



VOICE GHANA

Voice of People with Disability Ghana

Disability Rights, Advocacy & Capacity Building Organisation

**Position Paper Establishing Baseline for PWDs Inclusion and Participation
in the Electoral Processes in the Agortime-Ziofe and Adaklu Districts**



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Introduction

VOICE GHANA has been operating since 2002 as an independent Civil Society Organisation, campaigning for the rights and needs of persons with disabilities and engaging Local Government Officials, Traditional Authorities and Private Enterprises on their statutory responsibilities to persons with disabilities.

Our **aims** and **objectives**, among others, are to train, support and empower people with disabilities at the grassroots level to form Self Help Groups in advocating for their rights to appropriate healthcare, welfare, education and employment.

Our target groups are people with all types of disabilities including children and people with intellectual disabilities. Our special focus is on people with disabilities who have limited or no access to education, perhaps because of their gender, or they live in remote areas or are extremely poor.

Background to the Development of this Position Paper

Views gathered from our disability Self-help Groups in 2013 showed that persons with disabilities in the Agotime-Ziofe and Adaklu Districts are marginalized in electoral and political participation and representation. Also, results of an independent research conducted by VOICE GHANA during the 2012 General Elections showed that electoral processes in the Agotime-Ziofe and Adaklu Districts were not inclusive enough for persons with disabilities.

It is against this backdrop that VOICE GHANA is implementing one year project with funding support from STAR-Ghana - Strengthening Transparency, Accountability and Responsiveness in Ghana www.star-ghana.org and its partners: UKaid, EU, DANIDA, and USAID; to ensure that:

- Persons with disabilities in the Agotime-Ziofe and Adaklu Districts are represented in the 2014 Unit Committee Level Elections.
- EC Offices in the Agotime-Ziofe and Adaklu Districts create inclusive environment for effective participation of PWDs in the 2014 DA Level Elections.

As part of the project, VOICE GHANA conducted random interviews with 120 persons with disabilities from 40 communities in the Agotime-Ziofe and Adaklu Districts between 13th February and 18th March 2014 to collate the necessary data on the:

- level of inclusion and participation of persons with disabilities in current Unit Committees
- level of inclusiveness of previous District Assembly level electoral process for persons with disabilities.

We later analysed the survey outcomes and produced a draft report, which was validated between 20th and 21st March 2014 in two separate half-day workshop sessions at Kpetoe and Adaklu Waya by a total of 69 PWD respondents made up of thirty-four (34) males and thirty-five (35) females from the two districts.

Summary of Key Outcomes from the Survey

The following evidence and data were established as a result of the survey:

1. There is virtually no representation of persons with disabilities in the membership of current Unit Committees, Area Councils and Zonal Councils in the Agortime-Ziofe and Adaklu Districts, though 58% of the population surveyed confirmed their interest in serving in Unit Committees in their respective electoral areas, should they be given the opportunity.
2. Only 4% of the respondents said they actually contested and won the Unit Committee elections in 2006 as a result of the interventions by VOICE GHANA.
3. Some of the reasons provided by the respondents as militating against their full inclusion and active participation in Unit Committees include:
 - Marginalization, stigmatization and stereotyping of persons with disabilities
 - Deprivation and poverty
 - Unjustified traditional beliefs, superstition and myths about disability, and
 - Wrong perception of persons with disabilities themselves due to lack of community support
4. Regarding the participation of persons with disabilities in the previous District Assembly (DA) level electoral processes, 85% of the population surveyed said they participated in the 2006 DA level elections as voters, while 90% confirmed their participation in 2010 DA level elections.
5. In spite of the high participation of persons with disabilities in these electoral processes, over 50% of respondents said the registration centres and polling stations were not accessible to accommodate their various disabilities.
6. Few respondents thought the attitude of registration officials and polling staff were not friendly to them at both registration and polling stations, while majority were with the opposite view.
7. In view of PWDs participation as EC Registration Officers and Polling Assistants during elections, 36% of the population surveyed said they were interested in this opportunity but just 4% actually serv as Polling Assistants in both 2006 and 2010 DA level elections. The possible reasons provided by the respondents for not being considered by the EC as Registration Officers and Polling Assistants include:
 - Issues of their disabilities
 - Low level of their education, and
 - Late submission of their applications for the jobs.

PWDs Position Concerning Inclusiveness of the Electoral Process

Almost all respondents confirmed the following as what could have worked better for them and ensure their full participation and representation in Unit Committees:

- Full community support, especially from Traditional Authorities and opinion leaders
- Timely and accessible information by the EC concerning the filing of nominations etc.
- Keen knowledge about the functions of Unit Committees and District Assembly concept
- Consideration of qualified and interested PWDs with the necessary expertise as Government Appointees and ex-officio members of Sub Committees by their District Assemblies

Also, the following positions were established in view of PWDs participation in the electoral processes and as Polling Assistants:

- Easy access to future voter registration centres and polling stations for PWDs voters
- Support for PWDs to easily participate in voter registration and voting processes
- Consideration of more qualified and interested PWDs as Polling Assistants by EC, and
- Timely and accessible information by EC concerning opportunities for Registration Officers and Polling Assistants during elections.

Conclusion

The above evidence and findings will form the basis of future advocacy by VOICE GHANA with the Electoral Commission, District Assemblies, Traditional Authorities, and opinion leaders, in the Agortime-Ziofe and Adaklu Districts to ensure that persons with disabilities actively participate in the 2014 DA level elections and are represented in Unit Committees including Area Councils as well as other local governance processes in the two districts.

Signed:

Francis Asong
Director

30th March 2014.