Disability Inclusive Elections: A systematic review of published and unpublished literature
Background

• Irish Aid grant that supported political participation
• Consolidate learning and experiences in the literature

Aim

• To review experiences and practices taken place in Africa
• Identify the effect of interventions on the participation of people with disabilities
Research questions

1. What **laws** and **policies** exist in countries in Africa to ensure the participation of people with disabilities?

2. What **barriers to participation** of people with disabilities in electoral processes in African countries have been documented?

3. What **documented approaches and interventions** have been employed in Africa to increase the participation of people with disabilities in elections?

4. What **impact** has been documented in the literature on the interventions applied and how has it been measured?
Inclusion criteria

- Empirical primary data
- Written in English, French and Portuguese
- Published from 2006 onwards
- Focused in political participation of people with disabilities
Literature search

Grey literature:

• National electoral commissions;
• The European Union External Action;
• African Union;

26 documents identified
Data extraction and Critical appraisal

• Conducted by two reviewers independently

• Critical appraisal tool:
  • CERQual approach
  • Critical Appraisal Skills Programme (CASP) tool
  • Authority, Accuracy, Coverage, Objectivity, Date, Significance (AACODS) tool.

Attribute ‘high confidence’, ‘medium confidence’ and ‘low confidence’
Search Results

54 unique documents identified for inclusion

- 30 information on strategies to support inclusive political processes
- 29 focused on legislation and policies
- 14 reported barriers faced by people with disabilities

Country

- Ghana 22%
- Nigeria 19%
- Kenya 14%
- Tanzania 8%
- Liberia 8%
- Sierra Leone 8%
- Mali 5%
- South Africa 5%
- Zimbabwe 6%
- Multiple countries 5%
- Multiple countries 5%

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Laws and Policies

Global Legislation
- 54 African countries ratified and signed the UNCRPD
- Except for 5 countries:
  - Botswana
  - Equatorial Guinea
  - Eritrea
  - Somalia
  - South Sudan

National Legislation
- Equal opportunities to elect and be elected;
- Specific legislation such as Disability Act
Barriers to participation

Barrier: Discriminatory legal framework

• Person of “unsound mind”, “mental capacity” and “mental infirmity” used in several provisions and restricts participation of people with intellectual disabilities.

• Terms not defined

• Restrict participation of people with intellectual disabilities
Barrier: Social Stigma and negative social attitudes

- Cultural norms
- Punishment of God

Approaches

No evidence, but these can be tackled by:

- Involving people with disabilities in decision-making processes (e.g. Disabled people’s Organisations, Civil Society Organisations)
Barrier: Physical accessibility of registration and electoral points

• Poor status of the local roads
• Distance to the nearest registration center or pooling station
• Registration centers not accessible for people with physical and sensory disabilities
Approaches

• Recognition of exclusion of people with disabilities in the electoral laws:
  
  • Kenya, Sierra Leone a person with a disability can be accompanied into the pooling station unit and use assistive tactile facilities

• Voting premises adapted by ramps

• Booths at height of wheelchair-using voters

• In South Africa, people with disabilities could request a home visit from their registration officer in order to register or amend their registration form
Barrier: Lack of education and financial resources

- Lower level of education
- Political campaigns can be expensive

Approaches

African countries received financial support:

- In Zimbabwe, DFID provided a grant for education of people with disabilities on their right to vote
- In Mauritania, DPO representatives were financially supported to take part in national, regional and international meetings
Interventions

- Accessible elections, Cameroon:
  - 12 pilot voting booths in six regions of Cameroon
  - Training DPOs and people with disabilities on legal aspects
  - Supporting six spokespeople representing accessible elections in the campaign
  - Supporting radio/television programmes encouraging people with disabilities to participate in the electoral processes
Interventions

• Ghana

  • In 2000, the Electoral Commission (EC) piloted a tactile ballot guide;

  • In 2004 elections, the Ghana Federation of the Disabled 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.

  • Ghana Association of the Blind (GAB) trained on how to use the tactile ballot guide in every polling station.

  • 117 disabled people trained as election observers
Impact

No data/information documented
Conclusion

• Legal framework is available, however people with intellectual disabilities are still excluded

• Implementation of the legislation varies, but we need to better understand how vulnerability varies within disability

• People with disabilities continue to suffer from discrimination and exclusion

• Barriers occur at pre-electoral, electoral and post-electoral stages

• Clear need for impact studies on interventions and high quality studies
Thank you

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