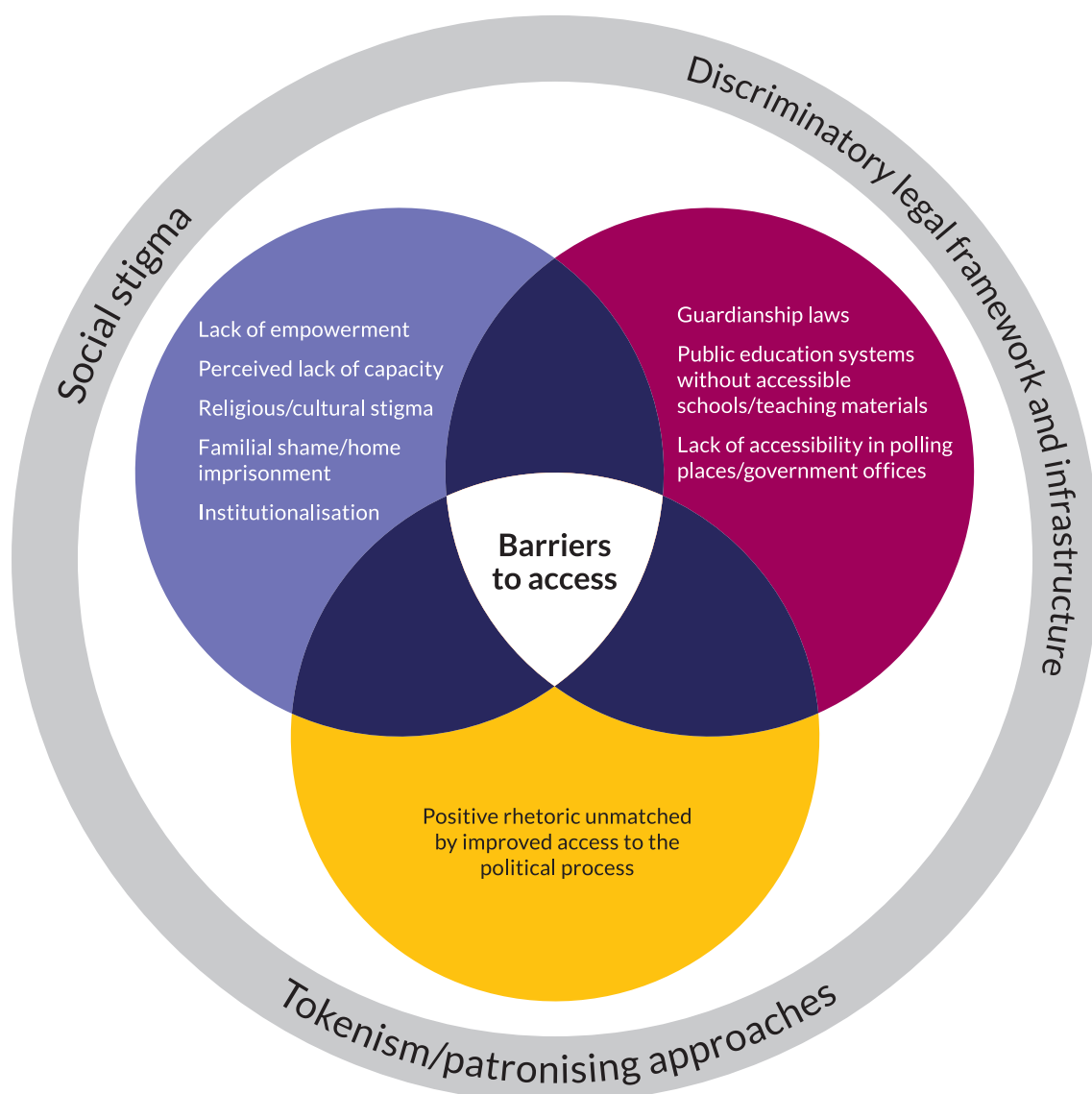
Legislation in countries such as Guinea, Mali, Nigeria, Ghana, Liberia, Burundi, DRC and Cote D'Ivoire allows voters with disabilities to request the assistance of a family member or a friend to cast their vote. In Nigeria, the Independent National Electoral Commission's procedures allow people with disabilities to jump the queue in polling units when voting or registering to vote. Nigeria's communication policy recognises the need to communicate with people with disabilities in a targeted manner¹⁵. The Burundian Electoral Code 2014 recognises that all Burundian citizens aged 18 or older are eligible voters. However, some individuals are deemed ineligible to vote due to criminal history, mental illness or other extenuating circumstances^{16,17}. In Uganda, the 1997 Local Government Act recognises the representation of people with disabilities in all the local government levels for both males and females. Additionally, the Act recognises the importance of the use of sign language for people with hearing impairments. In Cameroon, legislation supports protection and advancement of people with disabilities and the State encourages them in different aspects of social and political life¹⁸. Although no specific legislation documents were identified for Mauritius, it has been noted on a document that there are no restrictions on people with disabilities to vote or stand for office¹⁹.

Overall, provisions to enable the participation of people with disabilities in elections were identified for 15 African counties. The documents proclaim equal opportunities for people with disabilities to elect and be elected and refer to specific provisions, mainly personal assistance prioritisation at the polling stations.

Question 2: Barriers faced by people with disability in accessing political participation

In this section we aimed to identify barriers encountered by people with disabilities in accessing political participation in different settings in Africa. Very few studies examined the levels of participation of people with disabilities in politics. A small scale study among 120 participants in two districts in Ghana found that 58 per cent of people with disabilities showed an interest in serving in the Unit Committees in their electoral areas; however only four per cent actually contested and won the Unit Committee elections in 2006. About 36 per cent of participants were interested to become an electoral commission registration officer or polling assistant; however only four per cent did serve as an assistant in both 2006 and 2010 district assembly (DA) elections.

Figure 3: A Venn diagram identifying the barriers encountered by people with disabilities (Source: Equal Access Manual)



Most literature agrees that the barriers undermining participation of people with disabilities in political processes are multi-dimensional and multi-factorial. The International Foundation for Electoral (IFES) systems developed a framework that captures the inter-connection among three dimensions leading to exclusion: societal stigma, discriminatory legal frameworks

and infrastructure, and positive rhetoric unsupported by political action (tokenism) (figure 3)³.

Literature also suggests that barriers to political participation may vary by the stage of the election cycle and distinguishes between pre-election, election and post-election barriers³.

Barriers at different stages of the election cycle

Pre-electoral period

The pre-electoral period focuses on the preparation of an election which should, ideally, support for an accessible election³.

Specific challenges people with disabilities face at this stage:

- Pre-election technical assessments that do not address election access issues
- Discriminatory election law
- EMB budgetary resources not allocated for reasonable accommodations
- Inaccessible polling centres selected
- Poll workers not trained on administering the vote to people with disabilities
- Difficulties in securing a national Identification (ID) card
- Voter registration conducted in inaccessible locations
- Voter education and information on political party platforms/candidates not distributed in accessible formats
- People with disabilities not included as observers
- A lack of DPO experience in advocacy for political rights

Electoral period

The electoral period consists of much more than just voting: other major events include observation, campaigns, and announcing election results³.

Potential barriers faced by people with disabilities:

- Observers not monitoring access issues
- Political parties failing to address issues important to voters with disabilities, or recruit candidates with disabilities
- Party manifestos that are not in accessible formats
- Inaccessible polling stations
- Security forces not sensitised on how to provide a safe environment for voters with disabilities
- Media outlets failing to disseminate information in accessible formats
- An inaccessible complaints adjudication process

Post-electoral period

The post-election period gives stakeholders a chance to assess the implementation of the election³.

Potential barriers faced by people with disabilities:

- Not being involved in the 'lessons learned' process
- DPOs not being familiar with electoral rights
- Civic education that does not address the rights of persons with disabilities and is not distributed in accessible formats
- Selection criteria for election commissioners that is not disability-inclusive

Country-specific examples reported in the literature

Barriers identified in country-specific literature included in this review were broadly grouped into the following categories: lack of education and financial resources, stigma and negative social attitudes, and inaccessible physical infrastructure^{20, 21, 22, 23, 24}.

Lack of education and financial resources

Available evidence generally suggests that educated people participate in politics more than those who have not accessed education (25). The relationship between disability and education has been reported in many studies (20-23). Therefore it is not surprising that in this review, lower levels of education among people with disabilities were found to be an important barrier to their political engagement. For example, a study from Ghana reported that many people with disabilities dropped out of school and were functionally illiterate, which impacted on their awareness of their rights and their willingness to participate in politics²⁵.

The same study from Ghana argued that political campaigns were very expensive. Significant resources were required for mobilisation campaigns, which included television and radio advertisements, printing of banners and flyers, and organising meetings. It was argued that many people with disabilities could not meet such costs. As a result 90 per cent of study participants considered the lack of financial resources to be a major challenge obstructing their participation in local politics²⁵.

Stigma and negative social attitudes

Social attitudes were also thought to be strongly associated with political participation. For example, over 95 per cent of people with disabilities in the study in Ghana reported that stigma against people with disabilities played a major role in their political marginalisation. It was explained that the negative attitudes towards disability are often rooted in cultural and social norms, where physical and sensory impairments are often associated with punishment from God. In many Ghanaian communities, for instance, people with disabilities were not allowed to become chiefs, even if they were part of the social elite. Those who did dare to contest in political elections were often mocked, and in some cases people with disabilities were treated unfairly in the election process. As a result, many people with disabilities were discouraged from engaging in politics, even if they were educated, aspired to contest and had resources to finance their election campaign. Only a few isolated cases managed to win district assembly elections^{24, 25}.

Physical accessibility of registration and electoral points

Voter registration is one of the most important prerequisites for the participation of people with disabilities in elections. If voters are not registered or their disability status is not known, they may face accessibility challenges on the day of the election or not being able to vote at all³.

A number of papers discussed physical accessibility of registration points and polling stations across Africa. In DRC, election observers reported access to the registration centres as problematic due to the poor status of the local roads and the voters' need to travel to their nearest centres, which in some cases was as far as 20 kilometres to the nearest centre.

In Ghana and Malawi, all voters were required to appear and register in person, but there were no registration provisions in place for people with physical or sensory disabilities. In Ghana over 50 per cent of respondents said that the registration centres and polling stations were not accessible to accommodate needs of people with physical disabilities²¹. An accessibility audit undertaken in the country in 2007 showed that although the special and inclusive education policies were in place, they were not implemented due to the lack of assistive technology and appropriately trained staff. Even the National House of Parliament was not accessible to people with mobility problems²⁵. In addition, the study found that the attitude of registration officials and polling staff towards people with disabilities was not friendly and in some cases was even hostile.

Similarly, in Liberia, some polling stations and polling precincts were reported to be located on the first floor, making them inaccessible to people with physical impairments²⁶. In Nigeria, there were restrictions on vehicle movement on the day of the elections, which prevented many people with disabilities from voting²⁷. In Mozambique, mobile registration centres were deployed in rural areas with the objective that no voter should travel more than 10 kilometres to the registration point. However, this standard was not always met and some voters had to travel 30 to 40 kilometres to register²⁸.

Impairment-specific barriers

Some literature argued that the degree of exclusion was often determined by the type of impairment experienced by the voters. In Ghana for example, while wheelchair users had difficulty in accessing polling stations, deaf and blind people faced communication challenges at the centres, where political rallies were held²⁵. Also, candidates with hearing impairments found it difficult to interact with the public and participate effectively in political debates, as there were no sign language services or assistive technology provided²⁵. In a few places where sign language interpreters were available, they were not appropriately trained or certified. People with visual impairments could not get access to printed materials, as braille machines were rare²⁵.

A paper from Kenya examined issues around political participation of people with intellectual disabilities. It argued that people with intellectual disabilities experienced challenges similar to people with physical and sensory disabilities. In addition, they were systematically discriminated against in legislation. In Kenya, the majority of people with intellectual disabilities did not have ID cards. In many cases families or other community members had to apply on their behalf as people with intellectual disabilities were not viewed to be equal citizens and their right to the ID card was questioned. Some people with intellectual disabilities were accused of dishonesty when they applied for an ID card; others were denied a priority right at the polling stations, as their disability was not obvious and they were forced to wait for hours to vote^{29, 30}.

The Kenya paper commented on gender inequalities in political participation. It was noted that some cultural beliefs meant women were viewed as unequal to men, and questioned their civic and political involvement; and although there were legal provisions in Kenya designed to encourage the participation of women in politics (eg the 2/3 gender rule, where two out of every three people in government must be female) it did not apply to women with disabilities, particularly intellectual disabilities^{9, 29}.

The paper also argued that many people with intellectual disabilities themselves did not see political participation as a priority in their lives, as they had to face day-to-day problems related to poverty, illiteracy, high need for care and lack of services^{9, 29}.

Question 3: Strategies to support inclusive elections

The review identified a number of strategies employed to increase participation of people with disabilities in political processes. These included introducing equal opportunity legislation and policies, supporting inclusive infrastructure, and working with DPOs to strengthen their advocacy and participation in wider CSO coalitions. The review also identified a wide range of examples of international development initiatives supported by various donor agencies.

Legislation and policies

The recognition of exclusion of people with disabilities in the electoral laws grants an opportunity to make provisions which can improve equality of participation in the electoral process. For example, Nigeria's 2010 Electoral Act states that people with disabilities may request support from the registration officer to complete the registration form. Additionally, a voter with visual impairment or physical disability may be accompanied into the polling unit by another person of their choice. Visually impaired registered voters may, where available, use assistive tactile facilities²⁷.

Similarly, legislation in Sierra Leone and Kenya allows voters with physical disabilities to be accompanied by another person of their choice.

In Mauritius, the amendments of the National Assembly Elections Regulations and Municipal Election Regulations enabled disabled voters to be accompanied by a close relative¹⁹.

Adjustments of the physical infrastructure

Measures to improve physical accessibility of the elections and other political processes have been reported in a number of countries. In DRC, it was observed that only the ground floors of schools were used for registration to avoid problems with using stairs by people with physical disabilities. Assistance was also made available for older people with disabilities and illiterate voters¹⁷.

In Mauritius, voting premises were adapted by ramps being installed in all polling stations, and by booths at the height of wheelchair-using voters being provided¹⁹.

In South Africa, people with disabilities could request a home visit from their registration officer to register or make changes to their registration details²⁸.

Representation of people with disabilities' interests by DPOs

DPOs are vital partners in elections and political participation development programmes. DPOs can provide a pre-existing platform for mobilising people with disabilities and representing their interests. A number of papers reported on how DPOs advocated for and/or represented the interests of people with disabilities in the electoral processes.

In Mauritania, legislation recognises the importance of DPO involvement in decision-making processes and supported the emergence of multiple national civil society organisations (CSOs) to protect and promote the rights of people with disabilities¹⁴.

In Mauritius, disability activists and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) working in the disability sector represented people with disabilities at the National Implementation and Monitoring Committee on the UNCRPD. A proposal was also made to set up a national advisory task force formed of people with disabilities to advise on the implementation of the UNCRPD in the country¹⁹.

In Niger, the National Committee for the Promotion of Rights of People with Disabilities was established in 2011. Two National Federations of Disabled Persons served within the Committee and were in charge of monitoring and implementing the UNCRPD. Additionally, a project supported by Handicap International enabled the involvement of almost all DPOs in Niamey in various issues related to human rights, including the UNCRPD¹².

The government of Burkina Faso established a multi-sectoral Committee for Rehabilitation and Equality of Opportunities. The Committee included representatives of different ministries, civil society and technical and financial partners. It was noted that the inclusion of DPOs allowed the Committee to reflect on the issues related to the rights for people with disabilities, and their involvement in decision-making processes¹¹. The government also took steps to support the establishment of CSOs and developing mechanisms for monitoring the implementation of the UNCRPD in the country. In Zimbabwe, the development of the National Disability Board (NDB) enabled the formulation of policies that ensured that people with disabilities lived independently and had access to all social services; it also supported an initiative to estimate the costs of the welfare and rehabilitation services targeting people with disabilities and made provision for people with disabilities to elect two senators to represent them^{13, 31}.

It was reported that in Ghana, DPOs had worked with other NGOs and the European Commission to promote the full participation of people with disabilities in elections since 2000. It was also reported that in the 2000 elections, for the first time around 80 people with disabilities were involved in monitoring the election process²⁴.

A paper on the work of the National Institute for International Affairs (NDI) reported on its efforts in building coalitions with other NGOs in Sudan, Lebanon, Kenya and Mali. The broader coalitions were involved in drafting policies and regulations, educating voters and monitoring the election process². It was argued that coalition work allowed DPOs to acquire more rights and responsibilities, share their experiences with other CSOs and encourage other coalition partners to take a proactive approach to understanding and supporting people with disabilities within their areas of work. In Mali the NDI supported the formation of an electoral observation coalition known as **Appui au Processus Électoral au Mali**, bringing together 46 CSOs, of which two were DPOs. In Lebanon and Kenya some DPOs acquired leadership positions in the coalitions which were not related to disability. It was also noted that coalitions encouraged coalition partners to look at their internal policies and practices, where (for example) a youth-focused CSO found deficiencies in its understanding of youth with disabilities; while a DPO recognised a need to employ more women in leadership positions².

In 2012, Voice of People with Disability Ghana (Voice Ghana) created a Situation Room on election day to monitor accessibility of polling stations. The authors contacted 60 people with disabilities at random through phone calls on election day and engaged presiding officers to address any issues that were raised²⁰.

Financial and technical assistance from international development donors

A few countries in Africa received financial support with the aim to improve political participation. For example, in Zimbabwe, the authors noted that as part of the country support strategy, DFID provided a grant for education of people with disabilities on their right to vote¹³.

In Mauritius, funding was provided to DPOs and disability activists to participate in international conferences related to disability and the UNCRPD¹⁹.

In Mauritania, the authors reported that DPO representatives were financially supported to take part in national, regional and international meetings. The Ministry of Social Affairs, Children and the Family provided financial support to the Mauritanian Federation of People with Disabilities, which was used for organising the Pan-African Disability Forum in Nouakchott in 2011. At the time of publication, Mauritania was also heading the Maghreb Union of People with Disabilities as well as the West Africa Office of the Pan-African Organisation of People with Disabilities¹⁴.

In Cameroon, a project called Accessible elections for people with disabilities was developed with the support of Sightsavers and several local CSOs.

Project activities:

- Identification and refurbishment (ramp building, providing office lights, making low level tables) of 12 pilot voting booths in six regions of Cameroon
- Training DPOs and people with disabilities on the legal aspects of the presidential elections and on community sensitisation
- Arranging meetings with political leaders on disability issues
- Advocacy with the Election and Referendum Management Institution to include a disability field in the electoral software used for the electoral list
- Supporting six spokespeople representing accessible elections in the campaign
- Supporting radio/television programmes encouraging people with disabilities to participate in the electoral processes¹⁸.

In Ghana, in 2000, the EC developed and piloted a tactile ballot guide to allow visually impaired people to vote in secret. In the 2004 elections, the Ghana Federation of the Disabled (GFD) worked with the EC to raise awareness among people with disabilities of their right to vote and on the inclusion of the sign language interpretation. In the same election year, members of the Ghana Association of the Blind (GAB) were trained on how to use the tactile ballot guide in every polling station. In addition, 117 disabled people – all members of the disability movement – were trained as election observers²⁴.

In Malawi, the EC developed specific target messages during the registration process, and developed education materials for the general public. The messages focused on the importance of voting, the new register, where to go and what was required to register²⁸. The DFID-funded programme Strengthening Transparency, Accountability and Responsiveness (STAR) in Ghana was a 14-month programme implemented between December 2011 and January 2013, which included the following activities:

- Support to Ghana's Electoral Commission to ensure greater transparency and engagement with all election stakeholders
- Support to the Judicial Service in its election adjudication function
- Funding to the Ghana Centre for Democratic Development to ensure an impartial and independent observation of the compilation of a new voter roll using biometric technology
- Support to the Police Service to detect, prevent and properly manage election-related violence through the British High Commission
- Support to civil society groups participating in the STAR programme

An overall evaluation of the programme found some evidence of the progress towards gender and social inclusion agendas. It was reported that 22 of the 45 projects funded under this call specifically targeted exclusion issues, and some main outputs included:

- Design of 3,400 tactile ballot jackets and 5,000 sample ballot papers
- Training (on average) 40 people in each of the 170 districts nationwide
- Monitoring accessibility by GFD members at 119 out of 180 voting centres
- Training 100 people with hearing impairments (40 females and 60 males) as inclusion trainers for rolling out the training to 1,000 other people with hearing impairments
- Sensitisation of 2,605 persons with disabilities and their assistants on the biometric voter registration (BVR) and political participation
- Production and dissemination of 30,000 materials by the Independent Election Commission for people with psycho-social disabilities participating in the BVR exercise
- Production and dissemination of 200 copies of accessibility guidelines to the Electoral Commission officials²⁰.

In Liberia, USAID supported inclusive electoral and political processes through the implementation of EPPSP. This project was implemented by the IFES, the International Republican Institute and the NDI in 2004. The project focused on the same goal – strengthening the electoral processes, multi-party system, legislation and increased civic participation and accountability – but each agency had a different role. For example, NDI focused on civic education and participation providing sub-grants to local NGOs to undertake voter education and domestic observations. IFES provided support to increase professional skills of the National Electoral Commission (NEC) staff in 2004-2006, while in 2006-2008 it provided support to strengthen electoral reform and capacity building. This support included technical guidance, training, commodity support, and NEC infrastructure²⁶.

Question 4: Impact of interventions on the participation of people with disabilities in electoral processes

Overall, the majority of the documents included in this systematic review did not report the impact of the approaches and interventions described. For example, it was reported that DRC and Mauritius took appropriate measures to ensure disability-friendly environments; but to what extent these measures improved the engagement of people with disabilities with political institutions remained unclear. In Ghana, the authors reported that there were high levels of participation of people with disabilities in the 2004 elections. But no comparative measures to quantify the changes observed were provided. In addition, the authors argued that the higher levels of participation were due to a number of measures, including tactile ballots, sign language interpreters, physical adaptation of the polling stations and training of 117 people with disabilities as election observers. However, the contribution of each of these individual factors to the overall election process was not assessed. In Cameroon, there was no information on whether the selection and refurbishment of 12 pilot voting booths had any effect on the political participation of people with disabilities in the project areas. A number of documents noted that empowering people with disabilities could potentially improve political participation of people at risk of exclusion. But the impact of the empowerment interventions on the participation of people with disabilities in political processes was neither clearly articulated nor measured. Similarly, although various authors reported that the electoral laws gave people with disabilities an opportunity to participate in electoral processes, the exact impact of these laws was not reported.

Some authors described intermediate outcomes of their interventions: for example, improved collaboration between different NGOs or between government agencies and DPOs. A study from Ghana reported that the inclusion of people with disabilities in election monitoring processes led to strengthened ties between DPOs, the Electoral Commission, and twenty domestic CSOs. In another document from Ghana, the authors reported that the 2004 elections improved collaboration between the NEC and the Coalition of Domestic Election Observers (CODEO). In Liberia, the authors reported that the USAID programme on electoral and political processes improved the transparency and fairness of the elections and strengthened the partnership between the NDI and IFES.

Some documents provided narrative descriptions of the challenges experienced during the electoral reforms. The observers of the 2006 election in DRC stated that the party agents generally showed a good understanding of their role with regards to inclusion. However, in a few isolated cases the process was undermined by a perceived threat to the transparency and credibility of the Independent Electoral Commission¹⁷. In Niger, the existing legislation did not restrict participation of people with disabilities in the national and local elections; but no actions were taken to adapt polling stations to accommodate specific needs of voters with disabilities¹². In Ghana the evaluation report of the GESP noted that it successfully reached approximately 11,000 people with disabilities. However, the programme did not advance inclusion for socially disadvantaged groups, and did not demonstrate a socially inclusive approach. In Liberia, visually impaired voters could cast a secret ballot and people with disabilities could observe the elections, but no further support was provided at the post-election phase²⁶.

Conclusion

This systematic review focused on four interrelated elements: policies and laws to ensure participation of people with disabilities in political processes in Africa; barriers and enablers to political participation with a specific focus on elections; approaches and interventions applied in Africa to increase political engagement of people with disabilities; and the impact of the interventions applied.

We exhaustively searched a wide range of databases as well as grey literature and identified 54 unique documents that met our inclusion criteria. However, despite identifying a reasonable amount of relevant literature sources, we found much of it to be highly descriptive in nature, with little – if any – data on the effects of the legislation, policies or programmes applied.

Overall, the documents identified were diverse in their scope and content. Nine documents focused on the global level; the remaining ones were country-specific, with the majority of documents providing information on Ghana and Nigeria.

With regards to policies and legislation, the review shows that the majority of African countries ratified important disability-focused legislation, including provisions for improved participation of people with disabilities in political institutions. The documents proclaim equal opportunities for people with disabilities to elect and be elected, and refer to specific measures, mainly personal assistance and prioritisation at the polling stations. However, the review also found that the implementation of the legislation varies greatly between countries; and despite progressive policies and laws being in place, people with disabilities continue to suffer from discrimination and exclusion in many contexts.

There are various classifications of the barriers and enablers of political participation, and some sources identified and distinguished between barriers at the pre-electoral, electoral and post-electoral stages. Country-specific examples showed that many challenges experienced by people with disabilities can be clustered around three main groups: lack of education and financial resources; stigma and negative social attitudes; and inaccessible physical infrastructure. Literature also refers to impairment-specific barriers and there is some evidence to suggest that people with intellectual disabilities may be at highest risk of political exclusion.

Many documents had information on the strategies to support inclusive political processes. These included inclusive legislation and policies, adjustments of physical infrastructure of the registration and polling stations, and mobilising and empowering people with disabilities using the structures and capacities of local CSOs and DPOs. Evidence suggests that many strategies and interventions supporting political participation are implemented in Africa with strong financial and technical support from international development partners.

Although the reviewed documents described a wide range of programmes and strategies, the impact of these interventions remained unclear. The documents identified were largely descriptive with little articulation of the intended effect and limited opportunities for measuring outcomes. In addition, all documents (with the exception of the legal documents included in the review) were attributed 'low confidence' and had a high degree of bias, as they mainly consisted of grey literature in reports, case studies, press releases, dissertations and manuals.

Most documents included in the review did not address any specific exclusion issues, such as gender or ethnicity, and did not identify any strategies relevant to specific population sub-groups. As a result, while a thorough search of the literature has been conducted and a range of examples from different countries has been identified, the review concludes that political inclusion activities in Africa are poorly documented and it is impossible to draw any definitive inferences on which interventions work, where and for whom. Most of the sources identified were of low quality, which suggests the need for high quality research using explicit theory of change and rigorous measurements of the effect of the tested interventions.

Limitations and strengths

This systematic review is based on comprehensive searches of the literature. We conducted a search on relevant databases and websites for published documents. In addition, as part of the search strategy, we contacted experts and searched references of included documents in the review for unpublished documents. Characteristics and results of the included documents were reliable in accordance with the rigorous methodology in terms of searching the literature, data extraction and appraisal of documents. However, this study cannot exclude the presence of publication bias, which is that larger programmes and initiatives were more likely to be published and therefore the sources included in this review are not representative of all information available on this subject. In addition, this review may be prone to language bias as it only included documents written in English, Portuguese and French. It did not identify documents written in languages other than those stated in the inclusion criteria.

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Appendix 1 – Search terms

A list of search terms used to search the literature on databases.

#1 (“Disabled young women” OR “Disabled middle aged women” OR “Disabled women” OR “Disabled men” OR “Multiply disabled women” OR “Low income disabled people” OR “Multiply disabled people” OR “Disabled young people” OR “Sensory impaired young people” OR “Disabled young adults” OR “Visually impaired people” OR “Visually impaired young people” OR “Back injured people” OR “Blind people” OR “Blind-Deaf people” OR “Deaf people” OR “Disfigured people” OR “Facially disfigured people” OR “Hearing impaired people” OR “Housebound people” OR “Amputees” OR “Blindness” OR “Eye diseases” OR “Eye injuries” OR “River blindness” OR “Visual impairment” OR “Deafness” OR “Occupational deafness” OR “Hearing impairment” OR “Occupational hearing impairment” OR “Functional impairment” OR “Impairment” OR “Sensory impairment” OR “Limb deficiencies” OR “Amputation” OR “Chronic back pain” OR “Long term back pain” OR “Chronic pain” OR “Industrial injuries” OR “Injuries” OR “Chronic sickness” OR “Long term sickness” OR “Physical sickness”)

#2 “sub-Saharan Africa” OR “Angola” OR “Benin” OR “Botswana” OR “Burundi” OR “Cameroon” OR “Cape Verde” OR “Central African republic” OR “Chad” OR “Comoros” OR “Congo” OR “Cote d’Ivoire” OR “Djibouti” OR “Equatorial Guinea” OR “Guinea” OR “Guinea-Bissau” OR “Eritrea” OR “Ethiopia” OR “Gabon” OR “The Gambia” OR “Ghana” OR “Kenya” OR “Lesotho” OR “Liberia” OR “Madagascar” OR “Malawi” OR “Mauritania” OR “Mauritius” OR “Mozambique” OR “Namibia” OR “Niger” OR “Nigeria” OR “Reunion” OR “Rwanda” OR “Sao Tome and principe” OR “Senegal” OR “Seychelles” OR “Sierra Leone” OR “Somalia” OR “South Africa” OR “Swaziland” OR “Tanzania” OR “Togo” OR “Uganda” OR “Western Sahara” OR “Zambia” OR “Zimbabwe”

#3 (“civic” OR “civics” OR “citizen*” OR “politic*” OR “participation” OR “inclusion” OR “exclusion” OR “Vote” OR “elections”)

The search terms #1, #2 and #3 were combined for each database

Appendix 2 – Search strategy

Databases (search conducted in March 2016)

A list of platforms and each of their databases searched in March 2016.

Platform	Databases
EBSCO	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• EconLit• Library, information Science and technology abstracts• eBook Collection
Ovid	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• PsycINFO (1806-2016)• Social Policy and Practice
Web of Science (core module)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Social Sciences Citation Index• Science Citation Index Expanded• Arts and Humanities Citation Index
Science Direct	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Social Sciences and Humanities (Psychology; Social Sciences)
ProQuest	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• IBSS (International bibliography of the Social Sciences)• Sociological abstracts• Political Science
IDEA	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• International Institute for democracy and electoral Assistance (website)
ELDIS	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• ELDIS
Africa Portal	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Africa Portal
The Campbell Collaboration	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Campbell Collaboration
EPPI Centre	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• EPPI Centre

Websites (search conducted in March 2016)

A list of websites searched in March 2016.

- www.electionaccess.org/en/
- www.usaid.gov
- www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/
- inclusion-international.org/
- www.countrywatch.com/
- www.asksource.info/
- www.issafrica.org/
- makeeverywomancount.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=2745&Itemid=170
- Handicap International website
- International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES)
- UN Democracy Fund
- African Union
- The Commonwealth
- The European Commission
- African Centre for Democracy and Human Rights Studies
- Disabled Peoples' International
- World Blind Union
- World Federation of the deafblind
- Disability World
www.disabilityworld.org/
- aceproject.org/ace-en/focus/disability/default
- National Democratic Institute
(www.ndi.org/)
- eisa.org.za/
- Global accessibility (<http://globalaccessibilitynews.com/?s=elections>)

Authors and organisations for contacting (contacted in March 2016)

A list of authors and organisations contacted in March 2016.

- National electoral commissions
- African Union
- The Commonwealth
- The European Union External Action
- African Centre for Democracy and Human Rights Studies
- Disabled Peoples' International
- World Federation of the deafblind
- National Democratic Institute (ndi.org)
- Electoral Institute for Sustainable Democracy in Africa

Appendix 3 – Data extract and critical appraisal form

Data extraction form

Reviewer guidance

- Be consistent in the order and style you use to describe the information for each included study.
- Record any missing information as unclear, not described, or not applicable.
- Second and third reviewers should be consulted regarding any uncertainties.

Study ID	
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Study Details	
Citation	
Year of publication(s)	
Author(s)	
Lead author contact details	
Funder / sponsoring organisation	
Publication type <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Report(specify)• Case study• Other	
Geographical Coverage <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Country/ Region	

Study Details

Sector

A report may focus on one or more sectors such as:

- Technologies (e.g. voting, registration etc)
- Policy
- Law
- Registration
- Practice/approach (including electoral codes)
- Barriers
- Enablers
- Etc

Publication Source

Methodology (if applicable)

- Study design
- Type of data
- No. of studies included
- Location/setting

Study Population

Disability

- Please specify type of disability
- Please specify definition of disability used eg functional or medical and Moderate or Severe

Age

Sex

Law and policies

Please specify, laws and policies mentioned in place to ensure the participation of people with disabilities in national, district and local elections?

Law

- National, district and local

Policy

- National, district and local

Barriers of participation of people with disabilities in elections

Please be specific and concise

Enablers of participation of people with disabilities in elections

Please be specific and concise

Approaches and Interventions

Please specify approaches and interventions that have been employed to increase the participation of people with disabilities

Intervention classification

- Media
- Campaigns
- Assistance
- Means of communication
- Off-site voting
- training in electoral systems

Approaches and Interventions

Please specify approaches and interventions that have been employed to increase the participation of people with disabilities

Intervention

- Who implemented it
- How long did it last / how many times did it happen?
- Who funded it and how much did it cost

Intervention

- Who implemented it
- How long did it last / how many times did it happen?
- Who funded it and how much did it cost

Key Findings

- Impact measured on the participation of people with disabilities as a results of identified interventions
- How was the impact measured?

Applicability to other countries in Sub Saharan Africa

Further information on the participation of people with disabilities in local, national and district elections

Recommendations

Appraisal form

Disability-inclusive election – critical appraisal checklist tool

Developed using CERQual approach¹, CASP tool² and AACODS³

1. Authority

Identifying who is responsible for the intellectual content

Individual authors:

- Associated with a reputable organisation?
- Produced/published in the work in the field?
- Recognised expert, or identified in other sources or cited by others?

Organisation:

- Is it reputable?
- Is it an authority in the field?

- Yes
- Partially
- No
- Can't tell

Notes/comments:

2. Accuracy

Was there a clear statement of the aims?

- Yes
- Partially
- No
- Can't tell

Notes/comments:

2a. If yes...

Are the aims met?

- Yes
- Partially
- No
- Can't tell

Notes/comments:

3. Empirical data

Does the paper present primary empirical data?

If yes, go to 3a, b and c
If no, go to 4

- Yes
- No

Notes/comments:

3a. Data: Participants

Is the data set appropriate to meet the aims of the study?

- Participants (recruitment/selection, justification)
- Setting

- Yes
- Partially
- No
- Can't tell

Notes/comments:

3b. Data: Methods

Has the research design been clearly stated?

- Yes
- No

Notes/comments:

3c. Data: Ethics

Have ethical issues been taken into consideration?

- Research explained to participants,
- Informed consent obtained,
- Participant confidentiality,
- Approval from ethics committee
- Specific issues around vulnerable groups accounted for.

- Yes
- Partially
- No
- Can't tell
- Not Applicable

Notes/comments:

4. Potential for Bias

Has potential for bias been discussed and findings interpreted appropriately?

- Has the potential for bias due to methodological reasons been discussed?
- Opinion, expert or otherwise, is still opinion: is the author's standpoint clear?
- Does the work seem to be balanced in presentation?

- Yes
- Partially
- No
- Can't tell

Notes/comments:

e.g. observation bias not reported

5. Richness for data

Does the data reported in the study provide enough detail to justify the findings presented?

- Sample size
- Type of the data collected – primary or secondary

- Yes
- Partially
- No
- Can't tell

Notes/comments:

6. Relevance

Are the findings presented applicable to the context specified in the study?

- Yes
- Partially
- No

Notes/comments:

7. Coherence

Does the study discuss how findings compare and contrast to other research findings from other studies in the same field?

- Yes
- Partially
- No

Notes/comments:

Overall Confidence

High confidence

It is highly likely that the review finding is a reasonable representation of the phenomenon of interest.

(applicable when all the answers to the questions are 'yes')

Moderate

It is likely that the review finding is a reasonable representation of the phenomenon of interest.

(applicable when any of the following are 'Partially': 1, 2a, 3b, 3b1, 4; 'No': 4)

Yes – 1,2,2a,3,3b,3c,4,5,6,7

Partially – 3a,3b1

Can't tell – 3b1

Low

It is not clear whether the review finding is a reasonable representation of the phenomenon of interest.

(applicable when any of the following are 'No' or 'Can't tell': 1, 3, 5, 6,7,4)

- High confidence
- Moderate confidence
- Low confidence

Notes/comments:

1. <https://cerqual.org/>
2. http://media.wix.com/ugd/dded87_29c5b002d99342f788c6ac670e49f274.pdf
3. <http://greyelitstrategies.info/news/aacods-grey-literature-appraisal-scheme-adopted-uk-health-agencies>

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Bumpers Way
Bumpers Farm
Chippenham
SN14 6NG
UK

+44 (0)1444 446 600

info@sightsavers.org

