



NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR DISABILITY
REPORT ON MONITORING ELECTIONS FOR MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT
REPRESENTING
PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES
HELD ON 22.02.2016
AT COLLINE HOTEL, MUKONO

COMPILED BY

NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR DISABILITY UGANDA

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1.0. BACKGROUND

1.1. Introduction

In accordance to section 6 of the National Council For Disability Act 2003 and the National Council For Disability amendment Act 2013, The National Council For Disability (NCD) was established as a public institution mandated to monitor the implementation of international, national and local legislation in as far as they affect Persons with Disabilities (PWDs).

The Council is charged (in the Act that establishes it) with a duty to assist the EC (Electoral Commission) in the conduct of free and fair elections for PWDs at all levels.

The assistance is interpreted in the NCD Act Regulations 2015 to mean playing the role of monitoring /observation during the entire election process, a report of which is shared with the EC, Parliament and other stakeholders.

It is against this background that the NCD participated by way of monitoring the exercise that ended up bringing five (5) Members of Parliament (MPs) to represent PWDs in the tenth parliament.

PWDs will be represented by three men and two women in the Tenth Parliament.

Overall, this report analyses the 2016 Parliamentary elections of PWDs in terms of the process – right from developing of the National Voters' Register to mobilization of the electoral college, voter education, candidates' nomination and registration, campaigns, voting, counting and tallying of votes, and disbanding of the electoral college.

1.2. Objectives of the Monitoring Exercise

The NCD carried out this activity guided by the following objectives:

- (a) To fulfill the legal obligation of disability monitoring and assisting the EC in conducting free and fair elections for PWDs' representatives.
- (b) To document the electoral process, its outcomes, challenges and lessons for stakeholder consumption and future improvements.

2.0. ELECTORAL PROCESS

2.1. Development of National Voters' Register

From 1996 when Ugandans first held national and local elections under the new (1995) Constitution and its consequent related laws, PWDs as one of the special interest groups have elected their representatives through electoral colleges. While politics and the said elections are a function of Government, the Country in the mid 1990s had no appropriate public structure to be used for the elections of PWDs. The National Union of Disabled Persons of Uganda (NUDIPU) was then entrenched in the electoral laws, whose structures were to be used by the EC to get electoral colleges for the election of PWD representatives.

In 2013, the NCD Act was amended and this amendment mandated the Electoral Commission to form Electoral Committees of persons with disabilities from village to District levels. Accordingly, the district electoral committees of 5 members from each district converged at national level to elect the 5 representatives of persons with disabilities to Parliament.

2.2. Mobilization of the National Electoral College

The Electoral Commission mobilized PWDs to form electoral committees from village to district level from September to October 2015. However, not many PWDs were informed of the process due to inadequate voter education. This resulted in the Electoral Committee being dominated by a few categories of disabilities and men at the expense of the women and other disabilities.

2.3. Registration of Voters and Voter Education

The voters' register forms a centerpiece of election management. This exercise was done by Electoral Commission through the formation of Electoral Committees. However, some PWDs whose names appeared on the National Register of Electoral Commission were missing on the Voter register for PWDs. This could have contributed to some PWDs not participating in the elections of representatives of PWDs to Parliament in February 2016.

As regards voter education, the EC took this upon themselves at the venue, taking delegates through the detail of the entire electoral process.

The NCD was accredited by Electoral Commission to conduct voter education but was not able to conduct the voter education due to financial constraints.

2.4. Nomination and Registration of Candidates

Candidates contesting to be elected as representatives of PWDs to Parliament were nominated at the Electoral Commission head office at Jinja road in Kampala on 2nd and 3rd December 2015 unlike the previous practices when candidates were nominated at the voting venue.

There are five seats for PWDs; that is, a representative for each of the regions of North, Western, Central and Eastern; as well as a woman MP.

In the northern region, two candidates were nominated; that is, Hon. Nokrach William as an Independent, and Mrs. Joyce Achan Ondoga for NRM Party.

In the Eastern region, only one candidate was nominated – Hon. Asamo Hellen Grace.

In the western region, five candidates were nominated: Hon. Katuramu Hood as an Independent, Dr. Bernard Mayanja for NRM Party, Mr. Bwire Edgar as an Independent, Mr. Bakunda Abbey as an Independent and Mr. Geoffrey. as an Independent.

In the Central region, three candidates were nominated; that is, Hon. Ndeezi Alex for NRM party, Engineer Kasule Senfuka Abubakar as an independent and Mr. Lukwago John Bosco for FDC Party.

For the woman member of Parliament, three candidates were nominated; that is Hon. Hajjati Safia Nalule Jjuko for NRM Party, Mrs. Naigaga Florence Sekabira as an Independent and Mrs. Laurah Kanushu as an Independent.

During the Nomination of candidates, all formalities were followed.

2.5. Voting, Counting, Tallying and Announcement of Results

The beginning of the election process was somehow late. However the EC officials were able to steer the activities without hiccups. The opening/ guiding remarks started by 9:30 am.

The programme of the day was marked by Registration of the delegates, display of the voter's register, prayer and National Anthem, self introduction, opening /guiding remarks, voter education by the Returning officer, introduction of the nominated candidates, setting up the voting area with the ballot boxes well arranged, actual voting conducted from 10:20 am to 2:30 pm. Lunch from 2:30pm to 3:00 pm. The sorting of ballots, the counting and tallying of results was from 3:00pm to 4:00 pm

The programme of elections was fairly well managed in terms of time. From registration to declaration of results the programme started at 8.00 am and ended at 4:00 pm.

The food, the drinks and the teas were well catered for. There were no complaints. However the rooms were not accessible to some of the participants who had to spend their nights in the corridors of the hotel. Delegates with wheel chairs had some difficulties accessing the conference hall and some of the sleeping rooms.

Colline hotel could have done more to ensure smooth accessibility to the accommodation rooms and conference hall.

In regard to accessibility to information, this was fairly well catered for. The sign language interpreters were engaged to provide sign language interpretation services for delegates who were deaf. The problem was that the ballot papers were not brailled and the delegates with blindness had to depend on their sighted guides to tick for them the candidates of their choice.

Whereas there was a fair degree of representation of all parties, the limited voter education downplayed the effective participation of delegates and their candidates in the elections.

It was alleged that voter bribery was done by some candidates including both the incumbents and the fresh candidates trying to win the hearts of the delegates in exchange for physical cash.

One of the views that all the incumbents sailed through successfully to retain their seats was because they used money to buy voters, cannot be completely ruled out. If, this is true, then does the representation of PWDs in Parliament still serve the purpose? If not, then how can it be improved in the interest of the entire special interest groups?

The efforts by National Council for Disability and other Persons With Disability organizations to change the methodology of elections to the effect that the election of the PWD Members of Parliament be carried out on regional basis(Eastern, western, central and Northern) for the respective regional MPs could have catered for a degree of democratic fairness. However the failure to have the procedure of elections of MPs for PWDs realized leaves a gap that will always be exploited by the incumbents to sustain the unfair methodology in the elections of Representatives of PWDs Members of parliament.

The participation of the PWD delegates from the 112 districts was provided for by law. Every district sent 5 delegates to participate in the National delegate's conference for Election of MPs representing PWDs. If the representatives were to turn up 100%, then 560 delegates could have participated in the elections. However the actual number of delegates who participated was 544. The Electoral

commission needs to take vivid steps to close the gaps that hindered the participation of some of the delegates.

A number of key EC officials from Headquarters and from Mukono District were present during the election of representatives of persons with disabilities to Parliament. These were:

Official in charge Special interest groups elections -Mr. Tamale Stuart (Returning Officer)

EC Principle officer - Mr. Diana Kutesa

EC Commissioner - Mr. Tom Buruku

Deputy Chairperson- EC Mr. Biribono Joseph

Mukono district registrar – Mrs. Sarah Kalyowa

Polling Official –Mr. Ezra Ongaria, among others.

Voting was done district by district following the alphabetical order of the district names.

The voting was by secret method.

The ballots were sorted one by one in the presence of the candidate’s agents; the counting of the ballots was also done in the open, and in the presence of candidate’s agents and in the clear view of all who were present.

Refer to the matrix table below for detailed Results of the elections.

ELECTION RESULTS FOR MPS REPRESENTING PWDS ON 22.02.2016 AT COLLINE HOTEL, MUKONO				
Total number of voters: 544				
WINNERS	REGION	PARTIES	CANDIDATES	SCORES
	WESTERN	NRM	BENARD MAYANJA	178/537
		INDEPENDENT	BWIRE EDGAR	03/537
		INDEPENDENT	GEOFFREY	01/537
		INDEPENDENT	HOOD KATURAMU	301/537
		INDEPENDENT	BAKUNDA ABBEY	54/537
		SPOILT.		07
	CENTRAL	INDEPENDENT	ENGINEER KASULE SENFUKA ABUBAKAR	14/542
		NRM	ALEX NDEZI	527/542
		FDC	LUKWAGO JOHN BOSCO	01/542
		SPOILT		02/544

	NORTHERN	NRM	JOYCE ACHAN ONDOGA	255/541
		INDEPENDENT	WILLIAM NOCKRACH	286/541
		SPOILT		03/544
	EASTERN	UN OPPOSED	HELLEN ASAMO	
	NATIONAL WOMEN REP.	NRM	HAJJATI SAFIA NALULE	280/541
		INDEPENDENT	NAIGA FLORENCE SEKABIRA	146/541
		INDEPENDENT	LAURAH KANUSHU	115/541
		SPOILT		03/544

3.0. Observations:

National Council for Disability (NCD) observed the following during the electoral process:

3.1. Formation of the electoral committees:

Whereas the EC is tasked with organizing the process and particularly the formation of the Electoral College, it had inadequate awareness raising for PWDs to participate. Hence, the majority of PWDs missing out. Especially women and girls with disabilities as reflected in the National Electoral College that elected the representatives of persons with disabilities to Parliament.

3.2. Registration and education of voters in the election process:

The voter education determines who gets to vote, and how informed their choices are. Biases at this stage, whether due to manipulation or incompetence, may greatly influence the election results. There was inadequate civic education for the PWDs in the country - save for the very limited voter education and campaign posters at Collin Hotel in Mukono.

Voter education seemed inadequate. This leaves a lot to be desired in as far as making independent and informed choices on the part of the electorate is concerned.

The participation of members of other parties, other than NRM, was minimal. The disorderliness of PWD delegates and their assistants who kept moving in and out

without respecting the required silence and order in the election room could have been due to limited voter education by the electoral commission.

The final voter education that was delivered by the EC Returning official from the voting hall was too brief

3.3 Accessibility of the voting venue and the voting materials:

Some of the rooms for accommodation in Collins Hotel, the voting venue were not accessible to some of the participants who had to spend their nights in the corridors of the hotel. Delegates with wheel chairs had some difficulties accessing the conference hall and some of the sleeping rooms.

The other problem was that the ballot papers were not brailled and the delegates with blindness had to depend on their sighted guides to tick for them the candidates of their choice.

4.0. Recommendations:

In light of the observed challenges, NCD recommends that for future improvement:

4.1. Colline hotel should do more to ensure smooth accessibility to the accommodation rooms and conference hall for Persons with Disability.

Alternatively the EC should take necessary efforts to engage venues that are more accessible to PWDs. For election of their representatives

4.2. Adequate voter education should be provided to PWD delegates

4.3. Deliberate effort should be made by the Electoral Commission to ensure gender and disability sensitiveness when forming the electoral committees from village to district in the 2021 elections.

4.4. The Parliamentary elections Act to be amended to provide for election of PWDs on regional basis for free, fair and transparent Elections to be realized.

4.5 The security of the voting area should be better catered for. In future voting area should be restricted to voters, nominated candidates and their agents, election officials and observers. The organizers should not just allow anybody to enter and go out unchecked. The unchecked movement of people in and out of the voting hall allows campaigns to continue.

4.6 The EC should take responsibility to fund voter Education especially for government institutions which are accredited.

4.7 EC should support National Council for Disability (NCD) to acquire funding for voter Education.

5.0. Conclusion

This report has shown that the perspective on an election depends on how the electoral process is conceived. Focusing primarily on polling and tallying of results, gives a different understanding than when we consider the broader process, where the parameters and structures that underpin and restrain the electoral process are set. Generally however, the election officials and agents of the contesting candidates did a commendable job. The counting process was transparent and results were announced at the polling station. Overall, the process on and around polling day can be said to have been free in the sense that no voter was intimidated or denied their right to vote.

We need to consider the limitations that were placed on the time informing the potential person to come and vote, and the time between the nomination date and the voting date as well.

In order for the PWDs to effectively take part in electoral events, the EC has to consider availing sign language interpreters at each of the campaigning activities. Informational material has to be transcribed into diverse formats like Braille, large print, audio or pictorial to ensure easy accessibility by all categories of people.

Election-related events such as candidates' rallies, polling activities or even voter registration exercises should be situated in places that can be easily accessed by PWDs.

Signed:

Signed:

EXECUTIVE SECRETARY

CHAIRPERSON