



# Frequently Asked Questions *about* **VOTERS WITH DISABILITIES**

Election of  
President, Parliament  
and Local Council  
**Sierra Leone**  
**7 March 2018**  
**7am - 5pm**

To learn more about the  
National Electoral  
Commission  
of Sierra Leone,  
please visit:  
[www.nec.gov.sl](http://www.nec.gov.sl)

## **Why is it important for Sierra Leoneans living with disabilities to vote?**

According to the Constitution of Sierra Leone, all citizens should enjoy the right to participate in national governance and should not be subject to discrimination. Ensuring that persons with disabilities (PWDs) can vote with little or no difficulty is fundamental to a democracy. In fact, according to the National Electoral Commission, it would be "difficult for a country to call itself a democracy without maintaining a participatory and inclusive political environment in its policy."

## **What official provisions exist, to protect the right of persons with disabilities to participate in elections?**

Sierra Leone is committed to uphold obligations under United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. In addition, the Sierra Leone Disability Act and the Public Elections Act provide a legally-binding framework for protecting the rights of PWDs.

## **Does the NEC have an official policy on persons with disabilities?**

Yes. The NEC Disability Policy identifies challenges faced by PWDs throughout the electoral process as well as ways to mitigate them. In addition to helping PWDs, the policy is intended to assist NEC officers, national legislative and executive bodies, and both national and international stakeholders, as a means to better ensure full democratic participation.

## **What assistance is there for voters who are blind or visually-impaired?**

This year, for the first time ever, Sierra Leone will use tactile ballot guides. These ballot guides enable blind and visually-impaired persons to identify their preferred candidate by feeling the ballot, without having to see it. This affords them even greater independence as they do not require personal assistance. (However, they are entitled to bring a helper with them if they prefer).

## **What assistance is there for voters who are hearing-impaired?**

Some public service announcements are available in sign language so that they may be understood by those who are deaf or hearing-impaired.

Social Media

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**#votesalone**

## **What assistance is there for voters who are confined to wheelchairs or face challenges with mobility?**

Wherever possible, polling centres are on premises that are accessible to wheelchairs and to those who face challenges with mobility. Ramps will be used where premises are not wheelchair-accessible; and every polling station will have at least one screen that is lower, in relation to the height of wheelchairs and for those who need to sit down while completing their ballot papers.

## **Are disabled voters allowed to have helpers with them at polling stations and when they mark their ballots?**

Disabled and elderly voters are permitted to be accompanied by their own appointed helpers – even behind the voting screens. These helpers need to be registered to vote and should take their voter ID card with them to the polling centre.