



Participation of Youths with Disabilities in political spaces in Pallisa District: A Baseline Study Report



Prepared and submitted by
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INCLUSIVE DEVELOPMENT CONSULTS


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‘When the Police come to disburse us with tear gas, they assume that everyone is healthy and our persons with disabilities are not spared either. It is the reason as to why they shun opposition politics’

FDC mobiliser in Pallisa

Disclaimer:

The views and opinions expressed in this report are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of Uganda National Action on Physical Disability (UNAPD) or her agents.

The Baseline study followed as much as practicable the advise of the client and provided accurate data to inform UNAPD programming.

Acknowledgement

Inclusive Development Consults (IDC) is pleased to submit the report on undertaking a baseline study on the current state of participation of youths with disabilities in political spaces in two sub counties of Palissa District. The study was commissioned by Uganda National Action on Physical Disability (UNAPD) and undertaken in Kameke Sub County and Pallisa Town Council of Pallisa District.

IDC indebted to the numerous parties that made this work both a good learning experience and a success. We acknowledge the valuable input provided by the district and sub county officials, youths with disabilities, leaders of persons with disabilities and other authorities interviewed in Pallisa District. We are grateful to the management and staff of UNAPD for their support to ensure that the baseline study took place amidst a very busy schedule.

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The team is grateful to the Executive and Board of UNAPD and Voice -global for the financial support in undertaking the baseline study and implementing the project. The participation of every stakeholder is appreciated and it is our belief that this has contributed significantly to this report.

Anthony Oleja Enyogu – Team leader
Kampala, June 2022

Abbreviations/Acronyms

| | |
|-----------|--|
| CDOs | Community Development Officers |
| COVID-19 | Corona Virus Disease – Strain 2019 |
| CRPD | Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities |
| CSOs | Civil Society Organisations |
| DCPDs | District Council for Persons with Disabilities |
| DDPs | District Development Plans |
| DPOs/OPDs | Disabled Persons Organisations/ Organisations of Persons with Disabilities |
| EOC | Equal Opportunities Commission |
| IDC | Inclusive Development Consults |
| LC | Local Council |
| MGLSD | Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development |
| MoJCA | Ministry of Justice and Constitutional Affairs |
| NCPD | National Council for Persons with Disabilities |
| NGOs | Non-Government Organisations |
| NIRA | National Identification and Registration Authority |
| NUDIPU | National Union of Disabled Persons of Uganda |
| PADIAPD | Pallisa District Action on Physical Disability |
| PADIPU | Pallisa District Union of Persons with Disabilities |
| PWDs | Persons with Disabilities |
| PWPDs | Persons with Physical Disabilities |
| SCDPs | Sub County Development Plans |
| SMS | Short Message Service |
| UBOS | Uganda Bureau of Statistics |
| UCC | Uganda Communication Commission |
| UHRC | Uganda Human Rights Commission |
| UN | United Nations |
| UNAPD | Uganda National Action on Physical Disability |
| UNICEF | United Nations Children’s Fund |
| YWDs | Youths with Disabilities |

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Executive Summary with Key recommendations

The report is on a baseline study on participation of youths with disabilities in political spaces in Pallisa District. The study was commissioned by the Uganda National Action on Physical Disability (UNAPD) and conducted by Anthony Oleja Enyogu from the Inclusive Development Consults (IDC) Ltd. Data for the baseline was collected during the months of March and April 2022 from Kameke Sub County and Pallisa Town Council.

In Uganda, the definition of youths is given by those in the chronological age of between 18 and 30 years. According to the Uganda Bureau of Statistics (UBOS) 2022 population projections, youths currently constitute a significant proportion of the total population at 23.9% (n=10,580,600) of Uganda population (n=44,212,800). The youth population was estimated to grow from approximately 3.7 million in 1991 to 7.7 million in 2014 (out of which 53.4% are females and 46.6% are males) and, to the current 10.5 million projection. The youth population is likely to increase for the next 28 years before a slight drop is gradually realised and therefore, the youth population remains the most dominant population with peculiar needs and aspirations. The youth population is a critical population for stability, productivity and national development. Government of Uganda and her development partners are aware that the youths present exceptional potential with energy, talent and creativity which makes them key drivers for development.

Uganda National Action on Physical Disability (UNAPD) is non-governmental, gender inclusive and democratic organisation that brings together Persons with Physical Disabilities (PWPDs) in Uganda established in 1998 to create a common voice in advocating for rights, better service provision and independent living of members. The vision of UNAPD is “A society where persons with physical disabilities live in dignity”. The Mission of the organisation is “To advance member efforts in removing barriers that prevent PWPDs from enjoying their rights through advocacy, capacity building and networking”. UNAPD’s area of focus is disability rights advocacy and inclusion.

The main purpose of the study was to understand the current state of participation of youths with disabilities in political spaces in two sub counties of Pallisa District. The baseline provides the project benchmarks and guides interventions towards improving the participation of youths with disabilities in political spaces in Pallisa District.

Methodology

Participatory approaches were used to gather information and views from Persons with disabilities, persons with disabilities leaders, general councilors, DPOs, local government staffs at district and sub county levels, communities, and project implementers among others. Focus group discussions were conducted with project beneficiaries like the trained youths and community members while interviews were also conducted with leaders of persons with

disabilities, general councilors, DPO staffs, local government staffs and project implementers. In consultation with UNAPD head office staffs, the project areas to be visited and evaluation participants to be included in each district were selected. Case narratives formed a complementary method of data collection. During FGDs and interviews, evaluation participants with cases that just could not be left were asked at the end or in the due course of the interaction to elaborate and construct those cases.

A combination of quantitative and qualitative research designs was adopted for the baseline. The quantitative component entailed use of structured interviews with selected samples of youths with disabilities. The qualitative component on the other hand consisted of in-depth interviews and focus group discussions applied to a wide range of stakeholders and informants relevant to the situation of persons with disabilities. This promoted wide participation, ensuring that both the intended beneficiaries of the project, as well as other stakeholders including election officials, members of unions of persons with disabilities and, the District Council for Persons with Disabilities among others, participate and express their views. In addition, both primary and secondary data were used. The secondary data sources consisted of a review of documents relevant to the participation of youths with disabilities in political spaces, including government policy documents.

The study participants included: councilors representing Persons with Disabilities in the 2 Sub Counties; Community Development Officers (CDOs); Chairperson of the District Council for Persons with Disabilities; District Electoral Commission Registrar; Sub County Electoral Commission returning officers; District NIRA Officials; Police – Community Liaisons officer; Youths with Disabilities and; Youths with Disabilities in unions/ associations of persons with disabilities. These participated in: Key informant interviews, Focus Group Discussions and; a survey.

Key findings

There are a variety of international and national legal instruments safeguard the fundamental rights and freedoms of persons with disabilities to participate in electoral processes. However, their implementation is still a challenge, which can be attributed to some of their provisions not being disability-specific as well as there being insufficient resource allocation to the preparation and organisation of disability inclusive elections in Uganda.

With a disability prevalence of 19.9% (n=77,158) in Pallisa, there was limited participation of persons with disabilities in political spaces. This was mainly driven by the handicap associated with the impairments and, a disability unawareness in electoral processes. In regard to impairment and unawareness, there was limited – if at all no reference to the laws, policies and guidelines for including persons with disabilities in political spaces. For example, the accessibility standards (as provided for the in the Building Control Act 2013 and the

regulations thereof 2019) were not adhered to in the selection of polling stations and there were no accessible routes to the meeting venues such as council halls; accessibility formats, the Uganda Communication Commission (UCC) directive on the use of Sign language in public places and, the lack of knowledge on availability and provisions of the Persons with Disabilities Act 2020 makes reference to the law by the Town Clerk and Senior Assistant Secretaries (SAS')¹ difficult to execute;

The respondents confirmed that indeed Youths with Disabilities participated in political activities. However, they acknowledged that there were prerequisites to participation. These pre-requisites included among others: being a member of a political organisation such as a political party, being registered as a voter and/or having national registration – with a national identity card and; the main incentives offered for participation of youths with disabilities were materials such as: branded T-shirts, household consumables such as sugar, salt and soap and; whistles. These items equally compromised the independence and judgment of the youths with disabilities since they voted based on those items. It should be noted that these incentives are illegal and they tantamount to voter bribery and 'vote buying'. The ideal incentives should be provision of information for campaigns, T-shirts and posters on the rights to political participation and, portable radios for such cohorts and; the main barriers to participation in elections identified included: fear, low self-esteem, ignorance and communication challenges. These challenges need to be addressed in order to realise inclusive participation of youths with disabilities in political spaces right from the grassroot to national level.

Key recommendations

Reiterate the CRPD Committee on Uganda's concluding observations recommended that; the state party repeals all legal provisions that restrict persons with disabilities from exercising their right to stand for elections; provide voter education and awareness to persons with disabilities and adopt measures to ensure that the electoral process is accessible to voters with disabilities including voter registration, accessible polling centres and materials and assistance to vote by persons of their choice and; persons with disabilities on their right to vote, provide financial support to organizations of persons with disabilities to conduct the election processes of persons with disabilities in a transparent manner. The study team reiterates such recommendations because they still address the concerns raised by youths with disabilities during the study.

Awareness creation on disability and political spaces for youths with disabilities; election officials and; councilors on rights and responsibilities of persons with disabilities in political participation;

¹ Also called Sub County Chiefs

Provide voter education and translation services in Ateso, Lugwere and sign language. Where such materials are available, the team recommends that the Electoral Commission works with UNAPD and the Makerere university and, the Lugwere Bible project to support translation of such materials;

Facilitate the council for persons with disabilities to support mobilisation of persons with disabilities to register, identify the locations of persons with disabilities and, provide transport to frail persons with disabilities to participate in key electoral and political activities among others;

Constitute the Sub County Council for persons with Disabilities in Accordance with the Section 30 and 33 of the Persons with Disabilities Act 2020. In these, the unions and the councils for persons with disabilities should be used for mobilizing, transporting and educating persons with disabilities on political participation;

Design and provide a compendium of electoral laws, policies and guidelines for persons with disabilities to officials and council members. In this regard, there is need to develop a simplified version – preferably in the common local languages for persons with disabilities with illustrations;

Provide affirmative action and reasonable accommodation for persons with disabilities to participate in political processes and; working with the Councils for Persons with Disabilities, CSOs and leaders of persons with disabilities, to monitor, provide incidence and, summative reports on elections and participation of persons with disabilities and;

Orient security forces (including the army) on Military- civil relationships including supporting persons with disabilities and advising them on security and safety and, provision of additional information to cohorts of youths with disabilities and orient representatives of persons with disabilities on councils, and statutory commissions on their role among others.

The stakeholders who participated in the dissemination of the report additionally made the following recommendations:

- The project should provide councilors and leaders of persons with disabilities with the guidelines of the National Special Grants Programme so as to enhance the incomes and economic wellbeing for persons with disabilities. This will in turn improve their esteem and spur participation in political spaces;
- There is need to provide translation services for persons with speech impairments even when such impairments are not provided for in the Persons with Disabilities Act 2020. The

members noted that political participation requires voicing and the exclusion of such persons is detrimental to the body disability;

- There is need to introduce civic education in both schools and community education programmes;
- There should be popular version of the report, the National Special Grants Guidelines and possibly the laws and policies that relate to political participation of persons with disabilities;
- UNAPD should work with partners to create registers of all persons with disabilities in the implementation sub counties of Kameke and Pallisa Town Council. In this, SEED Uganda committed to work with UNAPD in order to come up with such a template for collecting such data;
- Work in partnership in order to leverage on the project interventions. Action Aid with her GBV shelter has committed to work with UNAPD in order to improve aspects of security and safety for all and;
- The project and leaders should utilise and free radio airtime in order to advocate and inform persons with disabilities. This can be requested through the office of the Resident District Commissioner's (RDC's) office;

SECTION ONE: INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1.1 Introduction

This report presents the results of a baseline on Participation of youths with disabilities in political spaces in Pallisa District. The study was commissioned by the Uganda National Action on Physical Disability (UNAPD) and conducted by Anthony Oleja Enyogu from the Inclusive Development Consults (IDC) Ltd. Data for the baseline was collected during the months of March and April 2022 from Kameke Sub County and Pallisa Town Council.

This report is organized into four sections as follows: Section 1 is the introduction and background; section 2 discusses the legal and policy framework for the participation of youths with disabilities in political spaces in Uganda; section 3 presents the study findings; and section 4 presents the conclusions and recommendations.

1.2 Background

In Uganda, the definition of youths is given by those in the chronological age of between 18 and 30 years². According to the Uganda Bureau of Statistics (UBOS) 2022 population projections, youths currently constitute a significant proportion of the total population at 23.9% (n=10,580,600) of Uganda population (n=44,212,800). The youth population was estimated to grow from approximately 3.7 million in 1991 to 7.7 million in 2014 (out of which 53.4% are females and 46.6% are males) and, to the current 10.5 million projection. The youth population is likely to increase for the next 28 years before a slight drop is gradually realised and therefore, the youth population remains the most dominant population with peculiar needs and aspirations. The youth population is a critical population for stability, productivity and national development. Government of Uganda and her development partners are aware that the youths present exceptional potential with energy, talent and creativity which makes them key drivers for development.

In the youth discourse, youths with disabilities are not left behind. In fact, the National Youth Policy (2016) recognises that,

‘Youth With Disabilities in Uganda face extreme conditions of poverty, limited opportunities to access education, health, employment opportunities and decent housing. There is need for improved efforts to make the physical environment more accessible, providing information in a variety of formats, and challenging misconceptions about the Youths with disabilities.’ National Youth Policy (2016), page 6.

² Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development (MGLSD) (2016) National Youth Policy. MGLSD, Kampala

Uganda's youth face particular challenges around education, employment (unemployment among youths with disabilities stands at 53%), health, relationships and family life, all of which can have adverse consequences on life chances and opportunities. It is around this age that many young people, particularly girls, begin relationships and have children. Gendered attitudes are entrenched from a very young age, and girls who marry young often endure lasting health and other consequences.

1.3 Problematising participation of youths with disabilities in political spaces

Uganda started practicing democratic principles of governance, with the first election in 1996 as per the 1995 constitution, all persons – persons with disabilities inclusive are entitled to participate in the electoral and other political processes³. This is further strengthened by the provisions of the Parliamentary elections Statute 1996 and the Parliamentary Elections Act 2005. In this regard, persons with disabilities have been electing their representatives through electoral colleges (Konrad, 2014). The Electoral Commission Act, 2005⁴, Parliamentary Elections Act Regulations (2005), the Local Government Act 1997⁵ and the Persons with disabilities Act 2020⁶ mandates Electoral Commission to conduct elections of persons with disabilities using Electoral College structures because it was easier and cost effective.

Similarly, Uganda's ratification of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with disabilities (UNCRPD) and its Optional Protocol in September 2008 without reservation, was a consolidation of the legal framework for promoting and protecting the human rights and fundamental freedoms of all Persons with Disabilities. Article 12 of the UNCRPD provides for equal recognition of Persons with disabilities before the law and Article 29(a) emphasizes that Persons with disabilities should 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 them to vote and be elected.

Despite the above legal framework, Persons with disabilities are not effectively participating in political process particularly in Pallisa district. Although Youths with disabilities constitute about 23% of Persons with disabilities population, less than 4% are visible as Persons with disabilities leaders at village or parish levels. The less activeness of Youths with disabilities as rights holders in the political dispensation can be classified in 2 ways: youths with disabilities irrespective of gender have not fully offered themselves to positions of leadership as voices of the voiceless and; even

³ Article 38 of the Constitution of the Republic of Uganda 1995

⁴ Section 8(2)

⁵ Sections 10(4), 23(4), 118(2), and 129 among others

⁶ Sections 17(1i), 43 and 44

those elected are not fully visible and accountable to their electorate to influence decisions or cause change.

Again, the participation in political spaces in principle appears to be participatory, open and transparent. However, there is growing concern over the limited involvement of Persons with disabilities at certain local government levels. There is general lack of meaningful representation of Persons with disabilities on decision making bodies of several committees in the districts, Persons with disabilities continue to be represented by non-disabled persons who take decision on their behalf which have in most cases not in their interest.

Whereas the concept of “equalization of opportunities” states that it’s the duty of the government to ensure the benefits of development programs reach out to the disabled citizens, they continue to be marginalized in development programs due to a number of factors such as; low education levels among Persons with disabilities leading to lack of confidence and self-expression, inadequate information access, intentionally being ignored or discriminated by local government technical teams, not being effectively represented on the committees, in-accessible physical environments where developmental workshops are organized and held from, lack of technical knowledge to contribute towards the elite led discussions, lack of skills of effective representation and negotiation, among others .

In areas where Persons with disabilities are involved, their technical capacity to contribute meaningfully to the discussions is very limited due to their low levels of education. In the long run, this situation leads to lack of prioritization or limited prioritization of disability mainstreaming in the existing local government programs and justifies the saying that “government policies of inclusion or affirmative action in favour of Persons with disabilities have remained more on paper than in action”.

If the existent representative situation is maintained, there is a likelihood of: Persons with disabilities views not being heard and incorporated in the local development agenda (DDPs and SCDPs); inclusion will remain utopian; statistics and budgets used for planning and implementation will be devoid of disability-inclusion meaning and, this will perpetuate the dismal disability situation in Uganda (UNICEF, 2014).

It should equally be noted and emphasized that the cornerstone of democratic governance is inclusive participation in political processes⁷. It determines the

⁷ Acemoglu, D., & Robinson, J. A. (2005). *Economic origins of dictatorship and democracy*. Cambridge University Press.

dynamics of the structure and distribution of political power and the consequent nature of political and economic institutions that shape the political and economic trajectory of the society. Therefore, participation in electoral processes takes various forms including: voting, vying for political positions and, partaking on internal political party activities. There should therefore be an enabling environment and pre-requisites for youths with disabilities to: offer themselves for leadership, vote, attending public meetings, drafting policies and effectively mobilizing and advocating their implementation, attend campaigns, campaign for preferred candidates and participate in vote counting among others. Specific conditions must exist to incentivize inclusive participation in political processes.

1.4 About the Uganda National Action on Physical Disability (UNAPD)

Uganda National Action on Physical Disability (UNAPD) is non-governmental, gender inclusive and democratic organisation that brings together Persons with Physical Disabilities (PWPDs) in Uganda established in 1998 to create a common voice in advocating for rights, better service provision and independent living of members. The vision of UNAPD is “A society where persons with physical disabilities live in dignity”. The Mission of the organisation is “To advance member efforts in removing barriers that prevent PWPDs from enjoying their rights through advocacy, capacity building and networking”. UNAPD’s area of focus is disability rights advocacy and inclusion.

The UNAPD empowerment for Political Participation project

Despite this, participation of people with disabilities in the electoral processes and leadership positions at all levels is still low compared to their nondisabled counterparts. Yet this would have been a great opportunity to determine and influence their destiny socially, politically and economically. This is attributed to discrimination, lack of information in accessible formats for different categories of Persons with disabilities, lack of support to vote and be voted, limited awareness about their rights, low self-esteem, and limited access to physical infrastructure coupled with stigma discrimination.

UNAPD is implementing the “Youths with disabilities empowerment for Political Participation” project in Kameke Sub County and Pallisa Town Council of Pallisa District. The project aims at strengthening effective participation of Youths with disabilities in the political dispensation in the district. In the implementation, UNAPD is capitalising on already built networks, synergies, collaborations, exposure achieved through the ended VOICE-Funded Project on advocacy for Sexual, Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) in the 2 districts of Pallisa and Mbale to further capacitate the rights holders to be self-led advocacy agents towards their effective participation

in the local based politics of Pallisa in a multi-sectoral approach. This project will also be based on the VOICE

Textbox 1: Project Activities

- Inception: meetings and launch in Kameke Sub County and Pallisa Town Council;
- Baseline study: on participation of youths with disabilities in political spaces and disseminate;
- Train 40 YwDs on identified gaps in leadership and governance as per the recommendations of baseline survey (2 trainings);
- Conduct annual project reviews to assess the progress of the project;
- Conduct 4 sub-county-based exchange and learning sessions between right holders, duty bearers, political leaders on participation of YwDs in political processes;
- Conduct 4 monitoring, evaluation and learning activities to assess the performance of the project
- Produce and disseminate 2 versions of 15-30 minutes, disability mini- documentary on YwDs participation in the political process
- Facilitate participation of 10 Youth with Physical Disabilities (YwPDs) in the UNAPD forth coming General Assembly (2022)
- Conduct awareness raising campaign (2410 IECs i.e. brochures, stickers-shirts, Pens, caps, 4 newsletters versions, 4 sessions of radio talk shows, radio spots, social media) on participation of YwDs in leadership and governance.
- Hold 2 community based public speech sessions on Uganda's political processes targeting potential 40 YwDs from 2 sub counties (2 sessions)
- Train potential 40 YwDs from 22 sub-counties in the relevant legal frameworks on political participation (2 trainings)
- Conduct 8 mentoring and coaching meetings between mainstream recognized Youth leaders and identified potential YwDs leaders in negotiation, debate, presentations and lobbying skills
- Organize youth led community-based peoples parliament in 2 sub counties to discuss leadership and governance issues
- Hold at least 6 engagement meetings with political parties at national and local level for inclusion of PwDs/YwDs representation in their governance structures
- Conduct 4 advocacy meetings with Electoral Commission (EC) and National Council for PwDs for the review of PwDs electoral process/law to adopt voting of PwDs at regional levels
- Hold at least 3 meetings with EC offices at national and district levels to advocate for inclusive electoral process (accessible voting places, use of disability friendly language, braille electoral materials for persons with visual impairment, sign languages)
- Hold at least 4 engagement meetings with National Identification Registration Authority (NIRA) to review the bio data collection tool to include disability/impairments.
- hold 2 exchange visits within the sub counties to build alliances with PwDs councilors/leaders for adoption of disability sensitive electoral resolutions in the council
- Conduct annual score cards in 2 project sub counties to assess performance of at least 20 PwDs/YwDs leaders/councilors at different levels of leadership and governance
- Conduct 5 local based networking meeting with mainstream organizations aligned to political participation for disability inclusion (research, election observation, civic education)
- hold advocacy meetings with district and sub county leaders (LC5, CAO, RDC, DEO, DCDO, CDO, GISO, LC3, SAS etc.) for effective representation of PwDs on mainstream committees such as youth, women, elderly at different levels
- Conduct annual Youth stakeholder's conference with the theme on "YwDs participation in the political spaces at local levels".
- Trust fund to UNAPD Membership Associations of Pallisa to: a) Form 2 pressure groups of "Now Us" Youth with Disabilities to advocate to push for effective inclusion of YwDs into the decision-making processes, b) Support the activities of the "Now Us" Youth with Disabilities pressure groups in 2 sub counties aimed at fostering effective
- Facilitate YwDs to participate in the National Youth Day and International Day for Persons with

theory of change which is instigated by 3 paths; empower, amplify and influence, which is typical of a right holders' organizations like UNAPD.

This project therefore seeks to address these problems by ensuring that persons with disabilities are empowered to actively engage in electoral processes and leadership, able to exercise and fully enjoy their fundamental rights and freedoms on an equal basis with others. This project will engage them in both voter education and civic education before, during and after elections; work with electoral commission and train polling assistants on how to handle persons with disabilities during elections. The projects will therefore target unions of persons with disabilities, youths with disabilities election officials and other existent community structures for youths and disability empowerment in the 2 locations.

UNAPD as a rights holder's organization has prioritized efforts to change the status quo among the Youths with disabilities as our communities of practice. Therefore, UNAPD in partnership with her membership community-based association of Pallisa District will empower the rights holders as agents of change and influence decisions for their active participation in an ever-shifting political and leadership spaces in a self-led multi sectoral approach in an effort to change the status quo of disability politics. This will be achieved through mixed lobbying and advocacy interventions informed by baseline survey, empowerment trainings, mentoring and coaching, exchange visits and community led initiatives like people's parliament, annual reviews and score cards, monitoring documentation and dissemination, and support to pressure groups ("Now Us") through the trust fund for positive change and collective accountability, among others.

1.5 Baseline objectives

The main purpose of the study is to understand the current state of participation of youths with disabilities in political spaces in two sub counties of Pallisa District. The baseline provides the project benchmarks and guides interventions towards improving the participation of youths with disabilities in political spaces in Pallisa District.

The specific objectives of the baseline study were:

- 1.1 To assess the prevailing situation on political participation of Youth with Disabilities in Pallisa Town Council and Kameke subcounty;
- 1.2 To establish the factors that limit the effective participation of Youths with Disabilities in the political spaces and;
- 1.3 To determine advocacy strategies to improve effective participation of Youths with Disabilities in the political spaces in Pallisa District and beyond.

1.6 Legal provisions for the participation of youths with disabilities in political spaces

A number of laws and policies exist both at international and national (Ugandan) level which make provisions for the participation of youths with disabilities in political spaces. A review of existing documents and interviews with key informants revealed the following frameworks:

The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with disabilities (CRPD) (2006): This is an international legislation which the Ugandan government ratified. The Convention gives guidelines and outlines actions which states must have in place to ensure access participation of persons with disabilities in political spaces. Uganda's ratification of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with disabilities (CRPD) and its Optional Protocol in September 2008 without reservation consolidated the legal framework on efforts to promote and protect the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by all Persons with disabilities. Specifically, Article 12 provides for equal recognition of Persons with disabilities before the law and Article 29(a) emphasizes 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 them to vote and be elected.

Uganda has enacted electoral laws with provisions on disability as mentioned below however, implementation has been limited and persons with disabilities have minimally benefited. This was emphasized by the CRPD concluding observations for example which highlighted inaccessibility of the voting environment, the absence of electoral materials in accessible formats and the lack of secrecy in the voting process for persons with disabilities. These limit effective participation of persons with disabilities in the electoral processes as candidates or voters.

The following provisions are embedded in **the Constitution of the Republic of Uganda (1995):**

- Objective XVI provides for the recognition of the right of persons with disabilities to respect and human dignity;
- Article 21(2) A persons shall not be discriminated against the grounds of disability among others;
- Article 32(1) The State shall take affirmative action in favour of groups marginalized on the basis of disability or any other reason created by history, tradition or custom, for the purpose of redressing imbalances;
- Article 35 (1) provides that Persons with disabilities have a right to respect and human dignity, and the state and society shall take appropriate measures to ensure that they realise their full mental and physical potential.

- Article 59 (4) Stipulates that parliament shall make laws to provide for the facilitation of citizens with disabilities to register and vote.
- Article 78 (1) provides that parliament shall consist of representatives of persons with disabilities, among other interest groups.

These Constitutional provisions provided a platform for increased advocacy and awareness on the fundamental human rights for persons with disabilities. As a result, even more policy makers and implementers became aware of the needs of persons with disabilities which resulted into the inclusion of disability in subsequent laws relating to elections in Uganda. These include;

- The Local Government Act (1997) sections 10(d) and 23(d) established two councilors with disabilities, a male and female, representing persons with disabilities at district and lower local government councils respectively.
- The Parliamentary Elections act (2005) section 8(2) established five representatives of Persons with disabilities in parliament, at least one of whom to be a woman.
- Presidential Elections Act 2005 section 38 which provides for Assistance of illiterate Voters and other voters with disability.
- The Equal Opportunities Commission Act (2007) section 5 provides for five members of the commission, at least one of whom to be a person with disability.
- The Uganda Communications Act (2013) in section 5, one of the functions of the Uganda Communications commission is “To promote research into the development and use of new communications techniques and technologies, including those which promote accessibility of Persons with disabilities and other members of society to communications services”.

1.7 Engagement in Political spaces by youths with disabilities

1.7.1 Election of Persons with disabilities

The first national elections held in Uganda under the 1995 Constitution was in 1996, Persons with disabilities, as one of the special interest groups, elected their representatives through electoral colleges (Konrad, 2014) under the NUDIPU structure as shown in the Parliamentary Elections Act regulations (2005). The law mandated the Electoral Commission to use such structures for this purpose because NUDIPU had mobilised persons with disabilities and formed branches in all the districts of Uganda.

At that time, the electoral colleges were formed at village, parish, sub-county and district levels. All Persons with disabilities in each village elected one representative to the village council (LC I). At parish level, all village representatives convened at the parish to elect a five-member committee taking into consideration gender, age and

disability (blind, deaf, physical, woman and youth). The parish committees assembled at the sub-counties to elect Sub- County committees and the two representatives of persons with disabilities (one male and one female) to the local government Councils (LC III). The Sub- County committees then elected district and municipal committees and again two representatives of persons with disabilities at those local government levels. The district committees assembled at the national level to elect 5 Members of Parliament.

Although NUDIPU recognised all categories of persons with disabilities, when it came to election of the leaders, some of them including persons with psychosocial and intellectual disabilities and albinism were marginalized during the formation of the electoral colleges. This made it difficult for such groups of persons with disabilities to be elected in leadership positions.

On the other hand, the Electoral laws did not mandate NUDIPU (a non-government organisation) to access Government funding to continuously update its structures and conduct civic education. As a result, mobilization of persons with disabilities to form electoral colleges at all levels became difficult (National Council for Disability, 2011). In 2013, the law was reviewed by Parliament and placed it under the jurisdiction of the National Council for Disability Amendment Act, 2013) a semi-autonomous government body in charge of disability mandated to assist the Electoral Commission in the mobilisation and formation of the electoral colleges for persons with disabilities, civic education and election monitoring (The National Council for Disability Amendment Act, 2013 section 31A) and, in 2020, the revised Persons with disabilities Act 2020 was enacted hence repealing the National Council for Disability Act 2003, Uganda Foundation of the Blind Act and, the Disability Act 2006. .

Despite the amendment, Schedule 3 of the Persons with disabilities Act 2020 excludes some disabilities in the coding of disability categories, for example psychosocial and intellectual disabilities. This was an anomaly since the Government of Uganda is a signatory to the UNCRPD that promotes and protects all persons with disabilities.

Furthermore, the Constitution of the Republic of Uganda (1995) article 80 and Local Government Act, 1997 section 116 sub-section 2 (a), still uses derogatory language such as “unsound mind” and “lunacy” in effect discriminating against persons with psychosocial and intellectual disabilities and prevents them from holding public offices. This also contravenes the provisions of Article 29 of the CRPD, which provides that:

States Parties shall guarantee to persons with disabilities political rights and the opportunity to enjoy them on an equal basis with others, and shall undertake:(a) 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.

Other challenges that have been recorded overtime in participation relate to: registration for voting and/or to be voted; access to physical political spaces and; independence and confidentiality in the voting owing to the 'philanthropic' connotations of communities towards participation in political spaces. These concerns have previously been raised by the National Council for Persons with disabilities (2017) and, unless the concerns are addressed, inclusive political participation is still farfetched.

The baseline therefore provides both a framework for participation in political spaces for persons with disabilities and how to address such concerns right from the grassroots level. By assessing the prevailing situation on political participation and, establishing factors that limit their participation in political spaces, the study generates learning and actions on making elections inclusive for persons with disabilities. It is also believed that with the muddle at the national level, taking baby and yet strategic and sustainable steps at village and sub county level, such lessons can be vintaged, learned and replicated for benefit of all persons in the county.

SECTION TWO: METHODOLOGY

2.1 General Approach

Participatory approaches were used to gather information and views from Persons with disabilities, persons with disabilities leaders, general councilors, DPOs, local government staffs at district and sub county levels, communities, and project implementers among others. Focus group discussions were conducted with project beneficiaries like the trained youths and community members while interviews were also conducted with leaders of persons with disabilities, general councilors, DPO staffs, local government staffs and project implementers. In consultation with UNAPD head office staffs, the project areas to be visited and evaluation participants to be included in each district were selected. Case narratives formed a complementary method of data collection. During FGDs and interviews, evaluation participants with cases that just could not be left were asked at the end or in the due course of the interaction to elaborate and construct those cases.

A combination of quantitative and qualitative research designs was adopted for the baseline. The quantitative component entailed use of structured interviews with selected samples of youths with disabilities. The qualitative component on the other hand consisted of in-depth interviews and focus group discussions applied to a wide range of stakeholders and informants relevant to the situation of persons with disabilities. This promoted wide participation, ensuring that both the intended beneficiaries of the project, as well as other stakeholders including election officials, members of union of persons with disabilities and, the District Council for Persons with disabilities among others, participate and express their views. In addition, both primary and secondary data were used. The secondary data sources consisted of a review of documents relevant to the participation of youths with disabilities in political spaces, including government policy documents.

2.2 Study Sites and Study Participants

The baseline survey was conducted in the project areas of Kameke and Pallisa Town Council in Pallisa District. The study participants included:

- Councilors representing Persons with disabilities in the 2 Sub Counties;
- Community Development officers (CDOs);
- Chairperson of the District Council for persons with Disabilities;
- District Electoral Commission Registrar;
- Sub County Electoral Commission returning officers
- District NIRA Officials;
- Police – Community Liaisons officer and;
- Youths with Disabilities.

2.3 Data Collection Methods and Tools

Data was collected through the following methods:

Structured Interviews – Structured personal interviews were administered to sample youths with disabilities. These interviews were administered on a one-to-one basis, guided by structured interview schedules (survey questionnaire). Depending on the nature of disability possessed by individual youth, for instance in cases where some youths with disabilities were not able to hear and/or speak or express themselves well, questions were asked through a family member, or through a sign language interpreter.

1.1 In-depth Interviews – In-depth interviews were conducted with Key informants. These consisted of one-to-one interviews with identified informants such as Electoral and other government officials, leaders of unions/ associations of persons with disabilities, Community Development officers (CDOs) and, members of the District Council for Persons with Disabilities. An interview guide, consisting of a checklist of topics for discussion was used to guide these interviews.

1.2 Survey Questionnaire: In order to generate quantifiable data, the researchers undertook a survey on participation of youths with disabilities in political spaces in the target sub counties. The survey targeted youths with disabilities with various impairments. Whereas no scientific approach to sampling was used, the target youths gave representative information and credence to the study.

1.3 Focus Group Discussions – these were held with youths with disabilities in the sub county and town council

1.4 Document Review – Relevant documents such as legislations existing on Persons with disabilities were reviewed to access any key information regarding the targeted beneficiaries.

2.4 Data management and reporting

Quantitative data from this study consisted of responses to structured interviews gathered with the survey questionnaires. Filled questionnaires were checked after each interview, and further editing was done at the end of each day, to ensure completeness and accuracy. Completed questionnaires were thereafter coded and open-ended responses were also assigned codes. Data was entered using Epi Info and analyzed using SPSS to generate frequencies, and cross-tabulations of selected study variables.

Qualitative data consisting of textual notes gathered mainly from focus group discussions and key informant interviews was transcribed and typed. Analysis was done using Nvivo software. Thematic analysis of qualitative data was done. The process involved verbatim transcription of audio recordings followed by generation of themes guided by evaluation objectives, expected outcomes and the evaluation focus area. Emerging themes within the data were followed and these guided the analysis and interpretation of evaluation findings. Content analysis of quantitative data obtained largely through reviewing the project proposal. A triangulation of information obtained was done to draw converging perspectives and experiences.

The consultant together with UNAPD staffs came up with and agreed on a work plan that guided the evaluation. UNAPD staffs provided useful insights into the project activities prior to and in the due course of the study.

2.5 Ethical Considerations

The purpose of the study and the information sought was adequately explained to the participants in order to secure their informed consent to participate. Their voluntary participation and right to opt out at any time were boldly emphasized. The procedure followed in their selection was well communicated. Permission was also sought from the participants before using the audio-recorders. In all cases, participants agreed to the recording. Study participants were assured of confidentiality and anonymity. To ensure confidentiality, the report excludes individual names of participants. All photographs were taken and used with prior permission. There is overall utmost objectivity in analysis and reporting of the findings.

SECTION THREE: STUDY FINDINGS

3.0 Introduction

The baseline findings in this chapter are presented to capture the objectives: The gender, occupation, knowledge, attitudes and practices on political participation and, the discussion thereof are presented herein. These are also presented in accordance with the objectives.

3.1 The study area and her demographic characteristics

Pallisa district is located in the Bukedi sub-region of Eastern Uganda. It is bordered by the districts of: Serere in the Northwest, Ngora in the North, Kumi in the North East, Bukedea, Butebo and Budaka in the east, Kibuku and Kaliro in the south and Namutumba in the west. It lies between latitudes 0045'N and 10 05'N and longitudes 33047'E and 34005'E; with an average altitude of 1,050 above sea level. The district headquarters are situated in Pallisa Town and the District has a total area of 1,956 km² (755 sq mi) of which land area is 564 km² (604 sq mi)⁸. The district is predominantly inhabited by Iteso and Bagwere who speak Ateso and Lugwere respectively.

Administratively, Pallisa district has 3 Counties, with 17 rural Sub-counties and 4 Town Councils; 95 parishes and 493 villages. Pallisa Town Council is found in Pallisa County while Kameke Sub County is found in Kibale County.

Pallisa district has a population of 386,890 who live in 64,777 households⁹ and an 87.4% of her population engaged in subsistence farming. The study established that the 44.4% and 50.6% of the persons who lived in Kameke Sub County and Pallisa Town Council were below the poverty line¹⁰. This was way above the 21.4% national average¹¹.

3.1.1 Education

Below is a table indicating the literacy levels in Pallisa district

Table 1: Literacy levels of Pallisa District

| Parameter | Number | Percent |
|--|--------|---------|
| Persons aged 18 years and above who are illiterate | 20,886 | 42.2 |
| Males aged 18 years and above who are illiterate | 7,251 | 32.3 |
| Females aged 18 years and above who are illiterate | 13,635 | 50.5 |

Source: UBOS 2017 – Pallisa District

⁸ <https://www.pallisa.go.ug/lg/location-size>

⁹ The average household size is 6 persons which is higher than the national average household size of 4.7

¹⁰ Pallisa District Local Government – Statistical Abstract 2018/2019

¹¹ Uganda Bureau of Statistics (UBOS) 2021- Statistical Abstract. UBOS, Kampala

The above table indicates a literacy rate of 57.8% for Pallisa district as compared to 73.5% national statistics (UBOS, 2021). There is a possibility that these statistics could have changed owing to the COVID-19 pandemic boomerang. It was not possible to establish the literacy rates of persons with disabilities in the district but the statistics above indicate that illiteracy among persons with disabilities could be much lower which dismally affects access and utilisation of goods, services and facilities.

To unravel this, the team used national education statistics to build a possible enrollment case and literacy case. Below is a table of enrollment of learners with disabilities (also called learners with Special Needs) in Pallisa District

Table 2: Enrollment of learners with disabilities in Pallisa District

| Impairment | Boys | Girls | Total |
|--------------------------------|------|-------|--------------|
| Autism | 75 | 62 | 137 |
| Hearing | 500 | 466 | 966 |
| Mental | 321 | 278 | 599 |
| Multiple - Including Deafblind | 11 | 11 | 22 |
| Physical | 541 | 381 | 922 |
| Vision | 407 | 357 | 764 |
| Total | | | 3,410 |

Source: Ministry of Education and Sports, Education Abstract 2016 (page 123)

From the table above, out of the enrolled 118,535 enrolled in Primary Schools in Pallisa District, 3,410 were learners with disabilities which represented 2.88%. Again, 28.3% of the learners had hearing impairments, 27% with physical impairments, 22.4% with visual impairments; 17.6% with mental impairments, 4% with autism and, 0.6% with multiple impairments – including Deaf blindness.

3.1.2 Justice

There is seldom information on access to justice. However, the jurisprudence system in Uganda is applicable and Pallisa district is not exceptional.

A baseline survey commissioned by National Union of Disabled Persons of Uganda (NUDIPU) in 2013 on access to justice observed that 54% of Persons with disabilities do not report violations of their rights to any authority largely due to lack of awareness of their rights to access justice. It further observed that there were few Public Interest cases on disability issues and that non-implementation of the existing laws and policies is a key reason for violation of these rights. In cases where the victims of a crime are persons with disability, their presence in courts of law and participation in the trial

process is key and should be emphasized and encouraged especially where they can be assisted to tell their story. Prosecution processes should be more victim focused.

3.1.3 Disability in Pallisa district and other demographic characteristics

According to the National Population and Housing Census Report 2016, Pallisa had a disability prevalence of 19.9% (n=77,158). This was higher than the national prevalence of 12.5%. Below is a table indicating the difficulty stands¹² and their rates

Table 3: Persons with disabilities in Pallisa District

| Difficulty strand | Population | Percentage |
|-------------------------|----------------|------------|
| Seeing | 24,123 | 31.3 |
| Hearing | 12,708 | 16.5 |
| Remembering | 23,066 | 29.9 |
| Walking | 17,261 | 22.4 |
| Total (PWDs) | 77,158 | |
| Total Population | 386,890 | |
| Disability prevalence | 19.9 | |

Source: UBOS 2016

The information above is vital for project targeting especially by impairment and such demographics presented above.

3.1.4 Key political spaces in the study area

Political space refers to the avenues, opportunities and entry points available for citizens to express their voice and influence political processes and outcomes¹³. A political space is considered open if citizens are able to communicate their preferences, organize, act individually and collectively and engage government without restrictions or harassment.

The key political spaces that were found in the study area included:

- Sub County and Town Council office Headquarters – particularly the council halls;
- Places of worship;
- Schools and other learning institutions;
- Social Centres such as the one in Pallisa Town Council;
- Trading centres – with community radios and;
- Radio stations (as both a physical space and entry point) among others.

¹² This is the recommended language owing to the statistical provisions of the Washington Group on Disability statistics and, the UBOS adopted this in all her surveys and censuses

¹³ <https://www.ndi.org/sites/default/files/Issue%2050%20A%20Matter%20of%20Political%20Space.pdf>

Given the higher poverty rates, the Televisions and print media did not offer better entry points for dispensations of a political nature. The political spaces identified were mainly being used for: council deliberations (including appropriation and key decisions that affected all including persons with disabilities); organizing elections including – display of registers, registration of candidates vying for elective positions, polling centres, campaign centres/ places, security and safety places for persons and polling materials, centres for administration of justice – including arbitration; centres for voter education and; places where special interest (including those of persons with disabilities) were discussed among others.

The baseline established that: of the political spaces mentioned above, the Sub County and Town Council Headquarters were the most active ones since there was a moratorium on political debates (barazas/ bimeeza) and there was immense interferences from the centre and Police on radio and other mass gatherings other than those organized by the establishment (National Resistance Movement).

It should therefore be noted that, democratic and socio-economic development requires citizen participation to drive change and ensure accountable government. Without active citizen involvement in political life, public officials may be unresponsive to their constituents and the basic rights and freedoms of democracy can go unrealized. In order for citizens to play an active role, they must have open, accessible and inclusive political spaces.

3.1.5 Polling stations in the study area

There are 43 polling stations in study area that is Kameke Sub County (11) and Pallisa Town Council (32). These had a total of 21,793 voters in the 2021 election cycle. These are presented in the Table below

Table 4: Registered voters in Kameke and Pallisa Town Council

| Sub County | Parish | No | Parish | Registered Voters |
|------------|--------------|----|--------------------------|-------------------|
| Kameke | Kameke | 1 | Kameke PS | 637 |
| | Nyakoi | 2 | Ogalai Oerere Tree | 576 |
| | | 3 | PAG Church, Kareu | 390 |
| | | 4 | Late Magali's Mango Tree | 339 |
| | | 5 | Ocupai-opeduru TC | 522 |
| | Komolo B | 6 | Kameke Scty Hqtrs | 465 |
| | | 7 | Komolo Manga Ogasian | 480 |
| | Komolo Manga | 8 | Omongole's Mango Tree | 480 |
| | | 9 | Orony Pemi Church | 331 |

| | | | | |
|--|-----------|-------------------------------|----------------------------------|---------------|
| | Omuroka | 10 | Omuroka Pag Church | 429 |
| | | 11 | Omuroka PS | 337 |
| Total registered voters (Kameke Sub County) | | | | 4,986 |
| Pallisa TC | West Ward | 12 | Apostolic Church | 795 |
| | | 13 | Pallisa Dairy Co-operation | 718 |
| | | 14 | Okaribwok Prm Church | 599 |
| | | 15 | Odwarat - Olua A PS | 493 |
| | | 16 | Pallisa High School - Kalalaka B | 410 |
| | | 17 | Pallisa Progressive Sec. Sch | 393 |
| | East Ward | 18 | Kalaki PS | 740 |
| | | 19 | Supa PS | 516 |
| | | 20 | His Grace PS– Obekai | 480 |
| | | 21 | Supa Catholic Church | 464 |
| | | 22 | Obuge Mango Tree | 362 |
| | | 23 | Police Play Ground | 737 |
| | Kagwese | 24 | Industrial Area Ground | 715 |
| | | 25 | Pallisa Parents Pr. Sch. | 655 |
| | | 26 | Rweta A – Borehole | 601 |
| | | 27 | Abundant Church | 571 |
| | | 28 | Nalufenya PS | 510 |
| | | 29 | Pallisa Health Centre III | 486 |
| | | 30 | Kagwese Primary Sch. | 428 |
| | | 31 | Kagwese CoU | 309 |
| | | 32 | Kawoken P.r.m Church | 713 |
| | Hospital | 33 | Odwarat CoU | 554 |
| | | 34 | Kaicho B - Mango Tree | 419 |
| 35 | | Pallisa Hospital Playground | 407 | |
| 36 | | Pallisa Community Centre | 299 | |
| Kaicho | 37 | Akadot PS | 598 | |
| | 38 | Pallisa Township PS – Kisenyi | 594 | |
| | 39 | Amusala LC 1 Court | 544 | |
| | 40 | Kaicho Boys PS | 540 | |
| | 41 | Busitema University | 523 | |
| | 42 | Victory SS | 399 | |
| | 43 | Pallisa Township PS | 235 | |
| Total registered voters (Pallisa TC) | | | | 16,807 |
| Total registered voters (Kameke & Pallisa TC) | | | | 21,793 |

Source: Electoral Commission, May 2022

From the table above, the densely populated polling stations in Kameke Sub County were: Kameke Primary School, Ogalai Oerere Tre and, Ocupai-Opeduru Trading Centre. In Pallisa Town Council, the polling stations with the highest number of registered voters were: Apostolic Church (4.7%), Kalaki Primary School (4.4%), Pallisa

Dairy Co-operation (4.3%), Industrial Area Ground (4.3%) and Kawoken PRM Church (4.2%).

Polling stations are usually located in accessible and public places and therefore, such information is imperative for locating ideal places for community meetings during the project implementation.

3.2 Demographic characteristics of survey respondents

The study undertook a survey with 63 respondents who had disabilities and youths in the Kameke Sub County and Pallisa Town Council. 60.3% (n=38) and 39.7% (n=25) of the youths with disabilities interviewed were from Pallisa Town Council and Kameke Sub County respectively.

Table 5: Respondents by sub county and sex

| Sex | Sub County | | Total |
|--------------|------------|-----------|-----------|
| | Palissa TC | Kameke SC | |
| Male | 26 | 17 | 43 |
| Female | 12 | 8 | 20 |
| Total | 38 | 25 | 63 |

Source: Baseline survey data

Table 6: Respondents by sub county and Highest level of education attained

| <i>Highest level of education</i> | Sub County | | Total |
|--|------------|-----------|-----------|
| | Palissa TC | Kameke SC | |
| <i>None</i> | 6 | 3 | 9 |
| <i>Primary Education</i> | 12 | 13 | 25 |
| <i>Completed Primary Education</i> | 13 | 4 | 17 |
| <i>Ordinary Level</i> | 3 | 1 | 4 |
| <i>Completed Ordinary Level</i> | 3 | 1 | 4 |
| <i>Tertiary Education and Training</i> | 1 | 3 | 4 |
| Total | 38 | 25 | 63 |

Source: Baseline survey data

From the table above, majority (66.7%) of the respondents had been to primary schools and some completed, 14.3% did not have any formal schooling while 12.6% had been to secondary education.

Table 7: Respondents by sub county and Disability category

| Disability category | Sub County | | Total |
|---------------------|------------|-----------|-------|
| | Palissa TC | Kameke SC | |
| Hearing | 5 | 7 | 12 |
| Intellectual | 5 | 6 | 11 |
| Physical | 17 | 8 | 25 |
| Visual | 8 | 4 | 12 |
| Multiple | 3 | 0 | 3 |
| Total | 38 | 25 | 63 |

Source: Baseline survey data

3.3 Establishments at the district level that support the participation of Youths with disabilities in political spaces

The study established a number of establishments (both government and civil society) that provided a platform for participation in political spaces in Kameke Sub County and Pallisa Town Council. These included councils, commissions and CSOs among others. These establishments are described herein below.

3.3.1 The Electoral Commission

The Electoral Commission is established under Article 60 of the Constitution of the Republic of Uganda (1995) [as amended]. It is mandated to compile maintain, revise and update the National Voters Register (NVR) on a continuing basis.

Article 61 (1) (e) of the Constitution states that, 'The Electoral Commission shall compile, maintain, revise and update the voters' register', and Section 12 (1) (e) and (k) of the Electoral Commission Act, Cap 140 (as amended) states that the Commission shall, subject to and for purposes of carrying out its functions under Chapter Five of the Constitution and this Act, have the powers to take measures for ensuring that the entire electoral process is conducted under conditions of freedom and fairness; and to ensure that persons with disabilities are able to vote without any hindrance.

The study established that there was a District Electoral Commission office in Pallisa that was headed by a District Elections Returning Officer and, there were Sub County Election Officers in every sub county. These ensured that there was smooth, fare and

just elections in their areas of Jurisdiction. The study team interacted with the Town Council and Sub County Election Officers who provided additional information on their role – including voter education, ensuring securing and adherence to electoral laws, provision of electoral materials and supervising lower election officials among others.

At the national level, there is a desk for Special Interest Groups where persons with disabilities fall. At District level, Special Interest Groups are the mandate of the District Return Officer. In our interaction with the Elections Officer of Pallisa Town Council, he stated that,

‘The Election of Persons with disabilities is mainly through the Electoral Colleges which start from the village levels. The elect 9 members from the village who proceed to the parish and later to the Sub County’ Election Officer, Pallisa Town Council

3.3.2 The Sub County/Town Council

The Sub County/ Town Council is headed by a Senior Assistant Secretary who have a role they play in the participation of persons with disabilities. It is the home of the council¹⁴, a point for voter verification and education and; an administrative unit where electoral materials are dispatched and kept.

The Sub County/ Town Council has an administrative structure of a Community Development officer who is also the technical focal point person for Persons with Disabilities. They are responsible for ensuring that persons with disabilities participate in governance and development programmes. It was however established that the Community Development Officers were not adequately facilitated and capacitated to undertake activities that increased the participation of persons with disabilities in their areas of jurisdiction. For complementarity, the respondents were probed on the existent government programmes for persons with disabilities in the sub county. There was a mention of the district special grant and nothing was stated about the national special grant and, special needs and inclusive education among the common and yet catchy programmes for persons with disabilities.

3.3.3 The Councils for Persons with disabilities

Lower Councils for Persons with disabilities are established under Part V of the Persons with disabilities Act 2020. Section 30 and 33 of the Persons with disabilities Act 2020 established the District and Sun County Councils for Persons with Disabilities. Their roles among others include: liaising with Government on the needs,

¹⁴ a political space for Council deliberations, a venue for voting, a home to the Lower Councils for Persons with Disabilities, a headquarter of the administrative unit, sometimes a home for the Police and Police stations and, a venue for voter education among others.

problems and other issues of persons with disabilities, for planning purposes and; mobilise persons with disabilities to participate in elections, sports and other co-curricular activities for persons with disabilities at all levels.

Textbox 2: The Persons with Disabilities Act 2020

Section 43 (Election of representatives) Persons with Disabilities Act

1. The election of the representatives of persons with disabilities at all levels of Government shall be conducted using the electoral structure prescribed in Schedule 7 to this Act.
2. The Electoral commission shall facilitate the formation of electoral colleges at the different levels of Government and shall appoint returning officers and presiding officers to conduct the elections of the representatives of persons with disabilities.
3. Any person with a disability who meets the national standard for elections has a right to contest for any elective office to represent persons with disabilities.
4. Elections at the national, district and city level shall be by secret ballot.
5. Elections at village, parish or ward, subcounty, division and town council level shall be by the electorate lining up behind the candidates nominated for the office, or their representatives, portraits or symbols.

44. Candidates for elections

A person with a disability may be nominated by the Electoral commission for elections under this Part, where that person is sponsored by a political organization or a political party or where the person stands for elections as an independent candidate.

The Council for persons with disabilities provides a platform for participation of persons with disabilities right from the sub county to national level. Again, in the election process, the councils' work is limited to mobilisation – which role has always been met with enormous challenges.

“We did not participate in mobilisation because the Electoral Commission always prefers to do it and we are not also contacted to support in the mobilisation... if they contact the Council, we will help them in understanding the needs of disabled people and also mobilise them for voter education and elections” Chairperson Pallisa District Council for Persons with Disabilities.

It was also established that there was no council for persons with disabilities in Kameke Sub County.

“The only Council here is the District Council” Senior Assistant Secretary – Kameke Sub County

When asked whether the offices had copies of the Persons with disabilities Act 2020, the Senior Assistant Secretary said that they did not have any such documentation pertaining Persons with Disabilities.

3.3.4 The National Identification and Registration Authority (NIRA)

The National Identification and Registration Authority (NIRA) is established under the Registration of Persons Act, 2015. The Act harmonizes and consolidates the law on registration of persons; provides for registration of individuals; establishes a national identification register; establishes a national registration and identification authority; provides for the issue of national identification cards and aliens identification cards and for related matters.

NIRA has a core role of registration of Persons. At the time of its establishment, and registration of persons, voter details were generated and currently being used by the Electoral Commission. All persons who vote must be registered on the voters register - which role is also collaborated with NIRA.

The key challenges that persons with disabilities faced in as far as registration was concerned included: lack of or 'deformed' biometric features and facial identifiers; majority of persons with communication disabilities missing out on national registration due to lack of information; limited involvement of Organisations and Associations of Persons with disabilities in mobilisation for registration, inaccessible offices – without ramps; lack of skills in communication with particularly the Deaf and deaf-blind persons; the high costs associated with replacing a lost identity card. All these curtailed voter registrations, participating in elections and being elected in positions of leadership among others.

3.3.5 Civil Society Organisations (CSOs)

Civil societies¹⁵ are a key actor in ensuring that there all persons are participating in political spaces. In 2021, the only accredited civil society that monitored elections was the Pallisa Civil Society Organizations' Network (PACONET). PACONET undertook electoral monitoring although in their reporting, nothing was made in regard to inclusive elections for persons with disabilities.

¹⁵ According to the World Bank: "Civil society ... refers to a wide array of organizations: community groups, non-governmental organizations [NGOs], labour unions, indigenous groups, charitable organizations, faith-based organizations, professional associations, and foundations."

The Inclusion of persons with disabilities in political spaces there has to be an enabling environment for effective participation of persons with disabilities in Electoral processes. In order to achieve this, it is necessary to work with key actors namely; Parliament of Uganda, Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development (MGLSD), Ministry of Justice and constitutional affairs (First Parliamentary Counsel) Political Parties, the Independent Electoral Commission, National Identification and Registration Authority (NIRA), Equal Opportunities Commission (EoC), Uganda Human Rights Commission (UHRC), Organisations of Persons with disabilities (OPDs), Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), Non-Government organisations (NGOs) and development partners to come up with an action strategy for achieving this noble pillar of governance.

3.4 Participation in Political activities

3.4.1 Rights to political participation

The baseline team asked respondents whether youths with disabilities participated in political activities in their communities. The respondents confirmed that indeed Youths with Disabilities participated in political activities. However, they acknowledged that there were pre-requisites to participation. These pre-requisites included among others: being a member of a political organisation such as a political party, being registered as a voter and/or having national registration – with a national identity card.

‘Yes, youths with disabilities and those who meet the requirements do participate in political activities for example those that have National I.D, those with voter’s cards.’ Respondent in a FGD for youths with disabilities in Kameke Sub County

‘Yes, they do participate although very few participate as candidates. Most of those that participate do so as voters but not candidates because they are despised, they have low self-esteem, they are not empowered. The requirements for participation include; Having a national identification card, voters’ card, to the candidates, one must be endorsed.’ Respondent in a FGD for youths with disabilities in Pallisa Town Council

Respondents were asked whether they were aware of their rights to participate in political processes. In Kameke Sub County, the youths said that they were aware of such rights and they mentioned rights such as the rights to: contest for political positions, associate with other persons deemed to be ‘able-bodied’, campaign for their candidates, express themselves during the campaigns and also when we contest for political positions. However, in Pallisa Town Council, the youths with disabilities stated that they were not aware of such rights.

'No, we are not aware of those rights ... even our leaders are not aware of their rights.' Respondent in a FGD for youths with disabilities in Pallisa Town Council

The youths with disabilities were also asked whether the rights of persons with disabilities in political participation were being observed in their communities. Common responses showed that such rights were being observed although to a smaller extent. The two main compounding factors for such responses related to marginalization of persons with disabilities in the community and, a lack of esteem on the part of the persons with disabilities to advocate for such rights.

'Yes, they are observed although to a small extent. This is so because persons with disabilities are discriminated in the community and most of them have low self-esteem so even in events where political offences are committed, it is very rare for them to raise their complaints.' Respondent in a FGD for youths with disabilities in Kameke Sub County

'The rights are not observed because persons with disabilities are not aware of those rights. More so, we are marginalized and despised so we cannot advocate for the rights we are not aware of.' Respondent in a FGD for youths with disabilities in Pallisa Town Council.

The Electoral Commission believes that they are delivering to their mandate and that sometimes because of the overwhelming work, they may not address individual needs of persons with disabilities in elections.

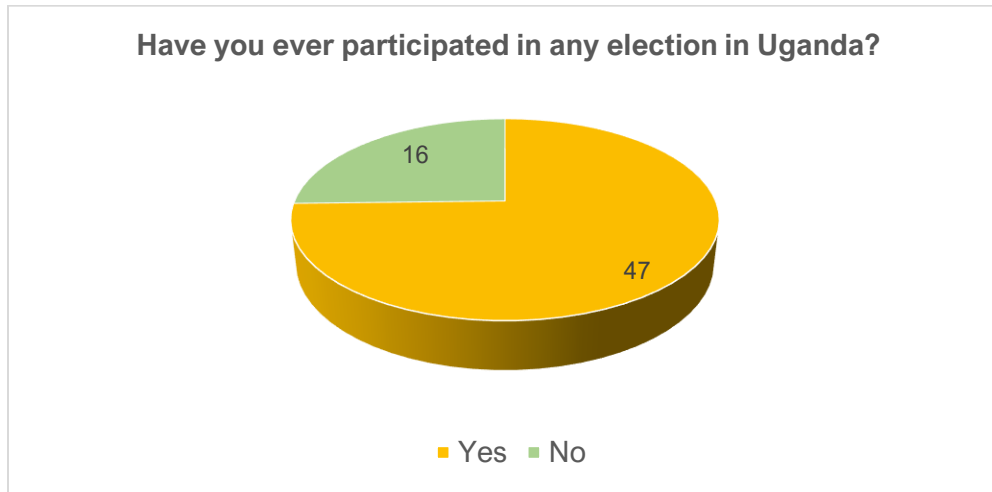
'We do not discriminate against anybody when it comes to elections. All people including the disabled ones are treated equally and allowed to participate in any activity be it voter registration or elections' Election Officer, Pallisa Town Council.

'Sometimes I see the election officials reaching out to families of people who cannot come to register but then, how many more people will the display officers reach in an entire electoral area, will the logistics be adequate?' Community Development Officer – Kameke Sub County

The study team checked on the prevailing information on the rights of citizens to participate in civic activities. There was no evidence of such information at the Town Council and Sub County Hall. The lack of such vital information could in-part limit participation of youths with disabilities in political processes.

The Respondents to the survey were asked whether they had ever participated in any elections. The results are presented herein below

Figure 1: Responses for having participated in any elections



Source: Baseline survey data

From the figure above, 74.6% of the respondents had ever participated in elections. The nature of elections that they had ever participated in is presented in the table below.

Table 8: Nature of elections participated in by the youths with disabilities

| If yes, which elections have you participated in? | Sub County | | Total |
|---|------------|-----------|-----------|
| | Palissa TC | Kameke SC | |
| None | 10 | 6 | 16 |
| General Elections | 22 | 12 | 34 |
| Youth Elections | 3 | 5 | 8 |
| Election of leaders of youths with disabilities | 2 | 0 | 2 |
| Union elections | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| Total | 38 | 25 | 63 |

SOURCE: Baseline Survey Data

All those who responded that they had ever participated in youth elections and elections of persons with disabilities (electoral colleges) had also participated in the previously concluded general elections. 17% had participated in youths' elections, 4.3% on elections of youths with disabilities and, 6.4% had participated in the elections within their unions.

In regard to responses associated with union elections, the results were corroborated with responses from the Focus Group Discussions where by the youths with disabilities

belonged to a specific district union of persons with disabilities. The main responses indicated that they did not belong to the unions.

'No, not all youths belong to a specific district union. We know only UNAPD which is an organization so about district unions we do not know.' Respondent in a FGD for youths with disabilities in Kameke Sub County

'Not all of them. Most of us don't even know the meaning of union and we have not heard about it. Those who know the Unions probably belong to them. The leaders of those unions don't even mobilise us therefore we don't even know the leaders of those unions.' Respondent in a FGD for youths with disabilities in Pallisa Town Council.

Again, the youths in an FGD were asked about the most active district unions of the persons with disabilities in their community. In Kameke, the Uganda National Action on Physical Disability (UNAPD) was mentioned while in Pallisa Town Council, Pallisa District Action on Physical Disability (PADIAPD) and Pallisa District Union (PADPU). The variation could possibly be attributed to Pallisa Town Council being near the centre and that is why they were aware and possibly participated in the union activities. Other than those two mentioned, there were no uni-disability associations that were mentioned – which points towards a limitation in collective efforts in advocating for the rights of youths with disabilities at both district and sub county levels.

The responses above suggest that there is limited mobilisation for participation in union politics which has an effect on understanding of the rights to participate in general politics.

3.4.2 Pre-requisites for aspiring for a political office

The requirements for aspiring for an elective office include: picking nomination forms which should be signed by a given number of voters in a specific area, possession of a national identity card and being on the voters register, paying a stipulated amount of money and presenting academic documents (where they are provided for).

The data generated indicated that, 4.3% (n=2) respondents had participated as voters and candidates while 95.7% had participated as voters only. The respondents who stated that they had wished to contest also decried the high costs of contesting.

'As Electoral Commission, we dot determine these terms. We only enforce compliance and where the terms are not supportive to the disabled, we ask you to address it with the councils or parliament' Election Officer, Pallisa Town Council.

'The requirements can be met by anyone but then the campaigns are very expensive to facilitate. My friend, you have to pay for motorcycles to reach your

electorates, some come with simple and hard problems which they think you can solve and you have to feed people – all those are costs to be met' Kll with District Councilor representing Persons with disabilities at Pallisa District Local Government.

'We simply cannot afford! Our community members will ask for five thousand shillings to sign for you on the forms and yet you do not even have enough to eat in your home.' Respondent in a FGD for youths with disabilities in Pallisa Town Council.

The other contributing factors for not contesting for positions included: limited education and communication especially in the town council, limited accessibility – where some of the respondents reporting having an additional cost of transporting their assistive device to far places to collect the required signatures and campaigning; the high fees for registration for nomination to contest for positions; limited time for campaigning and; simply not having interests in politics.

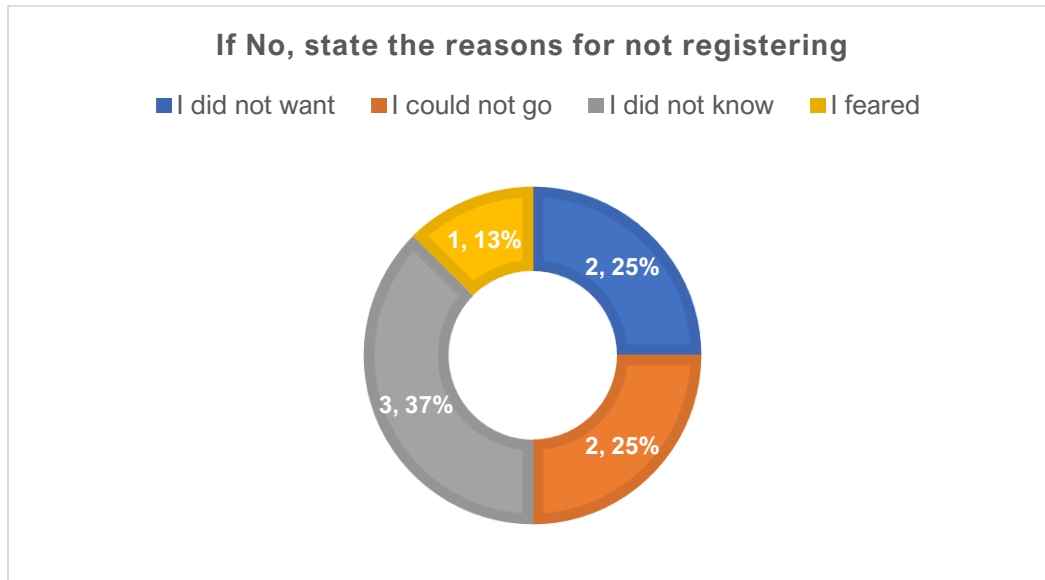
3.5 Participation in elections

Participation in elections requires that: one is registered and has adequate information on election dates, persons to be elected, participation in campaigns, access to polling areas and voting, witnessing counting, safety and security and, specifically for persons with disabilities, voter assistance and guidance. The baseline explored the current practices in as far as these pre-requisites were concerned and the findings are presented herein below.

3.5.1 Voter registration

The respondents were asked in the survey whether they were registered as voters. 87.3% (n=55) had been registered while 12.7% (n=8) were not registered. Those who were not registered were asked for the reasons and they are presented in the figure below:

Figure 2: Reasons for not being registered as a voter



Source: Baseline survey data

From the figure above, the responses of ‘I did not want’ (at 25%) could be attributed to negative attitudes towards participation in elections; ‘I could not go’ (at 25%) could be attributed to limited accessibility to both information and registration centres; ‘I did not know’ (at 37%) could be attributed to lack of information and; ‘I feared’ (at 13%) could be attributed to low self-esteem and other external factors such as: prior experiences of violence and intimidation that is always associated with electioneering.

The respondents who were registered as voters were asked whether the process of registration was easy or difficult. 53% (n=29) said that the process was easy, 31% (17) said that they found some difficulty in registration while, 16% (n=9) said that they found a lot of difficulty in registering.

Table 9: Reasons why registration was found to be easy or difficult by the respondents

| Give reasons for the answer you have chosen above: | Sub County | | Total |
|--|------------|-----------|-------|
| | Palissa TC | Kameke SC | |
| No Response | 8 | 7 | 15 |
| I did not line up | 4 | 4 | 8 |
| I was supported | 4 | 2 | 6 |
| The register was brought to my home | 6 | 2 | 8 |
| I do not know how to read | 1 | 4 | 5 |
| I cannot see well | 2 | 1 | 3 |
| The officials were tough | 5 | 2 | 7 |
| I thought I was going to pay | 5 | 2 | 7 |

| | | | |
|--------------------------|----|----|----|
| The weather was not good | 3 | 1 | 4 |
| Total | 38 | 25 | 63 |

Source: Baseline survey data

The responses in the table above relate to both support and non-provision of support during registration. For example, those who reported not to be in position to see well and, read were probably related to impairment and low literacies; while those who reported bad weather were related to access to the registration venues and; those who were supported found registration easy.

The Constitution of Uganda (1995) Article 59 (2, 3 and 4 respectively) stipulates that it is the duty of every citizen of Uganda of eighteen years of age or above to register as a voter for public elections and referenda; that the State shall take all necessary steps to ensure that all citizens qualified to vote register and exercise their right to vote; provides that parliament shall make laws to provide for the facilitation of citizens with disabilities to register and vote.

Article 61 (e) of the Constitution of the Republic of Uganda states that,

“Compiling, maintaining, revising and updating the voter register is a responsibility of the Electoral Commission.”

This was re-echoed in section 19 of the Electoral Commission Act (2002). However, for the 2016 and 2021 general elections, such function was delegated to National Identification and Registration Authority (NIRA) without building the capacity of NIRA to support their function. The research established that the registration form used in this exercise highlighted only 3 disability categories namely blind, hearing and physical disability leaving other disabilities to be captured in a provision of “other, however the officials who supported registration lacked capacity to sufficiently utilize the form to capture other disabilities that were not mentioned. More to note, the voters / national identity card does not indicate where the owner has a disability or not.

‘During registration and voter verification, we even try to reach homes of people who cannot come to the registration centre. I reached out to one home where there were two old people who could not come to the sub county’ Election Officer, Kameke Sub County.

The study further established other challenges related to voter registration that included: inaccessible physical environment; the notice board where the names were displayed was high and some wheel chair users could not reach it to verify the details; lack of Sign language interpreters to assist Persons with disabilities at registration centres; long distance to the registration venues and; lack of other (other than the bio-

metric finger print reader) features that could be used to verify the registered voter incase of a deformity where the identity features were.

3.5.2 Voter education and information

The baseline established the level of voter education and information in Kameke Sub County and Pallisa Town Council. The focus of the discussion was on access to information, sources of information and medium of communication used in voter education and information. In the FGDs, the participants were asked whether youths with communication disabilities (such as the Deaf and Blind) were made aware of dates, venues, services and (possible) outcomes associated with political participation. Below are the responses.

‘Yes, they are made aware through their helpers. Their helpers inform them of the venues, dates and outcomes associated with the political participation.’ Respondent in a FGD for youths with disabilities in Kameke Sub County.

‘No, they are not made aware because those who would be expected to inform them don’t inform them because they don’t know sign language so the Deaf are left out and most of the people with visual, hearing impairments stay with their grandparents who are not empowered, some of them are equally vulnerable so they are not made aware.’ Respondent in a FGD for youths with disabilities in Pallisa Town Council.

The survey asked the respondents whether they received any voter education prior to voting. Below are the results.

Table 10: Respondents reporting to have received voter education prior voting

| As a person with disability, did you receive any voter education prior to voting? | Sub County | | Total |
|---|------------|-----------|-------|
| | Palissa TC | Kameke SC | |
| <i>No Response</i> | 3 | 2 | 5 |
| <i>Yes</i> | 13 | 10 | 23 |
| <i>No</i> | 22 | 13 | 35 |
| Total | 38 | 25 | 63 |

Source: Baseline survey data

From table 10 above, the majority of the respondents (55.6%) reported not to have received voter education prior voting. The team further probed those who said that they had received voter education whether it was disability friendly and accessible. 30% of the respondents said that the voter education and information was disability friendly and accessible. The analysis has been made to ascertain the level of

accessibility of voter education and information by impairment or disability category. Below is a table of the results.

Table 11: Respondents reporting on disability friendliness and accessibility of voter education

| Disability category | Was the voter education you received disability-friendly? | | Total |
|---------------------|---|----|-------|
| | Yes | No | |
| Hearing | 2 | 10 | 12 |
| Intellectual | 3 | 8 | 11 |
| Physical | 8 | 17 | 25 |
| Visual | 5 | 7 | 12 |
| Multiple | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| Total | 19 | 44 | 63 |

Source: Baseline survey data

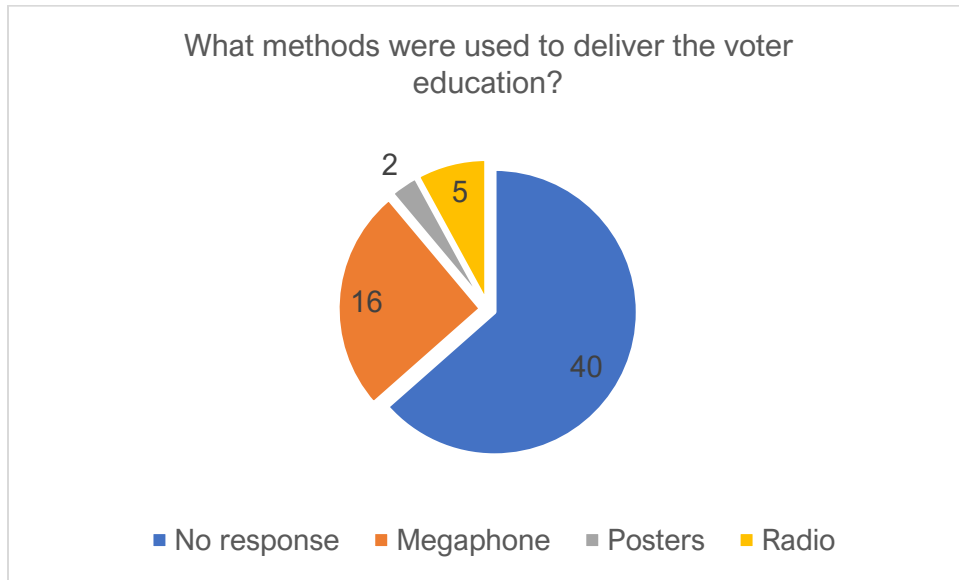
Persons with hearing impairments and those with intellectual impairment reported the highest difficulty in as far as access and friendliness of the voter education was concerned at 83.3% and 72.7%. This is possibly because of communication difficulties and the educators not understanding the peculiar communication needs of such persons. 68% of persons with physical impairments reported having difficulty in accessing voter education possibly due to the physical venue of the voter education. The main reasons for unfriendliness was related to lack of assistance in interpreting the messages and the impairment itself (could not hear or see well).

The baseline study established the venues where the voter education was mainly undertaken from. The respondents stated that, churches, sub county headquarters and radios were the main venues. The election officials said that, the venues were accessible.

‘The education sites are accessible, we even put posters and sometimes announce on the community radios but we have not been looking out for the Deaf because we are not trained on how to handle them with sign languages’
Election Officer, Kameke Sub County

The main methods used to deliver voter education and information are presented in the figure below

Figure 3: Medium used for delivering voter education



Source: Baseline survey data

The study has established that the megaphone was the common medium used to deliver voter education. The study team finds it the most appropriate although suggest blending it with local signs for the benefit of other youths with communication disabilities.

The respondents were asked to suggest approaches of improving voter education and information and below is a table of responses.

Table 12: Suggested approaches of improving voter education

| <i>Suggest ways of improving the voter education to meet your needs as a person with disability</i> | Sub County | | Total |
|---|------------|-----------|-----------|
| | Palissa TC | Kameke SC | |
| <i>No response</i> | 2 | 0 | 2 |
| <i>Bring the information home</i> | 2 | 3 | 5 |
| <i>Give information to PWD leaders</i> | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| <i>Facilitate PWD leaders to deliver voter education</i> | 13 | 9 | 22 |
| <i>Large print</i> | 6 | 3 | 9 |
| <i>Put education on a market day</i> | 8 | 6 | 14 |
| <i>Bring us in group of PWDs</i> | 6 | 3 | 9 |
| <i>Others</i> | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Total | 38 | 25 | 63 |

Source: Baseline survey data

From table 12 above, majority of the respondents (34.9%) recommend that, leaders of persons with disabilities be facilitated to deliver voter education and information. This was followed by: putting education on a market day (22.2%), educate persons with disabilities in their specific groups (14.3) and, large print (14.3%).

The point of facilitating the leaders of persons with disabilities resonates with one of the objectives of the Councils for Persons with disabilities - mobilise persons with disabilities to participate in elections, sports and other co-curricular activities for persons with disabilities at all levels.

3.5.3 Participating in campaigns

The baseline established the level of participation of youths with disabilities in political campaigns. The responses indicated that the degree or severity of impairment determined the level of political participation

‘Some participate especially those with mild disabilities but those with severe disabilities don’t campaign. Campaigns are done through door-to-door methods, use of posters for the candidates to be known, some have loud speakers that they use during campaign season and that is used to advertise the aspiring candidates.’ Respondent in a FGD for youths with disabilities in Kameke Sub County.

‘Some do campaign but not all them. Those whose disabilities are not severe do campaign because we have campaign agents, others campaign using door to door methods.’ Respondent in a FGD for youths with disabilities in Pallisa Town Council.

The main incentives offered for participation of youths with disabilities were materials such as: branded T-shirts, household consumables such as sugar, salt and soap and; whistles. These items equally compromised the independence and judgment of the youths with disabilities since they voted based on those items. It should be noted that these incentives are illegal and they tantamount to voter bribery and ‘vote buying’. The ideal incentives should be provision of information for campaigns, T-shirts and posters on the rights to political participation and, portable radios for such cohorts.

The Youths with Disabilities were also asked about the challenges that they faced in participating in political campaigns. Most of the responses pointed towards: access to campaign venues and assault.

‘Mobility challenges to those physically disabled since some stay very far and sometimes the rain affects movement due to some slippery roads, discrimination because some people think disability is a curse, assault and

battery from opposition.' FGD Respondent with a physical impairment in Kameke Sub County

'We face a challenge of battery and assault from political opponents, for instance they beat up a man who was in wheel chair and they threatened to take his wheel chair if he didn't stop campaigning for his candidate, also some political opponents block the way to hinder us from campaigning.' FGD Respondent with a physical impairment in Pallisa Town Council.

The respondents suggested that the candidates with disabilities be facilitated with transport means as an affirmative action; provide all youths with disabilities with adequate security during campaigns and also at the polling stations because those who assault them do it well knowing that they will not be charged and; undertake induction trainings especially for the new contestants with disabilities in Pallisa District.

3.5.4 Accessibility to polling areas and voting

Access to polling areas is a general challenge to persons with disabilities. The respondents were asked whether the voting process was disability friendly. 79.3% stated that the voting process was not disability friendly.

Table 13: Reasons why the previous elections were not disability friendly

| Give reasons for your answer above. | Freq | Percentage |
|--|-----------|------------|
| <i>No response</i> | 17 | 26.98 |
| <i>They came for me at home</i> | 6 | 9.52 |
| <i>I was supported</i> | 3 | 4.76 |
| <i>I knew everything</i> | 3 | 4.76 |
| <i>I lacked privacy</i> | 10 | 15.87 |
| <i>I feared the soldiers</i> | 14 | 22.22 |
| <i>There was violence</i> | 3 | 4.76 |
| <i>They steal votes</i> | 1 | 1.59 |
| <i>My name was not in the register where I usually vote from</i> | 1 | 1.59 |
| <i>My name was removed</i> | 1 | 1.59 |
| <i>I lost my voter's card</i> | 3 | 4.76 |
| <i>I was chased away</i> | 1 | 1.59 |
| Total | 63 | 100 |

Source: Baseline survey data

From Table 13 above, the fear of soldiers – possibly due to what the youths with disabilities had heard and lack of privacy emerged as the main reasons as to why the respondents referred to the election as not being disability friendly. Security forces

during elections should not only be reactive to quell riots and violence but also be seen supporting those in need.

Textbox 3: Voting experience of a Youth with Disability from Kameke Sub County

During the 2021 political elections, we were advised to vote for candidates of our own choices, we were told that the elections would be inclusive but that did not happen. The blind people were totally left out because we were urged to tick on the candidates that we wanted to vote for but that was impossible because we could not see where to tick. We had to vote through our helpers and that was challenging because they could deceive us so that you tick to the candidate they wanted since they were the ones telling us what was on the ballot papers, also the physically disabled we faced a challenge of lining up to those long lines to cast our votes. We easily get tired of standing for long but that was not put into consideration.

Textbox 4: Voting experience of a Youth with Disability from Pallisa Town Council

My name is Namirembe Abutwahib, I once contested for Parish chairperson for persons with disabilities at Parish level. My experience was a rough one. I was economically poor, so most of the people I was asking to vote for me were asking for money from me. Many were abusing me because I could not give them any money and they were encouraging others not to vote for me because I was poor that I could not help them to overcome their problems since me myself I am in the same state like them.

The study established that there was no reasonable accommodation provided for persons with disabilities and so was affirmative action and/or any exceptions. However, the Electoral Commission officials indicated that, persons with disabilities and Older persons were transported to the polling stations by the candidates and that, upon reaching the polling stations, they do not line up but rather just proceed to the voting area.

3.6 Barriers to effective participation in elections

The barriers to participation that were identified during the key informant interviews were also stated by the respondents in the survey. Below is a table of such barriers.

Table 14: Key challenges faced by persons with disabilities during elections

| Key challenges faced by persons with disabilities during elections | Freq. | Percentage |
|--|-------|------------|
| <i>Lack of transport</i> | 3 | 4.76 |
| <i>I was not supported</i> | 4 | 6.35 |
| <i>Lack of information</i> | 11 | 17.46 |
| <i>I lacked privacy</i> | 10 | 15.87 |
| <i>I feared the soldiers</i> | 14 | 22.22 |
| <i>There was violence</i> | 3 | 4.76 |

| | | |
|--|-----------|------------|
| <i>They steal votes</i> | 1 | 1.59 |
| <i>My name was not in the register where i usually vote from</i> | 1 | 1.59 |
| <i>My name was removed</i> | 6 | 9.52 |
| <i>I lost my voter's card</i> | 4 | 6.35 |
| <i>I was chased away</i> | 2 | 3.17 |
| <i>The names were tiny to be seen</i> | 3 | 4.76 |
| <i>Lack of a national ID</i> | 1 | 1.59 |
| Total | 63 | 100 |

Source: Baseline survey data

The respondents were asked whether they thought that there were persons with disabilities in their communities who would want to register or vote but are denied a chance because of such challenges. In response, 66.7% (n=42) respondents said that they were there, while 33.3% (n=21) said that they were not there and, they suggest the following recommendations in addressing such challenges.

Table 15: Recommendations for addressing the challenges faced by persons with disabilities during elections

| Suggest ways of improving the voting process to meet your needs as a person with disability: | Frequency | Percent |
|---|------------------|----------------|
| <i>Let people be told about peace</i> | 8 | 12.7 |
| <i>Always include our names on the register</i> | 8 | 12.7 |
| <i>Be truthful in counting votes</i> | 7 | 11.1 |
| <i>Provide transport</i> | 6 | 9.5 |
| <i>Provide voter information</i> | 6 | 9.5 |
| <i>Ensure privacy at the polling station</i> | 5 | 7.9 |
| <i>Show us a specimen of the ballot paper</i> | 5 | 7.9 |
| <i>Replace lost voter's cards</i> | 5 | 7.9 |
| <i>Remove soldiers</i> | 4 | 6.3 |
| <i>Educate us on what to do other than chasing us away</i> | 3 | 4.8 |
| <i>Support them to vote</i> | 2 | 3.2 |
| <i>Make larger names on the ballot papers</i> | 2 | 3.2 |
| <i>No response</i> | 1 | 1.6 |
| <i>Provide us with a national ID</i> | 1 | 1.6 |
| Total | 63 | 100 |

Source: Baseline survey data

3.7 Additional assistance for polling

Prior to the election, the focal person of the Special Interest Groups assured the country that ballot jackets¹⁶ would be used for the blind in order to improve confidentiality, that election supervisors and polling assistants would be trained on assisting persons with disabilities during the voting process and to ensure they did not have to queue. In line with the former promise, most of the respondents affirmed that they did receive assistance. An interesting observation raised by most respondents is the assistance they received from other voters. This included being helped to locate names that were very inaccessible due to the fact that they were written in small fonts and, in many cases, posted high on the wall. This indicates that, in general, members of the community are sensitive to the needs of persons with disabilities and are aware of the limited assistance available to them.

3.8 Beyond elections: the participation of Youths with disabilities in governance

Youths with Disabilities are beneficiaries of good governance and allocations from public goods¹⁷. In the provision of such goods, the venue for appropriation of such goods are usually the parliaments, councils and commissions. The study team established that: there was a Special Grants Committee in the Town Council and Sub County although at Kameke Sub County, they had not submitted any applications for the National Special Grants which limited their sources of funds for income generation; there were councilors representing persons with disabilities in the respective councils; there are representatives of Persons with disabilities in the Parish Development Committees (PDCs)¹⁸; there was a representative of persons with disabilities on the District Service Commission (DSC)¹⁹; there was a District Council for persons with disabilities although there was no sub county council for persons with disabilities in Kameke and; the election of representatives of persons with disabilities had been done through the electoral colleges.

To assess the performance of elected leaders with disabilities in influencing legislation or decision-making, the study team obtained information from a document review and from the participants in the study. Many participants with disabilities indicated that elected leaders with disabilities had not met the expectations of their constituents. The

¹⁶ Also known as a tactile jacket, this is a special pocket (which is usually brailed with the elections candidates) that allows persons with visual impairments to independently identify candidates and vote those of their choice with independence.

¹⁷ a commodity or service that is provided without profit to all members of a society, either by the government or by a private individual or organization.

¹⁸ PDCs are created to ensure smooth running of the Parish Development Model (PDM) – a development approach that has been designed by government to promote a cooperative-like development trajectory.

¹⁹ Responsible for employment and public service Labour relations in the district

evidence provided included failure of Councilors in disseminating information programmes and projects to Persons with disabilities, lack of capacity amongst councilors to do the job, and some councilors working towards their own personal gain. Other reasons cited for poor performance included low education levels, discrimination by fellow councilors and lack of support to meet their peculiar disability needs.

Further, the limited number of Persons with disabilities in councils is another challenge. Two representatives in the local government council (a male and female) are often not enough to influence issues in their favour. Research has established that at least one third of any group should be women if women's rights are to gain any traction. The same must be true for any other marginalized group. Thus, if there is a majority (able-bodied or men), the voice will hold more sway than the lone voice. To that end it is important that Persons with disabilities, who are often a minority on councils or parliamentary committees, should either be capacitated in terms of advocacy and influencing their fellow members OR – other mechanisms must be used to promote disability rights.

The study team probed whether such committees and councils were representing the interest of youths with disabilities. Responses from the youths indicated that there was little that the representatives were adding on the table since they were not much educated. The Councilors representing persons with disabilities in the respective Sub County and Town Councils indicated that they were doing their best although being curtailed by the number of councilors representing other constituencies who did not understand the peculiar needs of persons with disabilities.

'You know the Council is driven by numbers especially during voting. With me and my counterpart who represent disabled people, it is difficult to outcompete those other councilors. What we need now is to sensitize them on our needs so that we win them over.' Councilor representing Persons with Disabilities, Pallisa Town Council.

The survey asked respondents whether in their opinion, the councilors' representing persons with disabilities performed to their satisfaction. 31.7% (n=20) of the respondents said that the councilors performed to their satisfaction while 68.3% (n=43) said that the councilors did not perform to their expectation. The reasons for their responses are given in the table below.

Table 16: Reasons as to why the councilors were or not performing to expectations

| Reasons for the responses | Have the councilors' representing PWDs performed to your satisfaction? | | Total | Percentage |
|--|--|-----------|-----------|------------|
| | Yes | No | | |
| The hall is not accessible | | 10 | 10 | 15.9 |
| We receive nothing from the council | | 9 | 9 | 14.3 |
| I have never heard them contribute | | 6 | 6 | 9.5 |
| They just go there to eat | | 5 | 5 | 7.9 |
| They are illiterate | | 3 | 3 | 4.8 |
| They are sabotaged by other councilors | | 3 | 3 | 4.8 |
| No Special Needs School | | 3 | 3 | 4.8 |
| Nothing from our party is coming | | 2 | 2 | 3.2 |
| They have over stayed | | 2 | 2 | 3.2 |
| They represent us well | 12 | | 12 | 19.0 |
| We are on the PDC | 7 | | 7 | 11.1 |
| No response | 1 | | 1 | 1.6 |
| Total | 20 | 43 | 63 | 100 |

Source: Baseline survey data

3.9 Conclusion: a framework for participation in political spaces.

The CRPD concluding observations has made some recommendations on Uganda's maiden report in 2016 in regard to Article 29: Participation in political and public life.

Textbox 5: CRPD Concluding Observation on Participation in political and public life (art. 29)

1. The Committee is concerned about the restrictions in the Constitution and the electoral law that prevent persons with psychosocial and/or intellectual disabilities, thus discriminating against them and preventing them from standing for elections; it is also concerned about the inaccessibility of the voting environment and absence of electoral materials in accessible formats and the absence of secrecy in the voting process by persons with disabilities.

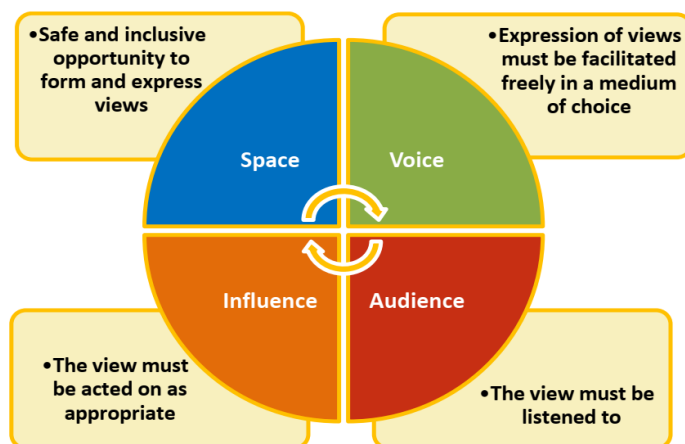
The Committee recommends that the State party:

- a) Repeal discriminatory legal provisions that restrict persons with disabilities from exercising their right to stand for elections;
- b) Provide voter education and awareness to persons with disabilities and adopt measures to ensure that the electoral process is accessible to voters with disabilities including voter registration, accessible polling centres and materials and assistance to vote by persons of their choice;
- c) Inform persons with disabilities on their right to vote, provide financial support to organizations of persons with disabilities to conduct the election processes of persons with disabilities in a transparent manner.

In response to the CRPD committee recommendations, the Government of Uganda designed the National Comprehensive action plan on the rights of persons with disabilities 2020-2024 where the Ministry of Justice and Constitutional Affairs (MoJCA), the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development (MGLSD), the National Parliament, Organisations of Persons with disabilities (OPDs) and, the National Council for Persons with disabilities (NCPD) were tasked to ensure implementation of the recommendations made in regard to Article 29.

For youths with disabilities to effectively participate in political spaces, there is need to apply the entire spectrum of the features of meaningful participation which are demonstrated in the figure below

Figure 4: Features of meaningful participation



Source: Lundy, 2007²⁰

The features above are discussed herein below:

Space: Youths with disabilities need to be able to form and express views and they must be afforded the space and time to do so. Youths with Disabilities should be given the opportunity to gain the confidence, the time and space to contribute their views on governance. This applies both at the individual level, for example, decisions relating to whether to vote or not, education, access to services, legislation or policies.

Voice: To speak or not to speak for themselves, express their views from the various foras and be recognised. Voice also relates to contributing ideas and not just say,

²⁰ Lundy L. Voice is not enough: Conceptualizing Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. *British Educational Research Journal*. 2007 Dec;33(6)(6):927-942

choose to meet with peers and prioritize together. Youths with Disabilities can express themselves using different media other than the traditional radio and megaphones mentioned earlier. This needs to be provided in different forms according to the communication needs, for example in relevant languages, in sign language, braille or other forms of augmented communication. Not all youths will be able to express themselves easily. They may need to be able to raise issues confidentially, or through different forms of expression, for example, in writing, through artistic media including music, poetry or writing. It is worth remembering that, according to Article 29 of the UNCRPD, participation rights are based on the capacity to form a view, and not on the ability to express a view in any particular way.

Audience/ Action: The youths with disabilities and their leaders should have the ability to identify problems and make suggestions on how to address them locally through political and technical engagements.

Influence: Having a status within the community (as expert clients on disability), be empowered and have influence over opportunities and services and the choice to be elected and/or elect and; having an active role in decision making whilst remaining accountable to the community as a whole.

The chapter mainly made the presentation of findings which indicated a number of parameters relating to the youth participation in the study sub county and town council.

SECTION FOUR: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 Introduction

The section makes conclusions and recommendations to the study taking into the objectives of the study

4.2 Conclusions

This sub section makes the conclusion of the main findings of the study whilst taking into account the outcomes. There are several conclusions derived from the findings of this study. One of these is that a variety of international and national legal instruments safeguard the fundamental rights and freedoms of persons with disabilities to participate in electoral processes. However, their implementation is still a challenge, which can be attributed to some of their provisions not being disability-specific as well as there being insufficient resource allocation to the preparation and organisation of disability inclusive elections in Uganda.

With a disability prevalence of 19.9% (n=77,158) in Pallisa, there was limited participation of persons with disabilities in political spaces. This was mainly driven by the handicap associated with the impairments and, a disability unawareness in electoral processes. In regard to impairment and unawareness, there was limited – if at all no reference to the laws, policies and guidelines for including persons with disabilities in political spaces. For example, the accessibility standards (as provided for in the Building Control Act 2013 and the regulations thereof 2019) were not adhered to in the selection of polling stations and there were no accessible routes to the meeting venues such as council halls; accessibility formats, the Uganda Communication Commission (UCC) directive on the use of Sign language in public places and, the lack of knowledge on availability and provisions of the Persons with disabilities Act 2020 makes reference to the law by the Town Clerk and Senior Assistant Secretaries difficult to execute;

There were established institutions that support the participation of Youths with disabilities in political spaces. These among others included; the Electoral Commission – with officials up-to Sub County level; the Sub County and Town Council; the District and Sub County Councils for Persons with Disabilities; the National Identification and Registration Authority (NIRA) and, Civil Society Organisations (CSOs). However, the institutions were found to be either not being aware of the participation needs of persons with disabilities or not facilitated (through financing, equipment and training) for disability inclusion hence limiting the participation if persons with disabilities in key political spaces. The Inclusion of persons with disabilities in political spaces there has to be an enabling environment and resources for effective participation of persons with disabilities in Electoral processes.

The respondents confirmed that indeed Youths with Disabilities participated in political activities. However, they acknowledged that there were pre-requisites to participation. These pre-requisites included among others: being a member of a political organisation such as a political party, being registered as a voter and/or having national registration – with a national identity card. In Kameke Sub County, the youths said that they were aware of such rights and they mentioned rights such as the rights to: contest for political positions, associate with other persons deemed to be ‘able-bodied’, campaign for their candidates, express themselves during the campaigns and also when we contest for political positions. However, in Pallisa Town Council, the youths with disabilities stated that they were not aware of such rights. Again, 74.6% of the respondents had ever participated in elections.

The main incentives offered for participation of youths with disabilities were materials such as: branded T-shirts, household consumables such as sugar, salt and soap and; whistles. These items equally compromised the independence and judgment of the youths with disabilities since they voted based on those items. It should be noted that these incentives are illegal and they tantamount to voter bribery and ‘vote buying’. The ideal incentives should be provision of information for campaigns, T-shirts and posters on the rights to political participation and, portable radios for such cohorts and; the main barriers to participation in elections identified included: fear, low self-esteem, ignorance and communication challenges. These challenges need to be addressed in order to realise inclusive participation of youths with disabilities in political spaces right from the grassroot to national level.

4.3 Recommendations

4.3.1 CRPD based recommendations

The CRPD Committee on Uganda’s concluding observations recommended that; the state party repeals all legal provisions that restrict persons with disabilities from exercising their right to stand for elections; provide voter education and awareness to persons with disabilities and adopt measures to ensure that the electoral process is accessible to voters with disabilities including voter registration, accessible polling centres and materials and assistance to vote by persons of their choice and; persons with disabilities on their right to vote, provide financial support to organizations of persons with disabilities to conduct the election processes of persons with disabilities in a transparent manner. The study team reiterates such recommendations because they still address the concerns raised by youths with disabilities during the study.

4.3.2 Awareness creation on Disability and political spaces

Create awareness for youths with disabilities on the available political spaces and their rights and responsibilities to use them. The political spaces include: Sub County and Town Council office Headquarters – particularly the council halls; places of worship; schools and other learning institutions; social centres such as the one in Pallisa Town Council; trading centres – with community radios and; radio stations (as both a physical space and entry point) among others;

Create awareness among election officials – including electoral commission officials (and all her temporarily hired staff), Sub County and Town Council Staff; members of the District Council for Persons with Disabilities (DCPD), police officials and, Senior Assistant Secretaries(SASs) on: the rights of persons with disabilities in political participation; how to foster inclusive communication, the legal pre-dispositions on the rights to political participation of youths with disabilities; actions and inactions for disability inclusion and accessibility among others. It is also imperative to train the officials on materials that support persons with specific disabilities such as; the ballot jacket, umbrellas for persons living with albinism and, how to draw illustrations for polling stations among others;

Train councilors at District level, Kameke Sub County and Pallisa Town Council on: understanding disability, key concerns of persons with disabilities in councils, commissions and elections; disability laws, policies and national guidelines in place and; effective representation of persons with disabilities among others;

The district Electoral Commission office should request for a training with the head of Special Interest Groups at the national office to translate all electoral guidelines relating to persons with disabilities and;

Create awareness for persons with disabilities on their rights and responsibilities to political participation

4.3.3 Information and education

Work with representatives of persons with disabilities to use both physical and other tech-based means to locate polling stations for persons with disabilities and the use of any self-servicing item that may be available for polling;

Provide voter education and translation services in Ateso, Lugwere and sign language. Where such materials are available, the team recommends that the Electoral Commission works with UNAPD and the Makerere university and, the Lugwere Bible project to support translation of such materials;

4.3.4 On Voter registration and verification

Facilitate the council for persons with disabilities to support mobilisation of persons with disabilities to register, identify the locations of persons with disabilities and, provide transport to frail persons with disabilities to participate in key electoral and political activities among others;

Incorporate use of Short Message Services (SMS) and other social media platforms that appeal to youths for education. The use of Facebook, WhatsApp, TikTok and Viz kit among others could be adopted in addition to the existing medium used;

4.3.5 Leadership and governance

Reinstate political debates (barazas/ bimeeza) with regulation on use to minimize abuse. This should be done in accordance with the Public Order Management Act and in consultation with the Uganda Police authorities;

Constitute the Sub County Council for persons with disabilities in Accordance with the Section 30 and 33 of the Persons with Disabilities Act. In these, the unions and the councils for persons with disabilities should be used for mobilizing, transporting and educating persons with disabilities on political participation;

Design and provide a compendium of electoral laws, policies and guidelines for persons with disabilities to officials and council members. In this regard, there is need to develop a simplified version – preferably in the common local languages for persons with disabilities with illustrations;

Increase youths' participation in party politics and key decisions of their unions by encouraging them to vie for political and leadership positions, be accountable to their electorates or subjects and, share key advocacy messages with the Councils for Persons with disabilities and the other local government councils;

For complementarity, avail the Community Development Officers (CDOs) and Senior Assistant Secretaries with copies of the Special Grants guidelines (January 2022 version), the Persons with Disabilities Act 2020 and, when approved, the Persons with Disabilities Regulations 2022. The CDOs and the SASs should be in position to support groups of persons with disabilities to apply for national special grant. It is hoped that improving household and personal incomes of persons with disabilities will reduce on voter bribery and ultimately independence and confidence to articulate issues;

4.3.6 Improve access to political spaces

Put in place ballot jackets for the blind with brailed ballot papers; provide a specimen of the ballot paper for each category of candidates for prior learning and avoidance of ballot wastes (and possibly nullification); ensure physical accessibility by providing ramps to council halls and polling places, leveling the designated polling ground for easy access and;

4.3.7 Provision of affirmative action and reasonable accommodation

The National Identification and Registration Authority should undertake mobilisation for persons with disabilities – in consultation with the DCPD and the SC-CPD for registration of all potential persons with disabilities for a national identity card. This should also capture other personal feature that can be used in the absence of a signature and fingers or finger prints; provide affirmative action (fee-free replacement and registration) of persons with disabilities and; particularly target persons with communication disabilities (such as the Deaf, persons with visual and intellectual impairments);

The councils could pass ordinances where persons with disabilities receive fees waivers for registration of their associations, organisations and, for political offices.

Provide incentives such as T-shirts and posters to youths with disabilities with key messages on inclusion and the rights to participation;

4.3.8 Monitoring and reporting

Working with the Councils for Persons with Disabilities, CSOs and leaders of persons with disabilities, to monitor, provide incidence and, summative reports on elections and participation of persons with disabilities;

4.3.9 Other generic recommendations

Other recommendations include: orient security forces (including the army) on Military- civil relationships including supporting persons with disabilities and advising them on security and safety and, provision of additional information to cohorts of youths with disabilities and orient representatives of persons with disabilities on councils, and statutory commissions on their role among others.

4.3.10 Additional recommendations from the baseline dissemination

The stakeholders who participated in the dissemination of the report additionally made the following recommendations:

- The project should provide councilors and leaders of persons with disabilities with the guidelines of the National Special Grants Programme so as to enhance the incomes and economic wellbeing for persons with disabilities. This will in turn improve their esteem and spur participation in political spaces;
- There is need to provide translation services for persons with speech impairments even when such impairments are not provided for in the Persons with Disabilities Act 2020. The members noted that political participation requires voicing and the exclusion of such persons is detrimental to the body disability;
- There is need to introduce civic education in both schools and community education programmes;
- There should be popular version of the report, the National Special Grants Guidelines and possibly the laws and policies that relate to political participation of persons with disabilities;
- UNAPD should work with partners to create registers of all persons with disabilities in the implementation sub counties of Kameke and Pallisa Town Council. In this, SEED Uganda committed to work with UNAPD in order to come up with such a template for collecting such data;
- Work in partnership in order to leverage on the project interventions. Action Aid with her GBV shelter has committed to work with UNAPD in order to improve aspects of security and safety for all and;
- The project and leaders should utilise and free radio airtime in order to advocate and inform persons with disabilities. This can be requested through the office of the Resident District Commissioner's (RDC's) office;

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Annex 1: Reference Letter to the CAO - Pallisa

4th March 2022

Our ref: UNAPD/BSL/02/2022

The Chief Administrative Officer
Palissa District

Dear Sir/Madam,

Baseline Study on Participation in Political spaces by Youths with Disabilities

Inclusive Development Consults (IDC) Limited – a consultancy firm specializing in capacity development, monitoring and evaluation has been contracted by Uganda National Action on Physical Disability (UNAPD) to undertake her baseline. The Baseline will be undertaken in Kameke Sub County and Palissa Town Council from 4th – 6th April 2022. The team will particularly interview:

1. Community Development Officer(s);
2. Councilors representing Persons with Disabilities
3. District Community Development Officer;
4. District Registrar (Electoral Commission);
5. Members of the District and Sub County Council for Persons with Disabilities;
6. NIRA representative
7. Police – Community Liaisons Officer;
8. Senior Assistant Secretary – Kameke Sub County
9. Town Clerk, Palissa Town Council and;
10. Youths with Disabilities;

The purpose of this minute is therefore to introduce to you the Bearer of this Letter (_____) who will be supporting this exercise. We also request you to support the assessment and the project as we get on.

All the necessary COVID-19 National Standard Operational Procedures (SOPs) will be observed by the team during the assessment.

We look forward to your cooperation.

Yours

Anthony Oleja Enyogu
Chief Executive Officer

Annex 2: General Consent Form

UGANDA NATIONAL ACTION ON PHYSICAL DISABILITY STUDY ON PARTICIPATION OF YOUTHS WITH DISABILITIES IN POLITICAL SPACES IN PALISSA DISTRICT

General consent

INFORMED CONSENT AND CONFIDENTIALITY OF INTERVIEWS

Good morning/afternoon, [preferred title] _____. My name is _____ and we are working on behalf of the Uganda National Action on Physical Disability (UNAPD). I am gathering information on participation of youths with disabilities in political spaces in Palissa District. If you agree, we would like to ask you some questions in order to understand the situation of youths with disabilities in regard to their participation and associated needs in your community. This will guide UNAPD in implementing her project in Palissa District.

The interview will take less than 1 hour. All the information we obtain will remain strictly confidential and your answers and name will never be revealed. Also, you are not obliged to answer any question you do not want to, and you may stop the interview at any time without affecting your living in this settlement.

The study is expected to generate information for UNAPD's project interventions to increase participation of youths with disabilities in political spaces. This is not to assess or criticize you, so please do not feel pressured to give a specific response and do not feel shy if you do not know the answer to a question. I am not expecting you to give a specific answer; I would like you to answer the questions honestly, telling me about what you know, how you feel, the way you live and how you respond to children with disabilities. Feel free to answer questions at your own pace and do not hesitate to tell me if a question or word is not clear so that we can explain it to you.

Do you agree to participate in this interview? Yes No
(If yes, continue to the next question, if no, stop the interview and thank the respondent)

Do you have any question before we start? Yes No (If yes, answer questions).

May I start now?

Annex 3: Focus Group Discussion Guide

GENERIC QUESTIONS

TOOL 1: FGD GUIDE FOR YOUTHS WITH DISABILITIES

Interaction questions

1. Who are the persons considered as having a disability in your community?
2. Who is considered a youth with a disability in your community?
3. What is the situation of persons with disabilities in your community?
4. Do youths with disabilities participate in political activities in your community? (probe for the nature of activities, who is allowed to participate and, the requirements for participating)
5. Are you aware of the rights of persons with disabilities to participate in political processes? (probe for examples of such rights)
6. Are rights of persons with disabilities in political participation observed in your community? (probe for the reasons)

Participation in activities of the electoral colleges

7. Do all youths with disabilities belong to a specific district union of persons with disabilities?
8. What are the most active district unions of persons with disabilities in your community?
9. Are youths with disabilities part of the governance structures of the unions of persons with disabilities?
10. Are youths with disabilities effectively represented in the unions or associations of persons with disabilities? (probe for how they are represented and on whether they believe that their representatives are suitable to represent them)
11. Do youths with disabilities form part of the electoral college that elects their leaders at all levels (probe for the levels where youths with disabilities elect their leaders)
12. How else are youths with disabilities involved in the existent unions of persons with disabilities in your community or district? (probe for specific activities and/or programmes where the youths with disabilities are involved)
13. What are the common challenges that youths with disabilities face in participation in unions or associations of persons with disabilities in your community or district?
14. Which category of persons with disabilities is most affected/ (probe for why and how such a category is affected)

Participation in party political structures and key decisions

15. Do all youths with disabilities belong to a specific political party?
16. What are the most active political parties in your community?
17. Are youths with disabilities part of the governance structures of the political parties that they belong to?
18. Are youths with disabilities effectively represented in the political parties? (Probe for how they are represented and on whether they believe that their representatives are suitable to represent them)
19. How else are youths with disabilities involved in their party politics? (Probe for specific activities and/or programmes where the youths with disabilities are involved)
20. What are the common challenges that youths with disabilities face in participation in their political parties?
21. Which category of persons with disabilities is most affected/ (probe for why and how such a category is affected)

Participation in political processes

22. Do all youths with disabilities participate in political campaigns? (Probe for how they participate in such campaigns)
23. What incentives are offered for youths with disabilities to participate in political campaigns?
24. What challenges do youths face in participating in political campaigns?
25. How can these challenges face by youths with disabilities in political campaigns be addressed?

Belonging to a specific political party?

26. What are the most active political parties in your community?
27. Are youths with disabilities part of the governance structures of the political parties that they belong to?
28. Are youths with disabilities effectively represented in the political parties? (Probe for how they are represented and on whether they believe that their representatives are suitable to represent them)
29. How else are youths with disabilities involved in their party politics? (Probe for specific activities and/or programmes where the youths with disabilities are involved)
30. What are the common challenges that youths with disabilities face in participation in their political parties?
31. Which category of persons with disabilities is most affected/ (probe for why and how such a category is affected)
32. Are youths with disabilities aware of their rights to participation? (Probe for such rights)
33. Are youths with communication disabilities (Such as the Deaf and Blind) made aware of dates, venues, services and (possible) outcomes associated with political participation?
34. Please share your simple experience in participating in the recent (2021) political elections

Reasonable accommodation and protection

35. Are there specific exemptions, services or goods that are provided to persons with disabilities to facilitate their participation in electoral processes (probe for such exemptions, goods and services)
36. Are there cases where youths with disabilities conflict with laws enforcers or other authorities during campaigns (probe for such scenarios and the results thereof)
37. What are the requirements for participation in politics in your community or district? (Probe for the requisites e.g registration, whether the youths with disabilities can reach and utilise services, any affirmative action and sign language services etc)

Annex 4: Key Informant Interview Guide

IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR KEY INFORMANTS

This interview guide is for key informants at district and sub-county levels. These will include District and sub-county Speaker, Political Parties said to be existent in the district or sub county, Senior Assistant Secretary (Sub County Chief), NIRA official at the district or sub county, Community Development Officers, Police Community Liaisons Officer(s), District Returning Officer, official from an NGO working on election matters and the two Councilors for persons with disabilities in the district Council.

1. What is the name of the institution/organization you work for?
2. What's your position in the institution/organization?
3. Have you interacted with persons with disabilities before? (if the answer to this question is "yes", the key informant should briefly explain how he or she have ever interacted with persons with disabilities).
4. Uganda conducted general elections in January 2021, did you play any role? (*The roles could include conducting voter education, organizing elections or observing elections. The key informant should explain clearly.*)
5. Are you aware of the needs of persons with disabilities during elections? (If "yes", probe for the needs of various disabilities during registration, voter education and voting. Also probe for the needs of persons with disabilities as candidates – during nomination, campaigning and declaration of results.)
6. Do you think persons with disabilities received enough voter education before the 2021 general elections? (The answer to this question could be "yes" or "no". Let the key informant justify his/her answer in either case.) also probe for more answers basing on the needs the respondent mentioned above.
7. How disability-friendly was the nomination process for candidates in the 2021 general elections? (*Define disability-friendly as: "capable of catering for the physical and informational accessibility needs of persons with disabilities. Then probe for an elaborate explanation of the answer given to you by the key informant.*)
8. How accessible were voter materials (ballot papers) for the different disabilities? (for this question you should ask the key informant to elaborate his/her answer in light of people with hearing impairment, people with visual impairment and people with psycho-social and/or intellectual disability.)
9. Please explain how election officials (presiding officer and polling assistant) assisted persons with disabilities to access polling centres and cast their votes in the 2021 general elections. (for this question you should ask the key informant to elaborate his/her answer in light of people with hearing impairment, people with physical impairment, people with visual impairment, people with psycho-social and/or intellectual disabilities, people with albinism and people with multiple disabilities).

10. How were polling stations in your community for the 2021 general elections physically accessible? (the answer from the key informant should bring out issues such as presence or absence of obstacles to mobility -- including ramp vs steps; rough surface vs flat surface.)
11. How did declaration of results in the 2021 general elections cater for the information needs of all types of persons with disabilities? (By persons with disabilities we mean people with hearing impairment, people with physical impairment, people with visual impairment, people with psycho-social and/or intellectual disability, people with albinism and people with multiple disabilities.)
12. What do you consider as the key challenges faced by persons with disabilities before and during elections? Probe for other general challenges.
13. Do you think there are persons with disabilities in your area who would want to vote or register for elections but are denied by the challenges you mentioned above? (if the answer to this question is “yes”, probe for examples of such people.)
14. Suggest ways in which the conduct of voter education can be improved further to meet the needs of persons with disabilities. (Ask the key informant to give suggestions covering all disabilities including people with hearing impairment, people with physical impairment, people with visual impairment, people with psycho-social and/or intellectual disability, people with albinism and people with multiple disabilities.)
15. Suggest ways in which the conduct of elections can be improved to further meet the needs of persons with disabilities. (Ask the key informant to give suggestions in terms of the exercise of voting, accessibility of polling stations and declaration of results. These suggestions should cover all disabilities including people with hearing impairment, people with physical impairment, people with visual impairment, people with psycho-social and/or intellectual disability, people with albinism and people with multiple disabilities.)
16. Do you know whether leaders who are persons with disabilities have ever participated in orientation of elected leaders in your district/sub-county? (If the answer is “yes”, ask the key informant how this was done to satisfy the needs of persons with disabilities. If the answer is “no”, ask the key informant why that was so.)
17. Is there evidence of elected persons with disabilities influencing any legislation in the parliament/council in this district? (if the answer to this question is “yes”, ask the key informant to explain how these have influenced legislations and which specific legislations.)
18. How are persons with disabilities facilitated to do their legislative work in the council/parliament? (Probe for explanations such as provision of sign language interpreters, guides or any other type of helpers; plus provision of council/parliamentary material in Braille or large print.)
19. Do you have any other comment that you think has not been covered by this interview? (Allow the key informant to make any general comment; but not outside what the interview was about.)
20. Finally, thank the key informant for his/her time; and promise to come back to him/her in case of any further clarification.

Annex 5: Survey Questionnaire for Respondents with Disabilities

Please tick or fill in the most appropriate answer(s)

SECTION A: PERSONAL DATA

| | |
|---|---|
| 1. Sub County | 1. Palissa Town Council 2. Kameke Sub County |
| 2. Sex | 1. Male 2. Female |
| 3. Disability category/ impairment | 1. Hearing Impairment 2. Intellectual/Psycho-social Impairment 3. Physical Impairment 4. Visual Impairment 5. Albinism 6. Multiple Disability (please describe) |
| 4. Highest level of education | |
| 5. Have you ever participated in any election in Uganda? | 1. Yes 2. No |
| 6. If yes, which elections have you participated in? | 1. General elections 2. Youths elections 3. Elections of leaders of YWDs/ PWDs 4. Union elections 5. Any other _____ 6. |
| 7. Did you participate as a voter, a candidate, campaigner, or a combination? | 1. Voter only 2. Candidate |
| 8. Mention any position you hold (or have recently held) within the Local Council structure (possibility for multiple responses): | 1. Councillor representing PWDs 2. Councillor representing a mainstream constituency 3. Speaker to the Local Council 4. Position on the Local Council Executive 5. Any other (Please specify) _____ |

SECTION C: Barriers to Effective Participation of PWDs in Electoral Processes

| | |
|---|---|
| 9. Are you registered as a voter? | 1. Yes 2. No |
| 10. If no, state the reasons for not registering | |
| 11. If yes to question 7 above, state whether the process of registration was easy or difficult | 1. Easy 2. Some difficulty 3. A lot of difficulty |

| | |
|--|---|
| <p>12. Give reasons for the answer you have chosen above:</p> | |
| <p>13. As a person with disability, did you receive any voter education prior to voting?</p> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Yes 2. No |
| <p>14. If yes, what methods were used to deliver the voter education?</p> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Use of a megaphone 2. Use of posters 3. Use of radio talk-shows 4. Use of television 5. Use of interpersonal communication (community meeting, home visit or discussion with a friend). 6. Any other (Please specify) _____ |
| <p>15. Was the voter education you received disability-friendly? (Probe for more information basing on the category of disability of the respondent.)</p> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Yes 2. No |
| <p>16. Give reasons for your answer above.</p> | |
| <p>17. Suggest ways of improving the voter education to meet your needs as a person with disability:</p> | |
| <p>18. As a person with disability, was the voting process disability-friendly? (Probe for more information basing on the category of disability of the respondent.)</p> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Yes 2. No |
| <p>19. Give reasons for your answer above.</p> | |

| | |
|---|---|
| <p>20. What do you consider as key challenges faced by persons with disabilities during elections? Probe for general challenges as well as disability-specific challenges.)</p> | |
| <p>21. Do you think that there are persons with disabilities in your area who would want to register or vote but are denied a chance because of such challenges? (Probe for examples of such people.)</p> | |
| <p>22. Suggest ways of improving the voting process to meet your needs as a person with disability:</p> | |
| <p>23. In your opinion, have the councillors' representing persons with disabilities performed to your satisfaction?</p> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Yes 2. No |
| <p>24. Give reasons for your answer above</p> | |

Annex 6: Observation checklist

Describe the physical setting that was used as polling station in a given locality for conducting the 2020/21 general elections

| Premises | Observation |
|--|---|
| 1. School | |
| 2. Religious premises | |
| 3. Market | |
| 4. Parking yard | |
| 5. Community centre | |
| 6. Playgrounds | |
| 7. Any Other (please specify) | |
| 8. Describe barriers in the physical infrastructure | 1. Presence of obstacles to mobility 2. Lack of modifications for all users to freely and easily access the polling station 3. Any other obstacle (Please specify) _____ |
| 9. Describe the physical setting that was used as polling station in a given locality for conducting the 2020/21 elections for Persons with Disabilities | 1. Presence of obstacles to mobility 2. Existence or lack of ramps and/or handrails 3. Any other (Please specify) _____ |
| 10. Is there proof of accessibility to information for campaigning, voter education and elections? | 1. Availability of ballot papers and/or voter education material in Braille, audio format and/or large print 2. Any other proof of accessibility to information (Please specify) _____ |
| 11. Describe the Council halls at Sub-county and District levels | 1. Presence of obstacles to mobility 2. Lack of provisions for all users to easily access the hall 3. Level of lighting in the hall 4. Any other obstacle (Please specify) _____ |

Annex 7: Attendance List

Uganda National Action on Physical Disability (UNAPD)



We focus on results!



Inclusive Development Consults

Baseline study on participation of youths with Disabilities in Political Spaces in Palissa District

Venue _____

Date and time _____

| No | Name | Institution | Designation | Contact/ Email | Temp | Signature |
|----|------|-------------|-------------|----------------|------|-----------|
| 1 | | | | | | |
| 2 | | | | | | |
| 3 | | | | | | |
| 4 | | | | | | |
| 5 | | | | | | |
| 6 | | | | | | |
| 7 | | | | | | |
| 8 | | | | | | |
| 9 | | | | | | |
| 10 | | | | | | |

Annex 8: Proposed project indicators

| | | | |
|--|---|--------------------------|---|
| Youths with Disabilities that report participation in specific union activities that lead to elections; | KII and Desk review | KII Guide | YWDs YWDs in unions |
| Youths with Disabilities that report participation in determining the electoral colleges; | FGD | FGD Guide | Youths with Disabilities |
| Youths with Disabilities that report being effectively represented (effectiveness lies in the personality and qualification of the representatives); | FGD (specifically with: males, females, youths with physical disabilities and the Deaf) | FGD Guide | Youths with Disabilities YWDs in unions |
| Awareness of the various rights to participation in political spaces – including participation in political party politics; | FGD and Desk review | FGD Guide | Youths with Disabilities YWDs in unions |
| Awareness of the dates, venues, services and (possible) outcomes associated with political participation – especially for youths with communication disabilities; | FGD (specifically with: males, females, youths with physical disabilities and the Deaf) | FGD Guide | Youths with Disabilities YWDs in unions |
| Youths with Disabilities that report on participation in political campaigns; | FGD (specifically with: males, females, youths with physical disabilities and the Deaf) | FGD Guide | Youths with Disabilities YWDs in unions |
| Specific services associated with reasonable accommodation of youths with disabilities in political spaces – including elections, ballot jacket etc; | Blended KII and Questionnaire | Youths with Disabilities | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • YWDs in unions • District CPD • Electoral commission • NIRA official |
| Protection of youths with disabilities in political spaces (through affirmative action and physical protection from harm and any forms of violence in political processes) | Blended KII and Questionnaire | Youths with Disabilities | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • YWDs in unions • District CPD • Electoral commission • NIRA official |

| | | | |
|---|-------------------------------|--------------------------|--|
| | | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Police CLO • Councillors representing PWDs |
| Partake of the requisites for political participation (such as registrations, payment of established fees and, adherence to the established code of conduct among others) | Blended KII and Questionnaire | Youths with Disabilities | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • YWDs in unions • District CPD • Electoral commission • NIRA official • Police CLO • Councillors representing PWDs |

