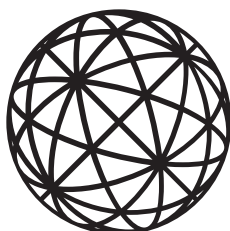




WE VOICE 4 SPACE

**A NATIONAL AGENDA FOR THE INCLUSION AND PARTICIPATION
OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES (PWDs) IN ELECTIONS AND
POLITICAL PROCESSES IN SIERRA LEONE**

THE 'PWD' AGENDA



**WESTMINSTER
FOUNDATION FOR
DEMOCRACY**



This material has been funded by UK aid from the UK government; however the views expressed do not necessarily reflect the UK government's official policies.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Sierra Leone Union on Disability Issues (SLUDI) wishes to express its appreciation to the disability community in Sierra Leone for its concerted efforts, collaboration and openness in the development of this Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) Agenda ahead of the 2018 general elections.

We are grateful to the 'Standing Together for Democracy Consortium,' a coalition of civil society organisations funded by UKaid through the Department for International Development (DFID) for providing funds to the Westminster Foundation for Democracy (WFD) to promote inclusion and participation of PWDs in the electoral and political processes of Sierra Leone. We appreciate the opportunity to present the disability community's public policy priorities to be addressed by a number of national and international stakeholders in the governance landscape in Sierra Leone.

We are so grateful to WFD's consultant, Mr. Alexander Bankole Williams, from the Ghana Federation of Disability Organisations, for his passion, commitment and technical expertise in facilitating the entire process of developing this PWD Agenda

We hope that with all our efforts we can better support the process of implementing the recommendations put forward by the disability community in promoting the inclusion and participation of PWDs in the elections and political processes of Sierra Leone for the upcoming 2018 elections and beyond.

SLUDI and its constituent members together

with the National Commission for Persons with Disability (NCDP) would like to express their appreciation to all the key stakeholders who provided insights and inputs in the development of this PWD Agenda. We acknowledge and thank the following for their valued assistance:

- African Young Voices (AYV)
- All Peoples Congress (APC)
- National Election Watch (NEW)
- National Electoral Commission (NEC)
- Political Party Registration Commission (PPRC)
- Human Rights Commission (HRC-SL)
- Local Council representatives
- National Democratic Alliance (NDA)
- Peoples Movement for Democratic Change(PMDC)
- Handicap International Sierra Leone
- Search for Common Ground (SFCG)
- Senior District Officers in Makeni
- Sierra Leone Peoples Party (SLPP)
- The organisations of Persons with Disabilities representatives in the 14 Districts
- Traditional representatives from Nongowa Chiefdom in Kenema
- Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender & Children's Affairs
- Peoples Democratic Party (PDP)
- Citizens Democratic Party (CDP)
- National Democratic Alliance (NDA)
- Ministry of Sports



**'THE MORE INCLUSIVE WE ARE
THE MORE OUR DEMOCRACY IS
STRENGTHENED. WITH A STRENGTHENED
DEMOCRACY, WE ARE SURE TO
TRANSFORM SIERRA LEONE TO SERVE
EVERYONE; EVERYONE TO LIVE A
DECENT AND DIGNIFIED LIFE'**

SLUDI President, Mr Santigie Kargbo

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

ADA	Amputee Descendant Association
ADP	Alliance for Democratic Party
APC	All Peoples Congress
AWWO	Amputee and War Wounded Organisation
BDDRM	Bonthe District Disability Right Movement
CGG	Campaign for Good Governance
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
DPO	Disabled Peoples Organisation
DFID	Department for International Development
DPOs	Disabled Peoples Organisations
DRIM	Disability Right Movement
HRC-SL	Human Rights Commission Sierra Leone
IGR	Institute for Governance Reform
IRN	Independent Radio Network
NAE	National Association of Epileptics
NALPA	National Leprosy Patient Association
NCPD	National Commission on Persons with Disability
NEC	National Electoral Commission
NEW	National Election Watch
PMDC	Peoples Movement for Democratic Change
PPDA	Polio Persons Development Association
PPRC	Political Party Registration Commission
PWD	Person with Disability
PWDs	Persons with Disabilities
SFCG	Search for Common Ground
SLAB	Sierra Leone Association of the Blind
SLPP	Sierra Leone Peoples Party
SLUDI	Sierra Leone Union of Disability Issues
SNEI	Special Needs Education Institute
TDDA	Tonkolili District Disability Association
UK	United Kingdom
UNCRPD	United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
WESOFOD	Welfare Society for the Disabled
WFD	Westminster Foundation for Democracy

BACKGROUND

The Sierra Leone Union on Disability Issues (SLUDI) is the umbrella national organisation for Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) and Disabled Peoples' Organisation (DPOs) in Sierra Leone. Founded in 1995, SLUDI promotes disability inclusion, voice and participation for PWDs and challenges issues of marginalisation and discrimination of PWDs in all sectors of life. It's vision is 'to help PWDs achieve independence, promote the implementation of the 2011 Disability Act and other critical legislations and help develop a positive attitude towards PWDs in Sierra Leone.'

Westminster Foundation for Democracy (WFD) is the UK's leading Democracy strengthening institution established in 1992. WFD is a member of the 'Standing Together for Democracy Consortium,' a coalition of CSOs funded by UKaid through the UK Department for International Development (DFID) in support of the 2017/18 electoral cycle in Sierra Leone. The coalition aims to create the right conditions for free, fair and peaceful elections in Sierra Leone. Led by Search for Common Ground (SFCG), the consortium consists of five national organisations - National Elections Watch (NEW), Campaign for Good Governance (CGG), Independent Radio Network (IRN), Institute for Governance Reform (IGR) and 50/50 Group - and two international organisations - SFCG and WFD. SLUDI has partnered with the Consortium through WFD in line with its aim to improve the participation of PWDs in the upcoming elections.

Purpose of the PWD agenda

The culture of developing and implementing pro-disability policies within political party manifestos in Sierra Leone is yet to be fully enshrined in the ethos and operation of party politics. To support the full participation and inclusion of PWDs, the disability community in Sierra Leone calls for 'Inclusive 2018 political parties manifestos and Campaigns' and the implementation of disabled-specific

public policy priorities by NEC, PPRC, the Government of Sierra Leone and its development partners. SLUDI is leading the PWD agenda campaign to draw the attention of stakeholders to a number of challenges faced by PWDs that require commitment as Sierra Leone goes to the polls in 2018.

The PWD Agenda is centred on six pro-disability public policy priorities identified by the disability community following extensive consultations with key stakeholders throughout the country.

The PWD Agenda will therefore serve:

- As an **advocacy tool** for the disability community and disability groups in Sierra Leone to advocate for key public policy priorities to be integrated within the manifestos of political parties in Sierra Leone.
- As a **guide for key organisations** interested in engaging PWDs and other institutions on PWD-related priorities for the upcoming elections.
- As a **national advocacy document** that will guide Elections Management Bodies (EMBs), political parties and the next Government of Sierra Leone (post 2018 elections) on the planning, budgeting and implementation of PWD interventions.



Preparing the advocacy for the PWD agenda with 28 CSOs and CBOs.

We, the disability community of Sierra Leone, call on the political parties and the next government to commit and invest on these six PWD Agenda priorities over 2018-2023:

- 1. Enhance the inclusion and participation of PWDS in the political process of Sierra Leone**
- 2. Ensure physical accessibility of public buildings, infrastructure and transportation for PWDS**
- 3. Support the collection of accurate data on PWDS in Sierra Leone for better planning**
- 4. Improve access to Inclusive Education**
- 5. Enhance PWDS access to health care with additional investment and monitoring**
- 6. Enhance the employment and socio-economic empowerment of PWDS**

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) recognise inclusion as a critical element in transforming the world and ending poverty for all. Sierra Leone has made some progress in promoting inclusive development as enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) in its national legislation to promote the rights of PWDS. The Disability Act of 2011 for instance, led to the establishment of the National Commission for Persons with Disability (NCPD) in 2012. Despite these efforts, critical barriers remain in creating the conditions for persons with disabilities to live an independent and dignified life and to fully participate in the governance of the state as equal citizens.

The 2018 elections provide an opportunity for the disability community to amplify its voice and play an active role in setting the agenda for political participation, inclusion and priority setting for state governance during and after the 2018 elections. To that end, this PWD Agenda serves as a catalogue of key PWD priorities that will be brought to the attention of stakeholders. The PWD Agenda has a set of recommendations which call for more concrete commitments and actions in transforming Sierra Leonean democracy to be more open, responsive, inclusive and representative of the views of some of its most vulnerable members - PWDS.



Validation of PWD Agenda with stakeholders.

HOW THE PWD AGENDA WAS DEVELOPED

With support from an expert consultant, SLUDI and WFD developed a set of semi-structured interview questions in consultations with NCPD in order to conduct interviews with key institutions. A Focus Group Discussion (FGD) guide was also developed for focus group discussions to generate the key issues that formed the basis of the PWD Agenda. This led to four direct engagement sessions with DPOs in all the four provinces of Sierra Leone (Western Area, North, East and the Southern Regions). The selection of representatives from the DPO community in the various districts was led by SLUDI with support from WFD. Two criteria were used for the selection of DPO representatives: gender and category of disability.

A total of 125 members from 15 DPOs were first engaged in the four regions.¹ These DPOs represented all 14 districts in Sierra Leone: the visually impaired; hearing impaired; persons suffering from polio, kyphosis and epilepsy; albinos; amputees and war-wounded, people with mental disabilities and; wheelchair-users. In order to validate the views of the DPOs representatives, 15 debrief sessions were held with 1,390 disabled persons in the 14 districts using interactive exercises like questions and answers, testimonies and presentations.

The consultant led the technical facilitation of all focus group discussions with mobilisation support from WFD staff and SLUDI representatives. At each of the engagement sessions in the various provinces, the facilitator had participants form three focus groups to examine the same issues using the focus group discussion guide. They were given a session to discuss the main challenges of PWDs that they would want to have addressed in political party manifestos

and they were then given a second exercise to look at the key issues of PWDs participating in political activities, as well as local governance, and voter and civic education.

Using a semi-structured questionnaire, the consultant interviewed a total of six professional institutions comprising of four commissions,² seven political parties³ as well as NEW, SFCG, Handicap International (HI), African Youth Voices (AYV) and the Ministry of Social Welfare Gender & Children's Affairs and the Ministry of Sports. The seven parties were selected using criteria like: being a party in Parliament, having served in previous parliaments, having taken part in previous elections and having engaged in active participation in recent by-elections across the country.

'I was pleased with the extensive consultations with the PWD community in the process of developing this Agenda - It is by us, for us and is what we use to continue our engagement with stakeholders for the next five years.'

PWD representative in Bonthe District



Sign language being used in Sierra Leone during a consultation with PWDs.

¹ These include: the Sierra Leone Blind Association (SLAB); the Amputee and War Wounded Organisation (AWWO), the National Leprosy Patient Association (NALPA), the Polio Persons Development Association (PPDA), SLUDI, the National Association of Epileptic (NAE), the Tonkolili District Disability Association (TDDA), the Welfare Society for the Disabled (WESOFOD), the Special Needs Education Institute (SNEI), the Disability Right Movement (DRIM), the Amputee Descendant Association (ADA) and the Bonthe District Disability Right Movement (BDDRM), Mental Disability Coalition, Milton Margai School for the Blind, National School for the Deaf.

² National Commission for Persons with Disabilities, Human Rights Commission, Political Party Registration Commission (PPRC) and National Election Commission (NEC)

³ Peoples Movement for Democratic Change (PMDC), Alliance for Democratic Party (ADP), Sierra Leone Peoples Party (SLPP) and the All Peoples Congress (APC), Citizens Democratic Party(CDP), Peoples Democratic Party(PDP), United Democratic Movement(UDM)

ISSUES FOR POLITICAL PARTY MANIFESTOS AND THE NEXT GOVERNMENT

We, the disability community in Sierra Leone, ask political parties to commit to the inclusion of the following public policy priorities in their manifestos

1. Enhance the inclusion and participation of PWDs in the political process in Sierra Leone

PWDs have participated in political party rallies, were previously nominated and elected as local counsellors and have been nominated as candidates by political parties to contest elections as MPs. However, there are no legally binding regulations within the policies of the political parties.

During the interviews in the development of the PWD Agenda, political parties expressed good will and commitment towards the inclusion of PWDs in their mainstream governance structures, yet there have been no firm policies pushed forward to promote and strengthen the expressed desires of the parties. The parties have 'disability desks' but these are not a creation of the party's constitution. All the seven parties interviewed do not have a PWD wing as they do for women and youth.

Contesting for elected political office in Sierra Leone requires strong financial capacity, but considering the poor employment opportunities PWDs face, this presents multiple challenges of resources, space and voices in elective politics. Although the Political Parties Registration Commission Act of 2002 prohibits discrimination from equal political participation, there is no specific policy that obliges parties to promote the inclusion of PWDs in their various political activities. The Sierra Leonean local government system currently has no written or clear cut policy that promotes the participation of PWDs in local governance at the district- or chiefdom-level.

Despite the efforts of the National Electoral Commission (NEC) to ensure PWDs access to voter registration and polling centres, not

all centres were accessible during the 2017 voter registration exercise. There is also an increased financial burden on PWDs to get guides to assist them in polling centres. Some have seen these challenges as key barriers to their right to vote.

Actions:

- Enshrine the development of a disability wing in political party constitutions to give written meaning to the expressed verbal intentions of PWDs and to promote their participation in political activities;
- Develop affirmative action initiatives through written policies to nominate PWDs in electable constituencies across the country. We strongly encourage political parties to take concrete steps to ensure that a minimum of 5% of all nominees for elected and appointed public positions - including Councillors, MPs and Ministers, Commissioners, Ambassadors and Board Members of public institutions - are reserved for PWDs;
- Commit to ensure that there will be mechanisms for local government to establish regulations for traditional rulers to promote and protect the dignity and rights of PWDs within the local governance system;
- Commit to promote the implementation of pro-disability legislation by reviewing the current Disability Act of Sierra Leone and putting in place clear mechanisms to support its full implementation;
- Establish a stand-alone inclusion committee in Parliament that will have a disability mandate to ensure all Government financial planning, laws and policies are disabled friendly at all levels.

2. Ensure physical accessibility of public buildings and transportation for PWDs

DPOs across the country express difficulty in accessing public buildings, goods and services due to the inaccessible nature of local infrastructure and the lack of auxiliary

disability-related services that will guarantee this. DPOs further express frustration with regards to the lack of access in transportation networks, which limits their right to movement. They recognise governments effort in buying 100 buses to aid the transportation crisis in the country but were disappointed that none of them was disabled friendly. There are limited means by which a service provider is able to identify and authenticate whether or not a person has a disability, especially in situation where the disability is invisible to enable them to render the needed service.

PWDs express that their right to movement is seriously challenged as most public buildings are not disability-friendly. They stressed that transportation is a huge challenge as commercial transport owners neglect PWDs as passengers.

Actions:

- The next government should develop mechanisms and regulations to support a transportation network that is accessible for PWDs in Sierra Leone;
- The next government should develop an Accessibility Guide to be used as a basic standard by Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) and Parliament for making inclusive policies and designing and implementing programmes that ensure physical access to infrastructure;
- Develop a mechanism for the appropriate categorisation and certification of disability to enable PWDs to access relevant disability-related services. To this end, we strongly call for the functionality of the medical board to improve.
- We request the next government to conduct an accessibility audit on public institutions and commit funds in ensuring public buildings are accessible to PWDs and that all public buildings should have sign language interpreters and supports to aid PWDs.

3. Support the collection of accurate data on PWDs in Sierra Leone for better planning

The needs of PWDs can only be adequately

catered for when there is accurate data available. The disability community express the view that the available data on PWDs does not seem to cover all the categories and totality of the disability community. According to the National Commission on Persons with Disability (NCPD) the data available provides a good basis of information but could be strengthened on PWDs in Sierra Leone.

There is a need to ensure that a conscious effort is made to strengthen the collection of accurate data on PWDs and their categorisation for the development of disability specific interventions that will deal with their diverse needs.

‘How can government budget funds for PWDs when the available data does not reflect our numerical strength. We will be deprived of our rights to basic social services if we fail to strengthen the present pwd data’

PWD representative from Freetown.



Group discussion on PWD data availability.

Actions:

- The new government to commit to providing funding for a data collection exercise on PWDs in Sierra Leone and their disability categories, in collaboration with NCPD and Statistics Sierra Leone. This initiative could also be supported with the development of a databank on disability related issues;
- Commit to promoting research on disability-related issues for evidence-based planning in addressing disability issues in the country.
- The new government should make it compulsory for all MDAs and Councils to comprehensively generate disaggregated data on PWDs accessing all government programmes in all sectors (health, education, employment etc.)
- The new government to establish a system to monitor and track budget and expenditure against the number of PWDs that access and benefit from programmes and services delivered by MDAs and the Councils.

4. Improve access to Inclusive Education

Illiteracy rates among PWDs are high and a major barrier for effective PWD participation in societal development. While there are different interventions from Government and NGOs in promoting education for PWDs, PWDs still do not have access to fully-inclusive education services. The Government is currently implementing a provision of the Disability Act 2011 that obliges the state to provide tertiary education to students with disabilities. Though most PWDs in tertiary institutions have benefitted from this, many are still unaware of it. PWDs express that teachers, especially those in the training colleges, require specific trainings on PWDs to provide inclusive education. There is no firm policy commitment in promoting inclusive education in the country. Some existing efforts to develop an inclusive education policy are underway but this needs to be supported and monitored.

Actions:

- Promote the implementation of an inclusive

education policy with an accompanying implementation and monitoring mechanism;

- Support initiatives geared towards the development of an inclusive education curriculum and ensure this is done for all the various categories of the education system from primary, secondary, vocational and technical and tertiary institutions;
- Commit to equipping all teachers with basic special needs skills to enable them to effectively implement inclusive education policies and processes.

5. Enhance PWDs access to health care with additional investment and monitoring

Though the Disability Act 2011 stipulates that free medical care should be provided to PWDs with the consent of the Chief Medical Officer, this is not fully implemented due to insufficient investments by previous governments and limited public awareness of this provision. Despite its own challenges, free medical care is provided to pregnant or breastfeeding women and children under five, including those with disabilities. PWDs appreciate the establishment of the Mental Health Units in all government hospitals in the 14 districts. However, they express concerns that elections related legislation is still not friendly to people with mental disabilities

‘Society has made us resort to begging since the opportunities for us to change our lives are not forthcoming. We are not a nuisance as some people refer to us but we want the opportunities to fend for ourselves and leave begging’

Comment from a PWD during the debrief sessions in Freetown.

Actions:

- Commit to increase spending on PWDs healthcare to ensure equal access to meaningful healthcare services by way of providing appropriate psychotropic medication, paramedical disability-related services and accessible sexual and reproductive health services;
- Commit to ensuring the development of policy regulations in the health sector that supports compulsory training of all health personnel on inclusive health service delivery and how to better deal with disability issues in the health sector;
- Review the 1902 'Lunacy Act' and change its nomenclature to 'Mental Health Act' in compliance with international best practice;
- Commit to review national election laws to address the discriminatory provisions against people using mental health services;
- Put mechanisms to better support the implementation, sensitisation and monitoring of PWDs' free healthcare as enshrined in the Disability Act of 2011.

6. Enhance the employment and socio-economic empowerment of PWDs

Unemployment is a major concern in the country. According to DPOs, there is a particularly high prevalence of unemployment among PWDs in Sierra Leone due to the negative perceptions about their capacities. PWDs say that they are challenged to compete for jobs due to negative public perception about disabilities. Youth members of the PWD community express the slow pace of support for those of them that are interested in taking up staff as a career option. The Ministry of Sports is aware of this challenge and during the interview expressed that the Ministry is working to mainstream PWDs in sport activities in Sierra Leone.

There is hardly a district in Sierra Leone without hundreds of disabled beggars and the disabled community is of the view that this increases their vulnerability as some people have been describing them as a nuisance. There is low capacity of DPOs at the local

level to advocate effectively for the rights of PWDs and social protection mechanisms are inadequate.

Actions:

- Develop favourable employment policies such as an employment equity policy for both the formal public and private sectors;
- Empower PWDs and DPOs at the local level by allocating a percentage of local government funding to PWDs through the NCPD to better run PWD employment schemes at the local level;
- Put in place systems that will require all employers with 20 or more employees to annually publish the number of disabled people they employ to ensure concrete actions are taken to support PWDs to gain meaningful employment;
- Ensure the establishment and functionality of mentorship and career guidance units within NCPD to better support PWDs to compete for employment opportunities in Sierra Leone;
- Aggressively invest in the informal sector by providing modern and functional vocational training centers that can generate a minimum of 1,000 skilled PWDs every year and establish systems to support their career in the skills acquired. This can help reduce the number of disabled people in the street begging.
- Commit to review and implement an inclusive National Sport Policy and develop a strategic plan that will fully implement and monitor the effectiveness of the policy.



Community based organisations and civil society organisations participate in a training session in Makeni town, Sierra Leone on PWD concerns, advocacy and policy.

ISSUES FOR INCREASING PWDs PARTICIPATION IN THE ELECTIONS PROCESS

The promotion of inclusive participation for PWDs also requires the participation and commitment of the NEC and PPRC. Actions that will enhance electoral participation, civic education and the awareness of the general public are vital so as to guarantee the full involvement of the PWD community in the electoral and political process as Sierra Leone approaches the 2018 elections and beyond.

We, the disability community in Sierra Leone, make specific recommendations for the consideration, commitment and action of the NEC and PPRC:

1. National Electoral Commission (NEC)

The disability community recognises the efforts of NEC in promoting the inclusion of PWDs in the electoral process, especially its efforts in the development of a disability policy and information, education and communication materials, which encourage disability participation and the establishment of a Disability Unit within the Commission. The disability community is still facing challenges of accessibility in voting centres and voter centre staff need to be trained on accessibility. There is still grave concern regarding the availability of tactile ballots for the 2018 elections.

Actions:

- In view of the peculiar challenges of PWDs, NEC should gather and disseminate disaggregated data in a timely manner to enable them to adopt pro-PWDs interventions based on PWDs actual needs;
- Increase the number of direct engagements with PWDs across the country at all levels on issues of voter and civic education;
- Ensure that a tactile ballot system is used in the 2018 elections and provide tactile ballots jackets;
- Ensure that at least 5% of the total number of NEC officials are PWDs across the

country;

- Increase consultations and coordination with institutions and umbrella bodies working to promote disability issues;
- Fully implement the NEC disability policy thereby ensuring that voter and civic education materials are available in alternate formats such as braille, audio, electronic, large print etc.;
- Conduct an accessibility audit of all polling centres to ascertain whether they are accessible and design strategies to ensure PWDs have full access to centres that are not disabled-friendly.

2. Political Parties Registration Commission (PPRC)

As a supervising and monitoring body for political parties, the disability community recommends the PPRC take the following actions.

Actions:

- Develop a provision in the PPRC guidelines for the registration and renewal of registration of political parties to include a provision for PWDs' participation;
- Special efforts to be made to partner and collaborate with SLUDI and NCPD or any other organisation working to promote PWD inclusion in the political and electoral process.



Wheel chair accessibility for public buildings presents real problems for PWDs in Sierra Leone.

ISSUES FOR THE ATTENTION OF OTHER STAKEHOLDERS

The promotion of inclusive participation for PWDs also requires the participation and commitment of other stakeholders. Actions that will enhance electoral participation, civic education and the awareness of the general public are vital so as to guarantee the full involvement of the PWD community in the electoral and political process as Sierra Leone approaches the 2018 elections and beyond.

We, the disability community in Sierra Leone, make specific recommendations for the consideration, commitment and action of the following stakeholders:

1. Civil Society Organisations (CSOs)

The disability community recognises the effort of CSOs in advocating issues relating to the welfare and wellbeing of PWDs, including their inclusion in the electoral process. The disability community therefore recommends that CSOs consider PWDs needs in their programming.

Actions:

- Develop an implementation strategy and monitoring mechanism by CSOs - led by the Disability movement - to track progress in relation to the PWD Agenda in order to realise the agenda.
- Enable all stakeholders to make informed decisions about the participation of PWDs in the electoral process of Sierra Leone; CSOs working on election observation should to conduct an appropriate level of observation of the participation of PWDs during the upcoming election in 2018 and provide empirical evidence regarding the participation of PWDs in the electoral process;
- Recognise that inclusive budgeting is important for CSOs working with PWDs. PWDs, especially the physically challenged and visually-impaired, require guides to enhance their participation in meetings and workshops. Hearing-impaired PWDs require interpreters to ensure their full

participation. Visually-impaired PWDs need materials in braille, large print, audio copies and electronic copies in order to improve their participation in such programmes. CSOs should consider all of these needs in addition to ensuring accessible venues are used for awareness raising and trainings with the disability community;

- Ensure increased networking and partnerships among CSOs, especially in the area of influencing duty bearers, to create the space for PWDs full participation in the political and electoral process.

2. The Media

We heavily rely on the media. The hearing impaired in particular continued to face challenges in comprehending programmes on the television. We appreciate the media houses that have special programmes for PWDs.

Actions:

- We ask all television stations to have sign language interpreters for their programmes so as to enable hearing impaired PWDs to benefit from all their programmes including elections related programmes.
- Train media staff on issues of PWDs and how to better communicate with them using the right terminologies and channels.
- Support in monitoring the inclusion of PWDs in the political and electoral process to ensure political parties adhere to their commitments.

3. Private Sector

Government alone cannot provide employment opportunities for disabled people. We are asking the private sector to join in promoting inclusion in the work place.

Actions:

- Develop and implement inclusive policies in the work place and raise awareness

among staff on this and seek better incentives from Government for employers with increased numbers of disabled people in the work place;

- Design and Invest in internship programmes for PWDs so as to build your own inclusive work force;
- Include the publication of information on the number of PWDs employed annually to demonstrate your real commitment and actions in promoting an inclusive employment approach in your workforce;
- Ensure increased networking and partnerships among CSOs, especially in the area of influencing duty bearers, to create the space for PWDs full participation in the political and electoral process.

4. People With Disabilities (PWDs)

We acknowledge the contributions of others and will continue to push for more support to PWDs. However, we also ask PWDs to be proactive in ensuring our contributions to promote inclusion in all political, electoral and development issues is effective.

Actions:

- PWDs must make conscious efforts to be involved in all civic and voters education programmes to better understand their rights and responsibilities during elections;
- All PWDs at voting age should always register and vote during elections;
- PWDs should avoid open confrontations on political issues and make all efforts to stay away from violence and promote peaceful elections in Sierra Leone;
- SLUDI to continue the collaboration with WFD and other pro-disability organisations and donors to develop an implementation strategy and monitoring mechanism with clear milestones - to track progress in relation to the PWD Agenda;
- PWDs interested in political offices and appointments should endeavour to prepare themselves and follow all the processes and procedures that require their membership for any association or group.



National PWD Elections Network meeting to discuss findings and recommendations of PWD agenda.



Presentation on the barriers that PWDs face, especially in relation to employment and education.



Community based organisations and civil society organisations participate in a training session in Bo town, Sierra Leone on PWD concerns, advocacy and policy.

ANNEX 1: SUMMARY OF THE KEY LEGAL ISSUES THAT SUPPORT THE VARIOUS ISSUES RAISED IN THE PWD AGENDA

PWD Right	The instruments(National/International)
Right to participate in elections and politics	• Article 29 of the UNCRPD begins by emphasising the political rights of PWDs and obliges governments to ensure that they exercise this right effectively and fully on an equal basis with others. It also expresses the right of PWDs to actively participate in public life. The Article further obligates governments to promote the participation of PWDs in the administration and activities of political parties. It then goes on to oblige the government to ensure that PWDs can participate in all electoral processes including: voting in an accessible manner with the relevant assistive devices, and where necessary with the assistance of a personal aid. State parties are to also required to ensure that voting procedures, facilities and materials are ‘appropriate, accessible and easy to understand and use’ as well as protect their rights to secret ballot. The same Article urges governments to make available opportunities that will enable PWDs also contest for elections. • Section 29 of the PWD Act 2011 of Sierra Leone mainly makes provision for PWDs to actively participate in voting in an accessible manner.
Right to physical accessibility	• Article 9 of the UNCRPD emphasises the need for governments to ensure that the communication barriers for all manner of PWDs including the Blind and Deaf are dealt with by making such needed communication aids and assistance available in all service delivery facilities. • Section 24 of the PWD Act 2011 of Sierra Leone also accentuates the need for ensuring access to buildings and the transportation network, but does not emphasise the development of standards and guidelines for such purposes. The section however, adds a very relevant component which is mobility aids that is needed to facilitate mobility.

Right to healthcare	• Article 25 of the UNCRPD obligates governments to ensure to deal with the additional health issues that emanate as a result of certain disabilities as part of the basic healthcare service for such categories of persons. • The PWD Act 2011 of Sierra Leone focuses on programmes for early detection of disability and ensuring free access to healthcare services. It makes provision for the certification of disability; a provision that neither the UN standard Rules nor the UNCRPD makes
Right to Education	• Article 24 of the UNCRPD reinforces the ‘full development of human potential, sense of dignity, self-worth, the strengthening of respect for human rights, fundamental freedoms and human diversity’ as the underpinning principles that guide the education of PWDs at all levels. • Sections 14-16 of the PWD Act 2011 of Sierra Leone mainly promotes free access to tertiary education and structural adjustments to the built environment as well as other educational facilities. It seeks to give appropriate incentives to students in government institutions who specialise in courses for the instruction of PWDs. The said law does not however, place much emphasis on good access to the basic and secondary education of PWDs.
Employment, empowerment and social security	• Article 27 of the UNCRPD urges governments to ensure that employment equity policies should be developed to promote the employment of PWDs in both the public and private sectors. It also makes a case for there to be clear rules barring employees from dismissing employees on the grounds of disablement. • Section 23 of the PWD Act 2011 of Sierra Leone emphasises issues such as incentives for private formal sector employers and the non-discrimination against a person in employment on grounds of disability. It does not however make room for incentivising PWDs who engage in their own businesses.
Governments’ responsibility in data collection	• Rule 13 of the UN Standard Rules in dealing with the subject of data collection on PWDs obliges governments to collect disaggregated data based on gender and categories of disabilities at a regular interval on the living conditions of PWDs, the available PWD programmes and their usefulness. This can be done in conjunction with government statistical bodies in charge of census and household surveys, Universities and research institutions. • The PWD Act 2011 of Sierra Leone 2011 though not detailed regarding data collection of PWDs, mandates the NCPD to facilitate efforts of data collection on PWDs for purposes of improving existing support systems, among others.



SLUDI president (left) meets with PWDs at School for the Blind in Freetown Sierra Leone.

‘WE CAN BUILD A CAREER IN ANY FIELD - SPORT, ENTERTAINMENT, LAW - WE JUST HAVE TO CHANGE THE CULTURE; CHANGE THE MIND SET AND BE SINCERE IN CREATING THE SPACE FOR PWDS INCLUSION AND PARTICIPATION.’

Secretary General, SLUDI