



Community Centre for the Disabled(CCD):

A Resource Centre for Persons with Disabilities

Assessing Participation of Persons with Disabilities in Past Three Elections in Afghanistan



1392- 2013

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TAWANMANDI
Strengthening Civil Society
in Afghanistan



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Preface

The Advocacy Committee for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (ACRPD) consists of local and international NGOs that advocate and implement different programs for persons with disabilities. Community Centre for the Disabled (CCD) is one of the members of ACRPD. CCD has managed to implement different programs for persons with disabilities in different areas. The current research report is one of its projects that has assessed the participation and access of persons with disabilities in three past elections. Therefore, it is recommended to read this research report and It is our responsibility to create opportunity for persons with disability to enjoy their political rights in society, especially in coming elections.

Mohammad Ali Mohabati

Secretary – general of Advocacy Committee for the Right of Persons with Disabilities

1. Acknowledgment

I would like to thank the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), Counter Part International (CPI) and Tawanmandi for providing financial assistance for conducting this survey. The finding of the survey would certainly contribute to promotion of persons with disability participation in elections and other democratic process within country. It will also provide baseline for measuring the progress of future disability inclusive interventions.

I also appreciate Ministry of Labor, Social Affairs, Martyrs and Disabled (MoLSAMD), Disabled People Organizations (DPO) and local government authorities for their coordination and facilitative support. I would also like to extend my particular gratitude to CCD survey team, technical support and consultant who made the survey operationally feasible.

Saifuddin Nizami

Community Center for the Disabled (CCD)

Executive Director

2. Acronyms and abbreviations

<i>Advocacy Committee for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (ACPD)</i>	10
<i>Community Center for Disabled (CCD)</i>	5
<i>Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)</i>	11
<i>Election management body (EMB)</i>	12
<i>Independent Election Commission (IEC)</i>	9
<i>Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, Martyrs and Disabled (MoLSAMD)</i>	3
<i>National Disability Survey in Afghanistan (NDSA)</i>	8
<i>National Risk and Vulnerability Assessment (NRVA)</i>	8
<i>World Programme of Action Concerning Disabled Persons (WPACDP)</i>	11

3. Executive Summary

In July 2013, Community Center for Disabled (CCD) conducted a survey to assess the level of participation of persons with disability in Afghanistan in past three elections. The survey was carried out in three city centers, namely, Balkh, Bamyan and Kabul.

500 (335 male vs. 135 female) persons with disabilities participated in the survey. The sample universe included (339) physical, (80) sensory, (44) multiple, (20) neurologic and (14) psychologically impaired individuals. All respondents were eligible as voters in past three elections “as this was an important survey inclusion criterion”

Among the key results, it was found that (302) persons with disabilities among the respondents participated in the elections while (198) did not. This indicates a participation rate of (60.4 %).

It was also determined that the level of participation has been correlated with type of disability and gender, for instance, participation rate for physically disabled was (73 %) while it was (18 %) for persons with neurologic disorders.

Participation by men and women reflected as 66 and 48 % respectively. To determine whether this difference is significant, the statistical test for two proportions was employed. The test found a statistically significant result between men and women’s participation. It concluded that the difference in participation is not due to chance but women with disability had experienced higher barriers than men with disability.

Major challenges experienced by persons with disability during past three elections included; inaccessibility of polling stations (26%), lack of accessible transportation facilities (17%), lack of civic education programs (15%), unfamiliarity with voting process (14%), long distance from residence (14%), Less cooperative behavior of polling stations staff (14%).

Major barriers to participation experienced by persons with disability who had not participated in any of past elections comprised; not having voter cards (17%); fear of being disabled (16%); not sure how to vote (14%); long distance to and from the voting areas (9%); lack of information about location of polling stations (8%); considering elections as not important (8%); lack of permission from family (8%); inaccessible polling stations(7%); security concerns (6%); nonexistence of polling stations in the adjacent areas (3%)

(83 %) of respondents perceived, it is important to participate in election. Statistical analysis determined a significant association between the perception of person persons with disability as seeing participation in elections as essential and their level of participation. Pearson test of association established as 13.522 ($p=0.000236$) at 95 % confidence interval¹. Since P- value is smaller than 0.05, the result was measured as significant.

(67 %) of persons with disability who had not participated in elections highlighted the reason for lack of participation as not having election registration cards.

¹ In [statistics](#), a **confidence interval (CI)** is a type of [interval estimate](#) of a [population parameter](#) and is used to indicate the reliability of an estimate. It is an observed interval (i.e. it is calculated from the observations), in principle different from sample to sample, that frequently includes the parameter of interest if the experiment is repeated. How frequently the observed interval contains the parameter is determined by the **confidence level** or **confidence coefficient**.

The interest rate to participate in upcoming election was found (82.2 %) but the interest will heavily be dependent on addressing the challenges persons with disability face and removing avoiding factors. The interest rate among those who participated and experienced challenges had declined to 62 %.

(73 %) of survey respondents agreed to establishment of a separate polling station for persons with disability in each city. (17%) of participant were not sure if they need a separate polling station for voting but only 10 % disagreed with such development.

(87 %) of respondents highlighted the need of civic education for themselves and their families pertaining to elections and other related processes.

(80 %) of respondents indicated the need for awareness raising sessions to polling stations staff about the political rights of persons with disability. They highlighted that the intention of such sessions should be to sensitize them about need of these people.

(72 %) of all respondents considered the establishment of a disability unit within independent election commission as highly important. They indicated, the unit should monitor the participation of persons with disability in elections and facilitate further opportunities for persons with disability.

(79.2 %) of participants rate their knowledge pertaining to election as limited while only (20.8 %) describes it as sufficient. This finding highlights the need for civic education programs.

Regarding accessibility of the polling stations to persons with disabilities, (40%) of respondents reported that polling stations were not accessible. (73%) of respondents who participated in elections have been living in approximate 10 to 30 minutes walking distance from polling stations. (26%) lived in 60 to 120 minutes walking distance.

Many polling stations had no parking areas or adequate signage to provide direction to people with disabilities.

Also the doors were not wide enough for wheelchair users to get through and most of them had no ramps or pathways to enable access of persons with disability.

4. Background

The World report on disability, produced mutually by WHO and the World Bank, indicates that more than a billion people in the world today experience disability. The report highlights that people with disabilities have poorer health, lower education achievements, fewer economic opportunities and higher rates of poverty than people without disabilities. It found that such inequities are largely due to the lack of services available to them and the many obstacles they face in social and political life (WHO, 2012). Mentioned findings are also faithful for Afghanistan case. As hundreds of thousands of Afghans have been disabled by war and landmines (estimates of landmine survivors with amputations, blindness and paralysis range from 94,000 to 200,000), many more have acquired impairments from birth, inadequate healthcare, congenital disabilities, accidents or malnutrition and preventable diseases such as polio or tuberculosis. "A high rate of birth complications, especially in undernourished women with inadequate care, cause disabilities such as cerebral palsy (Government of Afghanistan, 2003). A 2001 World Health Organization (WHO) report estimated that about 5 million Afghans have been affected by psychosocial stress such as depression, anxiety and psychosomatic problems. In addition, it explains that there are many people with learning disabilities, mental impairments and multiple disabilities that hardly receive any attention from the international community and disability organizations working in Afghanistan.

Afghanistan has a population of 30 million people (Compare Infobase Ltd, 2006). National Disability Survey in Afghanistan (NDSA) (Handicap International, 2005) reported a disability prevalence of 2.7 %. However mentioned prevalence has been found lower by National Risk and Vulnerability Assessment (NRVA) in 2009. The decrease can at least partly be attributed to the capture of less disability categories than NDSA.

National Risk and Vulnerability Assessment (NRVA) 2009, indicates that there is 406000 persons with disability living in the country, implying an overall disability prevalence of 1.6 percent. Overall, one household in every ten has one or more members with a disability (CSO, 2009).

Nearly 70 percent of persons with disability live in rural areas and more than 30 percent live in cities. 90 percent people with disabilities are suffering unemployment, 74 percent have no access to education and 80 percent females with disabilities are not enrolled in schools (NRVA, 2009). Because of lack of consolidated national data on disability, there is no real data available to gauge the participation of persons with disability in electoral processes within Afghanistan

Disability rights advocates clearly articulate that during previous general elections, the persons with disabilities faced a lot of difficulties and troubles as there were no necessary facilities in the polling stations. Huge number of people with disabilities remained deprived and didn't participate in the polling process. They also indicated; accessibility of publicity materials for persons with disabilities, awareness for IEC about persons with disability, separate registration

places for male and female voters, training of organizations working for the people with disabilities, deployment of mobile teams for registration and election cards as limited.

To fill the data gap pertaining to participation of persons with disability in election, CCD conducted a study of 500 families with persons with disability in Kabul, Balkh and Bamyan provinces.

The survey aimed to measure participation level, identify barriers and pinpoint their reasons. The survey result is intended to be used by Independent Election Commission (IEC) and other relevant forums to facilitate persons with disability full participation in above mentioned processes.

CCD is a disability specialized organization active since 2004. The vision of CCD is to create a positive culture toward disability in Afghanistan with a mission of: To promote and improve the social, cultural and economic situation of women, men and children with disabilities and their families, and including them in the normal life of the Afghan society through;

- Advocacy for the civil and humanitarian rights of persons with disability at different levels
- Capacity building of the persons with disability at the individual and organizational level

CCD is an urban model of disability organization and has been working in Kabul since its establishment in 2004. As a working strategy, CCD is deeply rooted in Kabul communities evidenced by 70 community volunteers supporting CCD in 22 municipal districts of Kabul. The proposed project also comes from the close involvement of CCD with the community and families.

Current report will act as a baseline for all other activities towards promotion of persons with disability participation in the decision making processes. At the same time, summary of this report will be used in the community awareness sessions, Advocacy Committee for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (ACPD) and three conferences in three regional cities of Afghanistan including Kabul.

5. Documents review

Looking at legal bases of promoting participation of persons with disability in election

According to Afghanistan national disability policy, the Government of Afghanistan accepts the principles of participation, integration and equalization of opportunities, defined in the UN's World Programme of Action Concerning Disabled Persons (WPACDP) and The Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities. The Government of Afghanistan also accepts the principles of rights based approach to disability in the proposed international convention on disability as well as Biwako Millennium Framework (Government of Afghanistan, 2003). Biwako Millennium Framework sets actions toward an inclusive, barrier-free and rights based society for persons with disabilities in Asia and the Pacific.

Principles of biwako Millennium Framework include Inclusive (disability mainstreaming, “twin track approach”), Barrier-free (removal of all kinds of barriers, physical barriers, universal design and barriers of social attitudes) – social model of disability, Rights-based – human rights (universal and global) (UNESCAP, 2008).

The National Disability Policy has emphasized the participation of persons with disability in governance process and in decisions pertaining to their lives.

Afghanistan formally ratified the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) on 18 Sep.2012 (United Nations, 2008). CRPD requires the member's states to facilitate the disability issues in election and other democratic processes.

Article 29 of CRPD states that persons with disabilities are entitled to participate equally in political and public life. This includes the right to cast ballots in an independent and secret manner, and participate in decision making processes that affect themselves and their communities but still persons with disabilities face challenges that make inclusion in these processes difficult.

Representation in the legislature is a goal of disability rights activists which they have been pursuing worldwide. Political participation represents a strategic step in realizing the rights of persons with disabilities. Through representation, persons with disabilities can push for legislation to promote and protect their rights to employment, education, health care and accessibility, among others. It is also a very important step to fight discrimination and raise general awareness about the issues persons with disabilities face daily.

Election management body (EMB) which is referred to as independent election commission as organ of the state is bound by the CRPD and therefore required to mainstream disability in election administration. Political parties may not be bound, but could be pressed to comply.

European Commission has prepared a compendium of international standards for elections. The compendium is an important contribution to the obligations, principles and commitments agreed by international and regional bodies and are being referred to increasingly in both election observation and assistance activities.

Article 10 of the compendium express, the right to vote at elections and referenda must be established by law and may be subject only to reasonable restrictions, such as setting a minimum age limit for the right to vote. It clearly states that it w unreasonable to restrict the right to vote on the ground of disability or to impose literacy, educational or property requirements (EU, 2009).

Chapter 5, article 3, of Afghanistan constitution emphasizes measures within election system to provide general and just representation for all the people of the country (IROA, 2004).

A systematic review of available literature on persons with disability participation was aconducted; only two reports met the criteria for preliminary review as following:

National disability surveys which was conducted in 2005 to understand livelihood, social participation, coping strategies and services that were effectively available to persons with disability. It was designed to help the planning of access to healthcare, water supply and sanitation, housing, education and employment but the review of survey questionnaire and report determined it had not collected any data pertaining to participation of persons with disability in election process.

NRVA which has been conducted in 2009 had determined the number of persons with disability live in rural and urban areas. It had also found that persons with disability suffered from unemployment, lack of access to education and limited enrollment in schools but it also does not included any data related to participation of persons with disability in elections.

Therefore, the organization and conduct of a particular survey to determine the participation level of persons with disability in electoral process and to promote their participation in such processes was deemed necessary.

6. Methodology:

Semi structured questionnaire method which is widely used in social sciences has been utilized for current survey. Target areas were selected to have a balance of places where received higher, mid-level and low level development assistance (High level (Kabul), mid-level (Balkh) and low level (Bamyan)). Security situation was another important factor in selecting above mentioned provinces. The sample universe included (339) physical, (80) sensory, (44) multiple, (20) neurologic and (14) psychologically impaired individuals. All respondents were eligible as voters in past three elections “as this was an important survey inclusion criterion” The survey team designed and used the questionnaire to determine the level of participation by persons with disability in election process, collected demographic data on respondents (age, gender, type of disability and residence), identified barriers they faced before, during and after voting and highlighted assistance they expect to promote their participation in election processes. The questionnaire enclosed questions pertaining to demographic data, type of disability, participation in election, barriers faced during voting process, avoiding factors for non-participation, perception about participation in election, interest to participate in upcoming elections, level of information about election and democratic processes, accessibility of polling stations, assistance they need and proposals they make. The questionnaire comprised forty six questions in seven sections. Each section was owed to one objective. The questionnaire was developed in Dari language. The questionnaire was field tested before wide application and revised accordingly.

The survey team used a snowball sample selection approach, however, the survey team knew that snowball sampling hardly lead to a representative sample, but it was deemed appropriate as it was not possible to find a list of all persons with disability in the target cities. Therefore, the survey team was identifying one or two persons with disability that were willing to participate and meeting the set inclusion criteria; it was likely that initial respondents knew other persons with disability in their area and helped survey team locate them. Inclusion criteria comprised the following:

- Persons with disability who has been eligible to vote in last 2 presidential and one parliament elections (male or female adult whose age is 26 by Jul.2013 or over).
- People who have been disabled by any reason since Oct.2004

CCD recruited sixteen survey teams in three mentioned provinces (3 in Bamyan, 5 Balkh and 8 in Kabul). The recruited surveyors were familiar with the culture and customs. The survey coordinators were coordinating the survey work with local authorities to facilitate their support. They were also making sure that gender and age issues are taken into account and in some circumstances, it was necessary to match the gender of the interviewer to that of the respondent and have elderly respondents interviewed by older interviewers. Participation in the survey was voluntary and the respondent could refuse to be interviewed. The interviewers were clarifying what the survey is about, providing all the necessary information, and making sure the respondent understands the implications of his / her participation before giving his / her consent. The given information was simple, clear and adapted to the respondent's level of understanding.

The surveyors were also describing that collected data will be destroyed as long as the final report is completed.

A random of 25% of all filled questionnaires was check for completeness, accuracy, validity and reliability. A 5 % on spot quality control of collected data was done by survey supervisor. Incomplete and blank questionnaires with only the identification information and the result code amounted to 0 %.

All surveyors were at least 20 years old and showed that they have the necessary skills and maturity for conducting interviews during field testing. Their level of education was at least that of a high school graduate. All surveys participated in orientation session before going to the field.

The surveyors understood that people form 90% of their opinions with regard to what they think about someone in the first ninety seconds. They were also acknowledging that the way they would presents themselves, such as the clothes how they behaves, will have an impact on the chances of getting an interview.

The survey team entered the data in Ms. Access 2010 data base, developed by an external consultant. The team entered the data using a code book as numeric.

Within Ms. Access the survey data was analyzed with a PivotTable and descriptive statistics. PivotTables are analysis tools that are helpful in summarizing data from a questionnaire surveys.

Descriptive statistics were used to describe the basic features of the data. Descriptive analysis provided simple summaries about the sample and the measures. Together with simple graphics and frequency tables, they formed the basis for presenting the findings.

With descriptive statistics, we simply described what is or what the data shows. To some extent, we also used inferential statistics; we were trying to reach conclusions that extend beyond the immediate data alone. For instance, we used inferential statistics to try to infer about difference in participation of men and women with disability in elections. The analyzed version of data has been presented in form of current report.

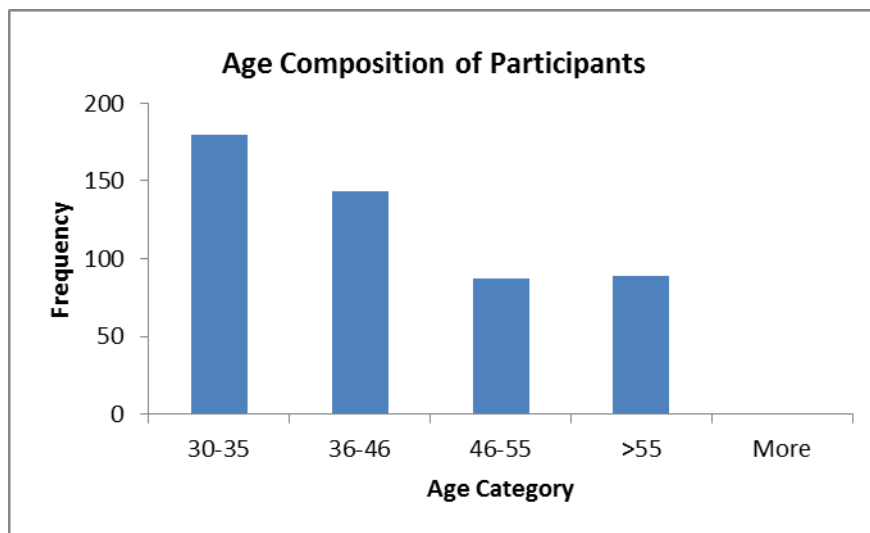
7. Discussing Survey Findings

7.1. Profile of survey respondents

500 (335 male vs. 135 female) persons with disabilities participated in the survey. The sample universe included (339) physical, (80) sensory, (44) multiple, (20) neurologic and (14) psychologically impaired individuals. All respondents were eligible as voters in past three elections “as this was an important survey inclusion criterion”

Among the key results, it was found that (302) persons with disabilities who were surveyed had participated in the elections while (198) did not.

The majority of respondents (37 %) were 30-35 years old while (30 %) were in 36 -46 age group; The chart-1 below describe the age composition of all age categories.



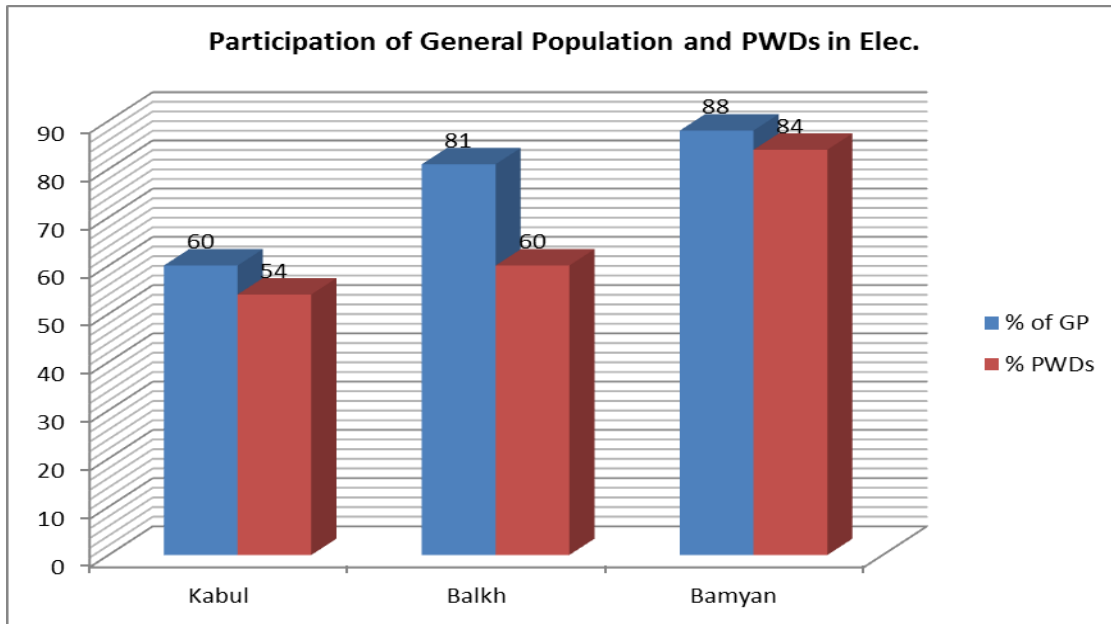
(Chart-1 age composition of participants)

67 % of respondents were married. 24 % identified as single. 8 % were widows/widowers and 0.4 % divorced. 19 % have got disabled since 10 years, 22 % since 15 years, and 20 % since 20 years while 37 % since more than 20 years.

7.2 Participation in past three elections by persons with disability

The overall participation rate in past three elections in Kabul, Balkh and Bamyan among 500 persons with disability was found 60.4 % but it has been record as 83.66 % (IDEA, 2004). The International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance-IDEA is an intergovernmental organization is document data pertaining to elections at world scale.

Stated rate was not similar for mentioned cities as it was determined 54 % for Kabul, 60 % for Balkh and 84 % for Bamyan. The survey team compared the participation of persons with disability with voters turn out general population in mentioned cities. The participation among general population is also recorded as 60 % at Kabul, 81 % in Balkh and 88 % in Bamyan province (Independent Election Commission, 2004). The survey team selected 2004 data as it was available by provinces, and data for other elections was recorded by polling stations. The target areas for current survey was provinces not the polling stations. The trend of participation among persons with disability and general population reflect an ascending pattern from Kabul to Balkh and finally Bamyan but generally the participation has been recorded fewer among persons with disability than general population in all three provinces. The chart-2 below explores this comparison.

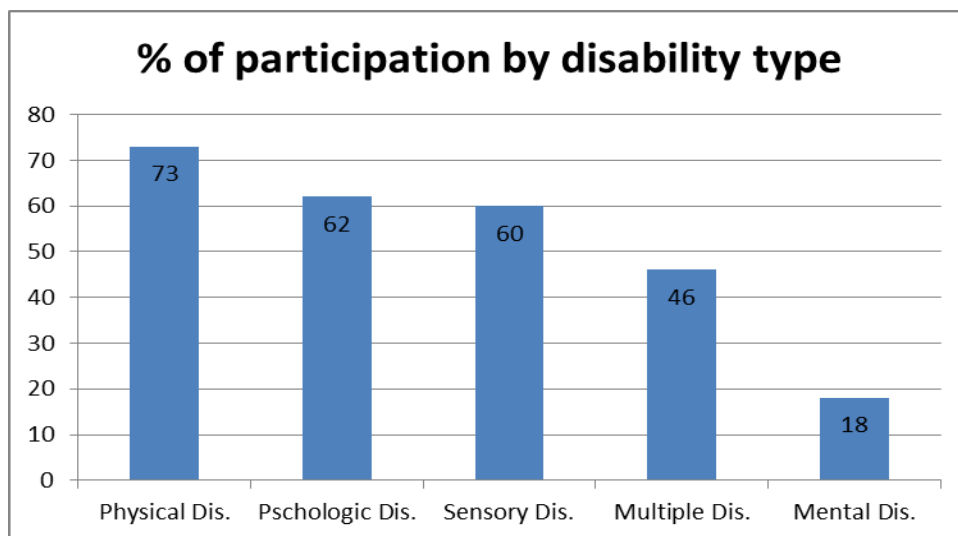


(Chart-2 participation of general population and PWDs in election)

The survey is conducted in three secure provinces with the highest possible participation level and it may not represent the whole country.

7.2.1 Participation by disability type

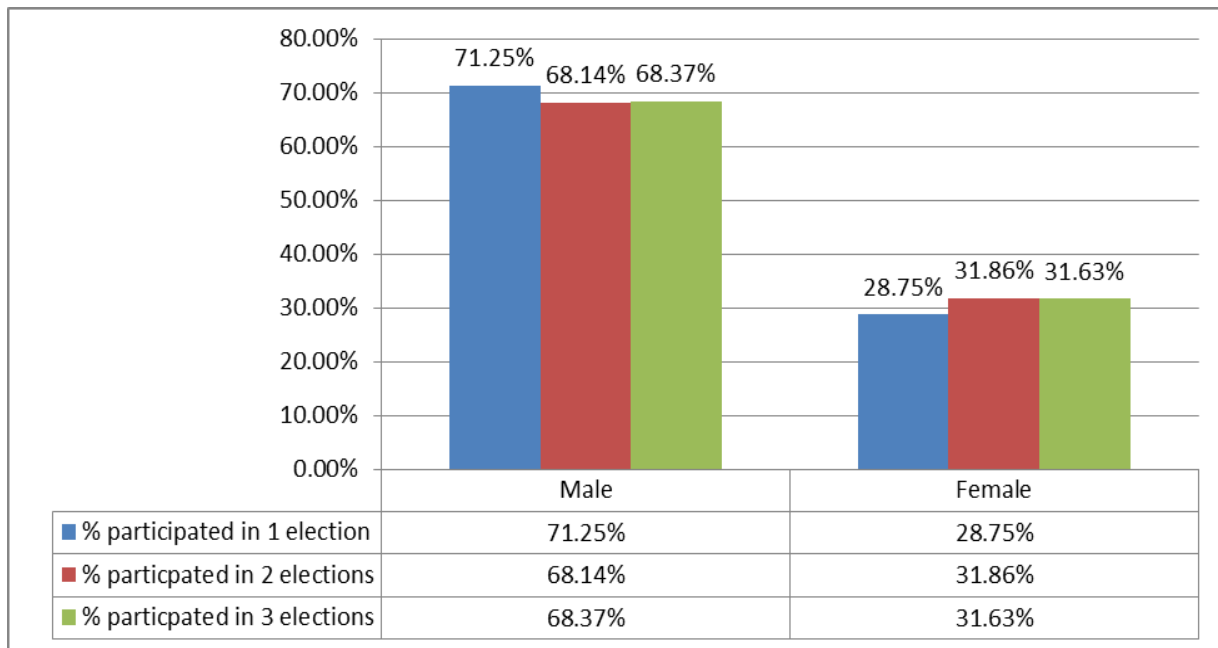
The participation level was also different among different categories of persons with disability, for instance, it was higher among persons with physical disability while lowest among persons with neurologic disorders. Chart-3 describes the level of participation by different categories of disabilities. This is similar to national disability survey finding as it determined participation in social life by persons with physical disability higher than other forms of disability (NDSA, 2003).



(Chart-3, participation by disability type)

7.2.3 Participation by gender

Participation by men and women reflected as 66 and 48 % respectively. For the purpose of determining whether this difference in participation was due to pure random chance or significant reasons. The statistical test for two proportions was employed. The test determined a statistically significant difference between men and women’s participation at 95 % confidence interval. 95 % confidence interval means that there has been 95 % probability that women faced certain barriers than men. Potential barriers to participation of men and women will further be discussed in next section. Chart-4 visualizes the difference in participation of both genders in all three elections.

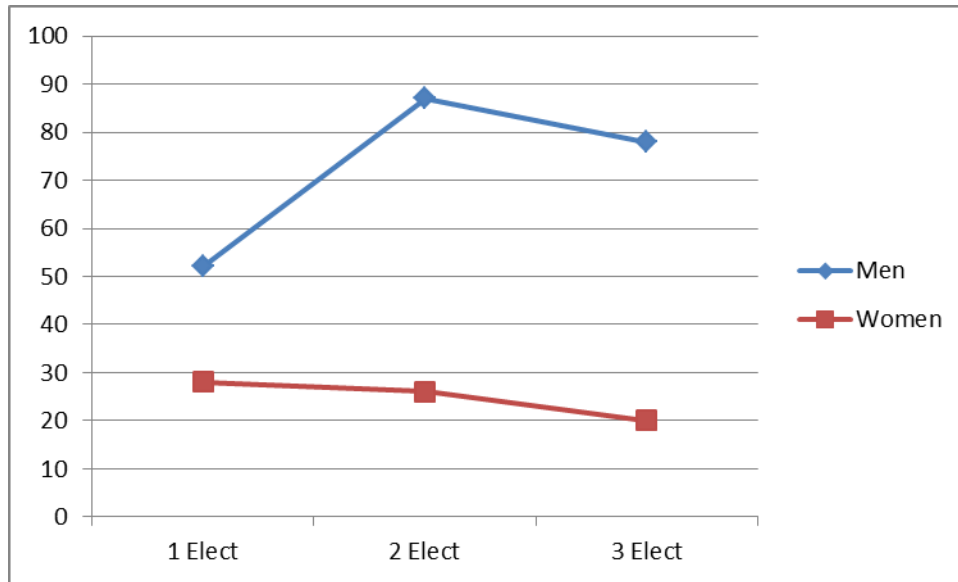


(Chart-4 participation by gender)

7.2.4 Participation by persons with disability in different elections

The interest rate to participate among all respondents in upcoming election was found (82.2 %) but the interest rate will heavily be dependent on addressing the challenges persons with disability faced because the interest rate among those who participated but experienced a lot of challenges declined to 62% while it remained the same among those who have not participated.

As mentioned, there was also discrepancy in participation during past three past elections. Graph below describes that the participation by men and women varied if they participated in one, two or three elections. Chart below describes this difference.



(Chart-5 participation in different in elections)

7.2.5 Participation by different age groups

The participation rate among different age classes of survey participants was also different. It was lowest at ages 30 to 35 (49 %) and highest at ages 45 to 55 (73 %). Table below highlights frequency distribution of participation in each age class.

Age Category	Participated	Note Participated	Total
30-35	88	92	180
36-56	85	58	143
46-55	65	23	88
>55	64	25	89
Total	302	198	500

(Table-1 participation by different age categories)

An analysis of below contingency table determined a significant association between the perception of person persons with disability as considering participation in elections as essential and their level of participation. Pearson test of association was determined as 13.522 ($p=0.000236$) at 95 % confidence interval. Since p value ²was smaller than 0.05, the result was considered statistically significant and it was justified in concluding that the positive perception about participating in election correlated with higher participation rate.

² P value: The p-value measures how much evidence there is against the hypothesis, which represents the belief that there will be no change or effect. A small p-value indicates that there is evidence against the hypothesis, and a large p-value means there is a lack of evidence against the hypothesis. You can find more information here: <http://www.childrens-mercy.org/stats/definitions/pvalue.htm>

Column1	Participated	Not Participated
PwDs Perceive Participation as essential	280	129
PwDs Perceive Participation as not essential	3	11

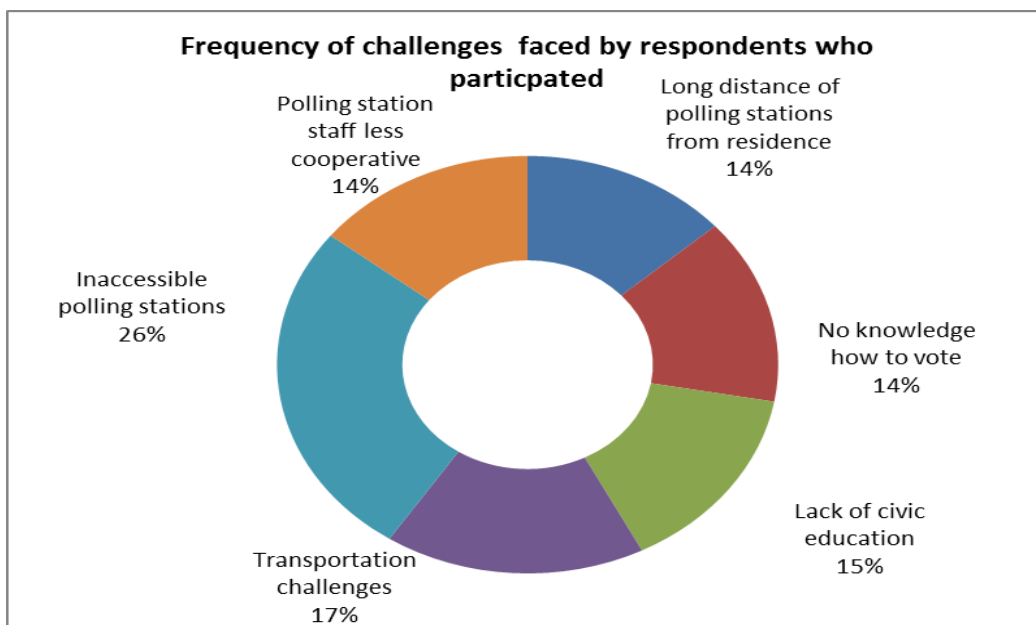
(Table-2 Association among PwDs with perceive elections as essential and not as essentials)

Perception is the experience of the world around and involves both the recognition of environmental stimuli and action in response to these stimuli. Perception about electoral process is shaped by awareness, and knowledge about elections, finally, attitudes of staff working in electoral process.

7.3 Challenges faced by persons with disability during past 3 elections

Key contests experienced by persons with disability during past three elections and pinpointed by current survey involve; inaccessibility of polling stations (26%), lack of accessible transportation facilities (17%), lack of civic education programs (15%), unfamiliarity with voting process (14%), long distance from residence (14%), less cooperative behavior of polling station staff (14%).

Inaccessibility of polling stations has been the major concern in all three elections. Access to information about the logistics of voting itself was highlighted as important in enabling access to polling stations. Over half of all respondents in response to an open ended questions said that it was not easy to vehicles/wheelchairs to reach polling stations. According to respondents half of the polling stations had doors that were not user-friendly to people with disabilities particularly the physically impaired. Chart below highlights the type of challenges faced by voters with disability during past three elections.

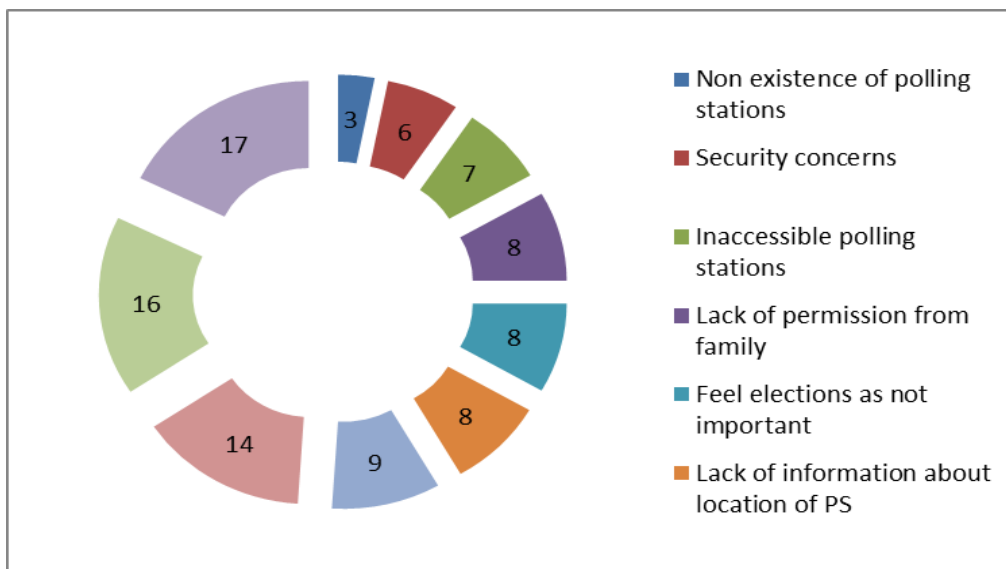


(Chart-6 frequency of challenges faced by respondents who participated)

7.5 Barriers avoided participation of persons with disability in past 3 elections

Voter registration is essential building blocks of the electoral process. As such, participating in this phase is important as it gives a potential voter an opportunity to assess and vote for promising candidate. 68 % of respondents who did not participate in elections affirmed their lack of participation as not having voter cards. Another important feature of current data set was fearing/ shame of being disabled as potential avoiding factors for people who did not participate in elections (66 %). This highlights the high need of interventions for empowering persons with disability to overcome their fear of being disabled. The respondents claimed that such interventions will enhance their participation in democratic processes.

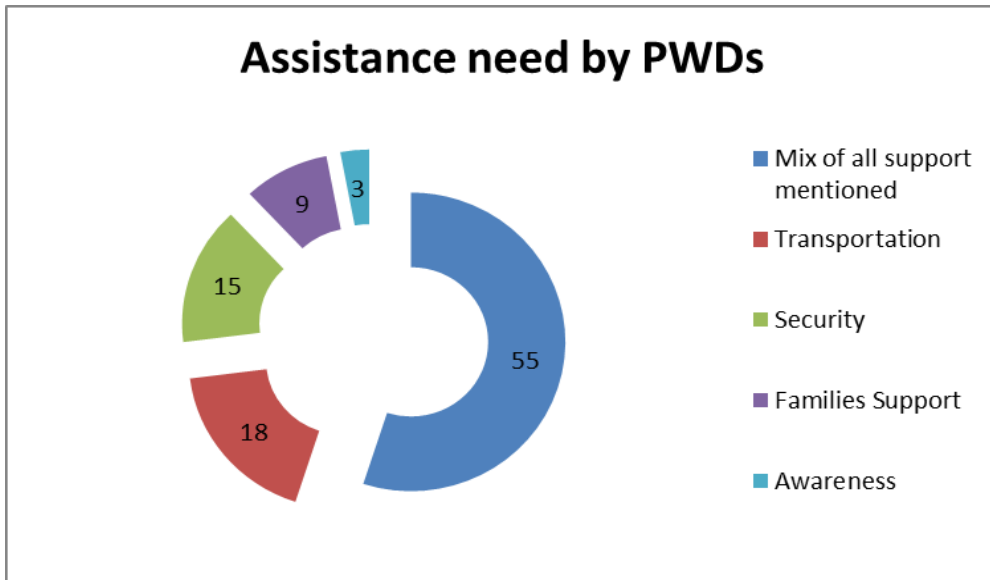
198 out 500 respondents did not participate in elections. This constitutes a higher proportion of survey respondents. It indicates that a significant proportion of the respondents did not participate in these important democratic processes. The reasons for their lack of participation were found as following: not having voter cards (17%); fear of being disabled (16%); not sure how to vote (14%); long distance to and from the voting areas (9%); lack of information about location of polling stations (8%); Feeling elections as not important (8%); lack of permission from family (8%); Inaccessible polling stations(7%); security concerns (6%); Nonexistence of polling stations in the adjacent areas (3%);



(Chart -6 Barriers avoided participation)

7.6 Assistance needed by persons with disability in act of voting

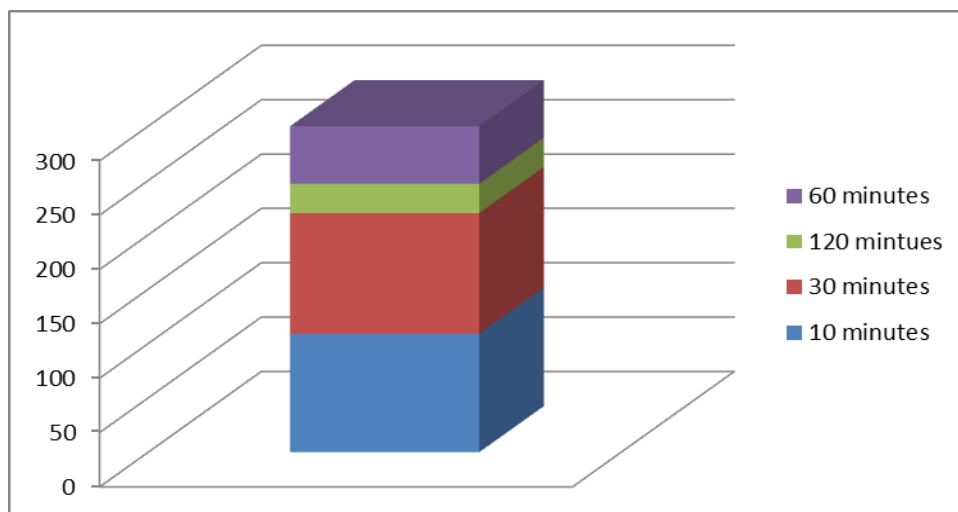
The fact that (55 %) reported needing a mix of security, family support, transportation and information assistance in order to be able to participate in elections. (18%) highlighted only transportation while (15%) indicated security. Family support and awareness rising were the other assistance indicated.



(Chart -7 assistance need by PWDs in act of votting)

7.7 Distance from polling stations vs. participation

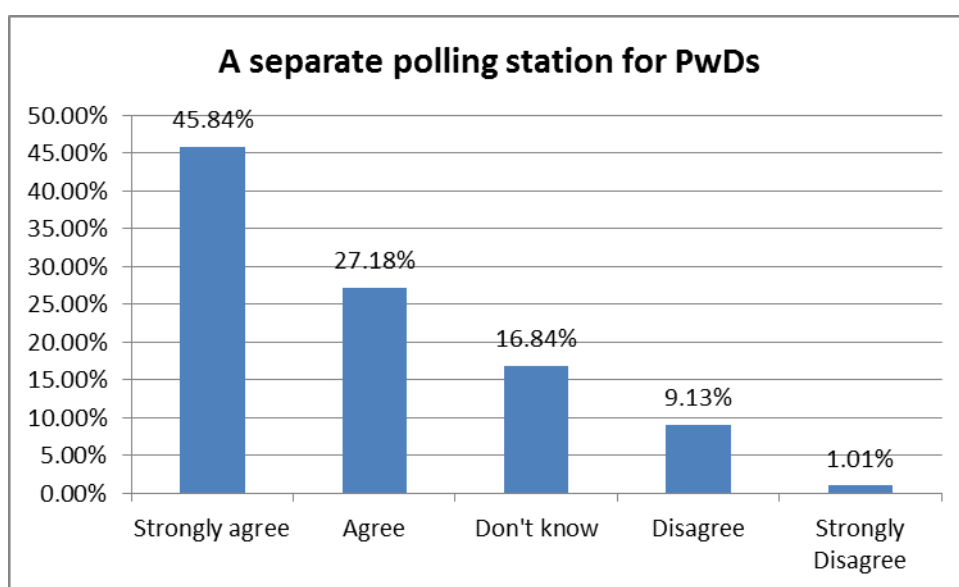
A question: does the distance from a polling location increase or decrease their likelihood of voting? This theme guided the analysis of this portion, The survey determined that higher percentage (73) of respondents who participated in elections have been living in approximately 10 to 30 minutes walking distance from polling stations. (26%) lived in 60 to 120 minutes walking distance. It became clear that the person with disability who lived closer to polling stations had higher chance of participation in election process. So proximity of polling stations to persons with disability is an evident factor which need be considered in planning any electoral process in future. Chart below describes the details of respondents' self-assessed distance from polling stations.



(Chart-7 Distance from polling stations vs. particiaiton)

7.8 Proposals from persons with disability for improving electoral process for PWDs

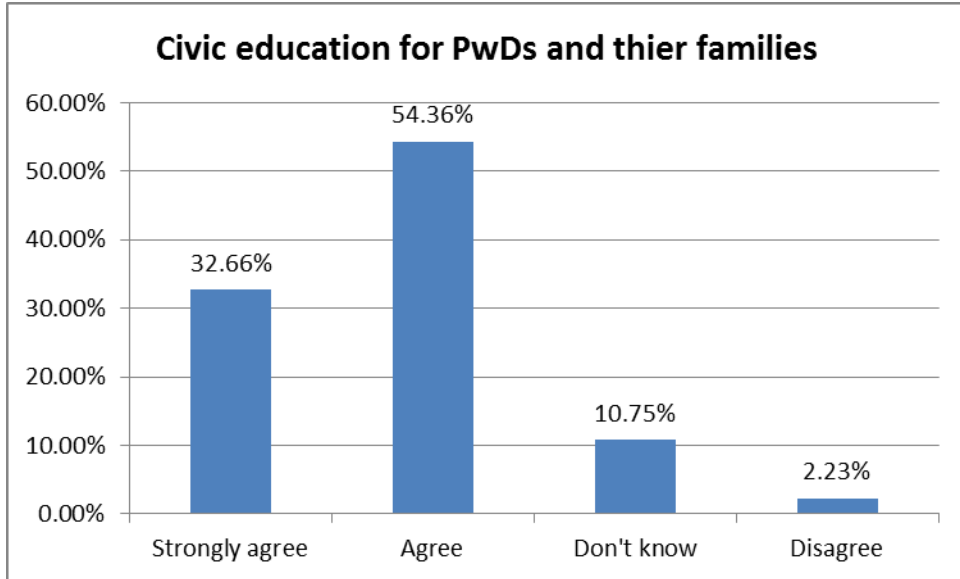
Considering the requirements of participation of persons with disability in elections as availability of wheelchair, mobility assistance devices, ballot papers in braille, sign language translators, and physical accessibility (having ramps, standard wide accessible doors and lifts) at polling stations, it might not be feasible in Afghanistan context to make all these arrangements in all polling stations available. Therefore, 73 % (This percentage is a cumulative percentage from agree and strongly agreed components) of survey participants agreed to establishment of a separate polling station for persons with disability in each city. 17% of participants were not sure if they need a separate polling station for voting but only 10 % disagreed with such establishment.



(Chart-8 proposals pertaining to separate polling stations for PWDs)

7.8.1 Civic education for PWDs and their families

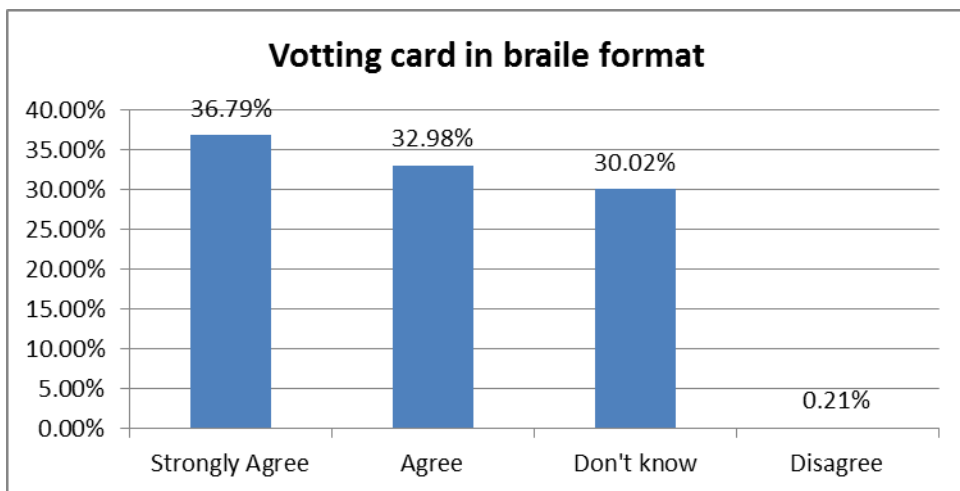
Although elections, campaigns, and voting are central to democratic institutions, citizens should learn that beyond electoral politics many participatory opportunities are open to them. Finally, they should come to understand that the attainment of individual goals and public goals tend to go hand in hand with participation in political life and electoral processes. They are more likely to achieve personal goals for themselves and their families, as well as the goals they desire for their communities, state, and nation, if they are informed, effective, and responsible citizens. A high necessity highlighted by persons with disability so they and their families receive civic education and information pertaining to elections and other related process (87%).



(Chart-9 Civic education for PWDs and their families)

7.8.2 Voting card in braille format

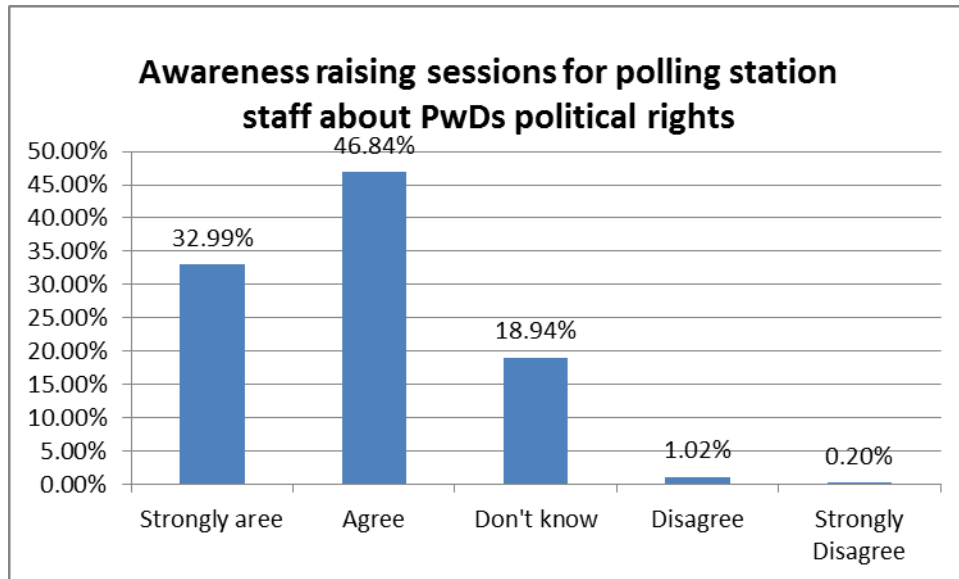
In a bid to increase participation of disabled voters, Braille numbers and ballot papers besides setting up ramps at polling booths is essential for visually impaired persons. If made available, the visually challenged voters will be able to read the names of candidates with the help of Braille ballot paper at the polling stations. Thereafter, they would be able to seal their votes by pressing the Braille numbers corresponding to the name of candidates they wish to vote for. Almost 70 % of survey participants confirmed their agreement about necessity of braille ballot papers.



(Chart-10 Votting card in braille format)

7.8.3 Awareness sessions for polling stations staff

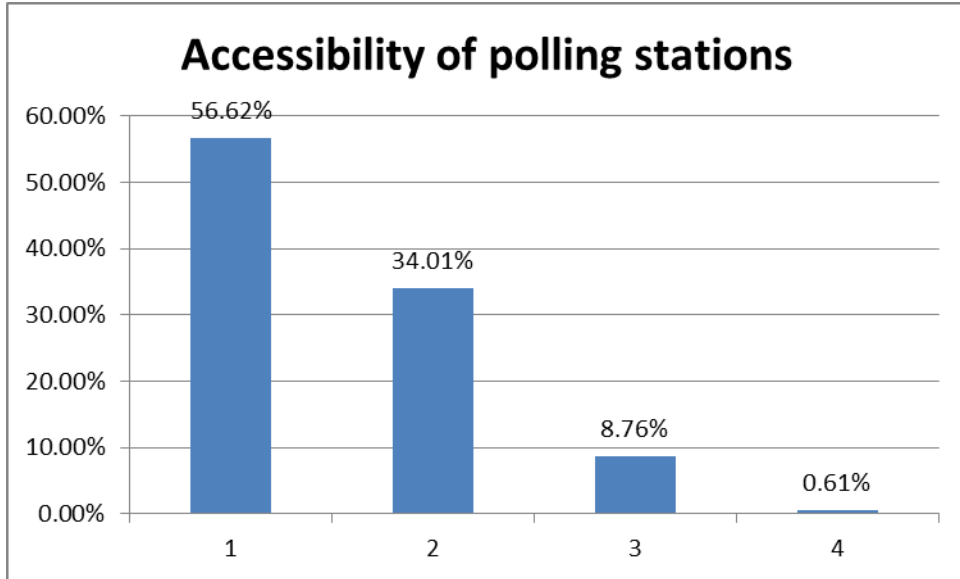
Another challenge which was shown is the illiteracy of visually impaired people and other persons with disability, therefore the polling stations staff need also be trained to be sensitive to the needs of people with special challenges. 80 % of participants have also highlighted the need for awareness raising sessions about the political rights of persons with disability for polling stations staff.



(Chart-11 Awareness raising sessions for polling stations staff)

7.8.4 Accessibility of polling stations

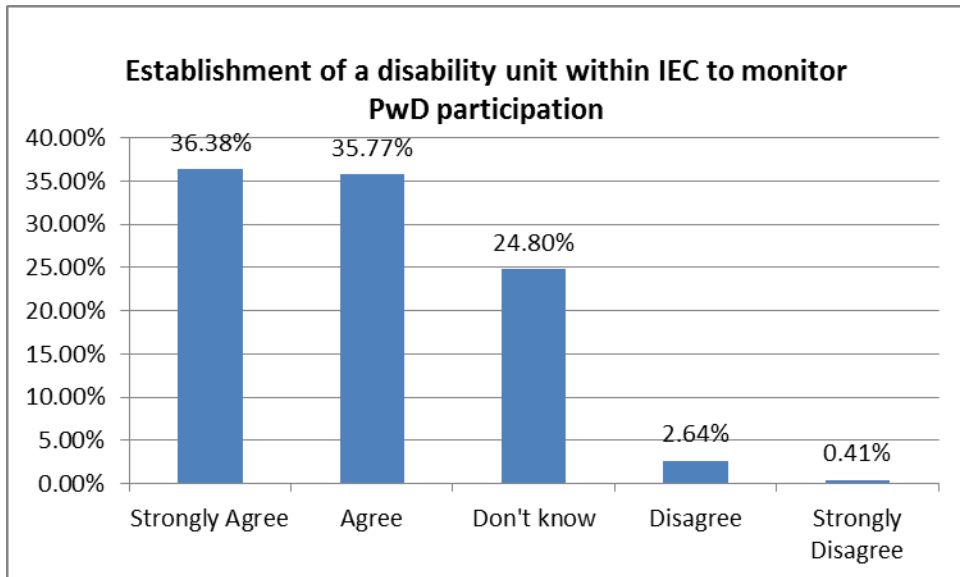
Accessibility of polling stations include signage to the polling station along all approach routes, sufficient width of routes to polling stations, setting up polling stations at ground floor, and provision of low-height polling booth , to facilitate voters who use wheelchairs or are short of stature, notices/ballot papers displayed in large print, availability of assistance during voting as requested. 80 % of respondents agreed that any particular polling station for person with disability need have above elements.



(Chart-12 Accessibility of polling stations)

7.8.5 Establishment of disability unit with IEC

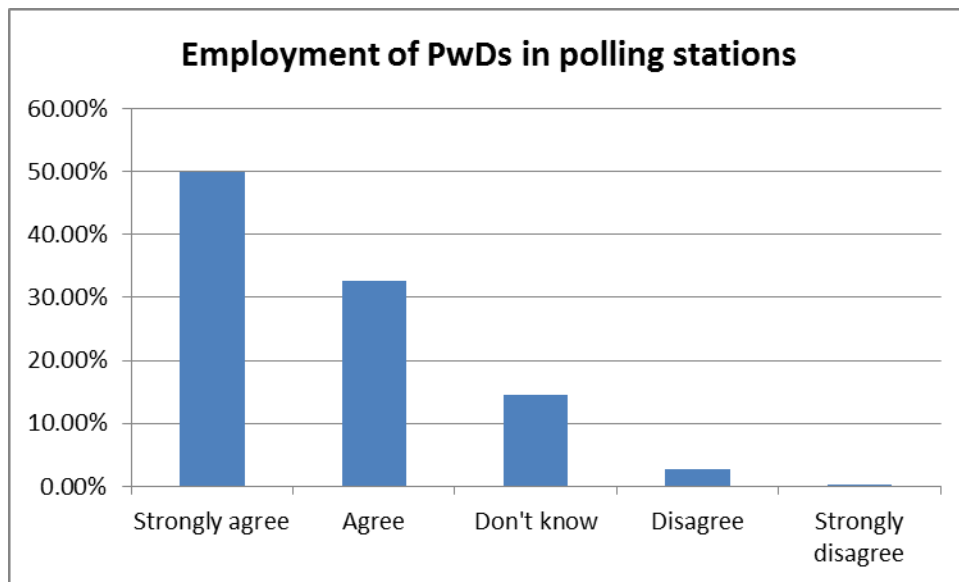
72 % of all respondents consider the establishment of a disability unit within independent election commission as highly important to monitor the participation of persons with disability in elections and this facilitate further opportunities for persons with disability. 24 % does not understand the importance of such establishment while 3 % are disagreeing which such development.



(Chart-13 establishment of disability unit with IEC)

7.7.6 Employing persons with disability in polling stations

Persons with disabilities face barriers to career and employment opportunities and lack the supports needed to enter the workforce. Education, skills training, accessible work places, and job opportunities. Many more persons with disabilities want to work but they are unable to because of employment barriers and lack of support. So person with disability look to electoral campaigns, civic education programs and organization of polling stations as important employment window for themselves. Chart below describes over 82 % participants are convinced persons with disability need to be hired at polling stations.



8. Recommendations for Action

8.1 National Electoral Commission

1. Prepare and provide timely user-friendly information on elections to people with disabilities as it was determined the positive perception about election increase the likelihood of participation in election.
1. Ensure that people with disabilities do not queue to vote at polling stations
2. Ensure special election officers are available to assist people with disability if require assistance;
3. Make sure the civic education programs are disability inclusive.
4. Give tasks to people with disabilities during elections (hire persons with disability as appropriate for civic education programs, campaigns, pre-election, polling day and post-election)
5. Set either special polling stations for people with disabilities in each city or consider particular polling boats for person with disability using well chairs (low height table at polling stations)
6. Ensure that minimum accessibility standards while selecting place as polling stations, for instance, usually on ground floor, door with sufficient width, ramps and stairs.
7. Deploy sign language interpreters and disburse tactile ballot papers in polling stations as necessary. Especially at polling stations for persons with disability.
8. Ensure the representation of people with disabilities in various IEC committees as well establishment of a particular unit within structure of IEC to monitor participation of persons with disability in election and other electoral process and provide necessary advocacy efforts.
9. Plan and implement trainings to IEC staff, particularly, polling stations staff to sensitize them about political and social rights and needs of persons with disability so they will be willing to provide necessary assistance and have a positive attitude toward persons with disability.
10. Consider special supportive programs for women with disability as it was found women with disability faced more barriers than men in past elections.
11. Mainstream the messages to convince persons with disability to get voter registration cards in election media campaigns. As survey determined not having voter registration cards as major avoiding factor to participation.
12. Consider the need of hearing and visually impaired people designing and implementing election campaigns materials

8.2 Central/Local Government(s)

1. Involve people with disabilities in policymaking and dissemination of information to citizens;
2. Develop the procedures as to elect/appoint more people with disabilities in election's decision making bodies.
3. Develop civic education programs to familiarize persons with disability about their political rights, particular, the voting process.
4. Design special programs to enhance participation of women with disability including programs to enhance family support to permit women with disability to participate in elections.

8.3 All Stakeholders

1. Provide practical voters' education frequently and not only during the election campaign;
2. Ensure there is adequate infrastructure and transportation for people with disabilities;
3. Conduct various seminars that consider/cater for different types of disabilities to enhance information about their own civil rights.
4. Give information in a language/form that is accessible to particular types of disabilities;
5. Provide more education about people with disabilities so as to sensitize all citizens;
6. Increase media Programmes on disabilities and the needs of people with disabilities;
7. Facilitate behavior change communication programs so society/community stop discriminating against people with disabilities, particular when persons with disability stand up as presidential, parliament and local counsel membership candidates.

8.4 People with Disabilities:

1. Participate effectively in the electoral process as voters and/or candidates;
2. Advocate for more inclusion in policymaking, decision-making processes and electoral process;
4. Actively participate in all efforts aimed at promoting rights persons with disability particularly rights to participate in election process.

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Community Centre for the Disabled (CCD):

A Resource Centre for Persons with Disabilities

Next to Ali Ebni Abitalib Masjid, Noor High School Street, Kabul University Road, Last Bust Stop, CCD Office

Email: ccd_kabul@yahoo.com, info@ccd.org.af

Phone: +93 799 215 820

Website: www.ccd.org.af

Facebook: community centre for the Disabled - CCD