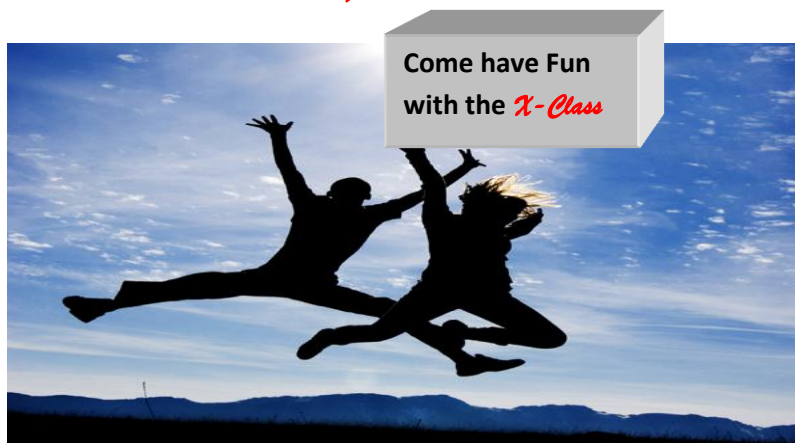




PROMOTING MEANINGFUL YOUTH PARTICIPATION IN ELECTORAL PROCESS

**VOTER
APATHY**

Voting is Fun!!!



Register to Vote Today and Join the X-Class!

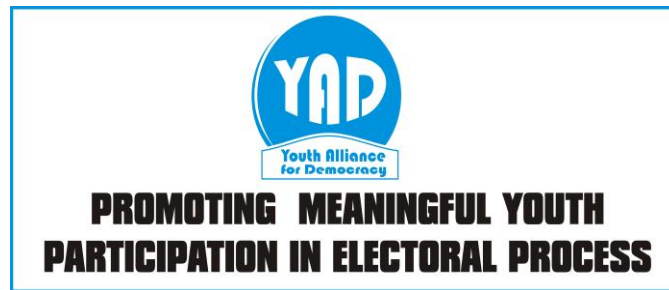
“Our answer is the world’s hope; it has to rely on youth...It cannot be moved by those who cling to a present which is already dying, who prefer the illusion of security to the excitement of danger. This world demands the qualities of youth; not a time of life, but a state of mind, a temper of the will, a quality of the imagination, a predominance of courage over timidity.”

Robert F. Kennedy, “Day of Affirmation Address.”

University of Cape Town, Cape Town, South Africa, 6 June 1966

Standards of Electoral Access for Persons living with Disabilities

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Introduction

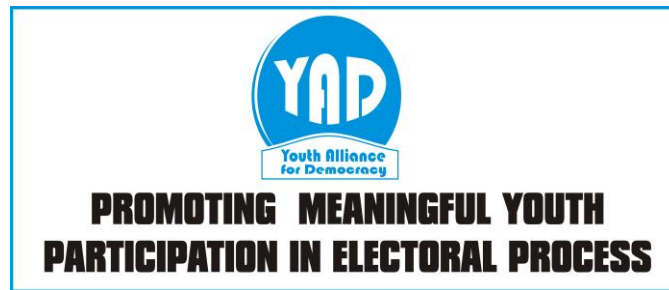
About 10% of Zimbabwe's population constitute persons living with disabilities according to Central Statistics Office Population data of 1992, the majority live in rural areas. The government of Zimbabwe is a signatory to the UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities. The convention pledges a commitment to mobility, education, accessibility, employment, and rehabilitation, participation in political life and overall equality of life for disabled people.

About the Project

Youth Alliance for Democracy (YAD) launched the *X-Glass* project in January 2011 aimed at improving access and participation of all young people from different backgrounds and persuasions in electoral processes in Zimbabwe. The project activities include but not limited to sensitisation programmes, consultative meetings with electoral stakeholders, carrying out a baseline survey as well as information generation and dissemination.

About YAD

Youth Alliance for Democracy (YAD) is a non-profit making non-partisan organization, registered in terms of the Youth Council Act 25:19. Its overall goal is to promote and enhance meaningful participation of youths in electoral process, taking into consideration the fact that elections are a continuous process, which have been characterized by youth apathy in Zimbabwe. YAD, therefore, seeks to transform the status quo by raising awareness among youths on issues of electoral governance and citizen participation, advocacy and lobbying relevant stakeholders to promote youth participation in electoral processes, training and capacity building of youth leaders as well as making them accountable to the electorate and setting up and building the capacity of Youth Electoral Clubs at community level. In doing so the organization disaggregates youths with regards to gender, physical ability, location, and status and values to accommodate youths from different persuasions, orientation and levels of ability, between 15 to 35 years. *Vision: Equal representation and meaningful participation of youths in electoral processes and Mission Statement: To promote meaningful youth participation in electoral processes and political leadership*



Standards of Electoral Access for PwDs

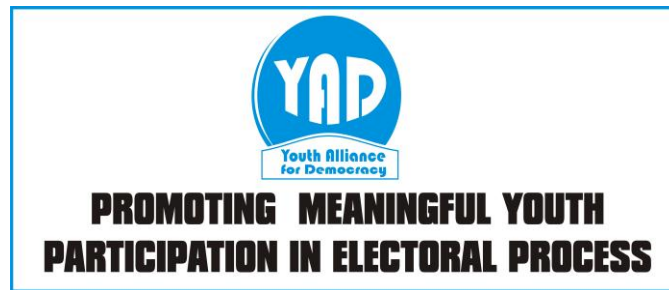
These standards were adopted by various associations and institutions of persons with disabilities in September at Rainbow Hotel in Kadoma at a meeting facilitated by YAD. The meeting came at a time when PwDs are increasing clamouring for recognition in the political processes of their motherland. YAD calls for the full implementation of these standards to level the electoral playing field in the country between the voters with and without disabilities.

1. Applying Voting Rights in a Non Discriminatory Manner: Enforcing Individuals with psychiatric disorders and other disabilities
 - a) Individuals must have free and equal access to participate in electoral processes, without discrimination of any kind
 - b) Individuals with intellectual disabilities or psychiatric disorders or any disability of any kind, have an equal right to register to vote. Individuals, who are deprived of their physical or economic liberty (for instance through institutionalisation or court appointed guardianship) or subject to compulsory treatment, equally retain their universal electoral rights.
 - c) It would be discriminatory to test any individual or group of individuals to ascertain whether they have the capacity to cast an informed. Intelligent or rational vote. To be non-discriminatory, any such act would be applied to the entire electorate.
2. The State's Obligation to 'Overcome Specific Difficulties'
 - a) The state is under an obligation to take 'effective measures' to overcome specific difficulties to ensure that citizens can exercise their universal right to register to vote, to vote in public. These include: overcoming all impediments to freedom of movement. The state and election authorities are obliged to conduct voter education and registration of all citizens. Some of the effective measures are:
 - I. Voting at sites which are accessible to all citizens with physical and other disabilities. The state and election authorities are obliged to ensure that voters, who reside in short term and long term institutions and those that are homebound by disability, can exercise their rights to register to vote and ultimately participate in the actual voting.
 - II. Overcome language barriers, the state and electoral authorities should ensure that sign language interpreting is mainstreamed in the entire electoral process
 - III. Overcome communication barriers- the state and electoral authorities are obliged to consult with disability organisations to identify and secure the use of other means of facilitating communication (such as Braille, tactile, large print, and audio and electronic devices)



PROMOTING MEANINGFUL YOUTH PARTICIPATION IN ELECTORAL PROCESS

- b) The state should consult democratically elected representatives of organisations of persons living with disabilities and their families in making use of and appreciating technologies and mechanisms in the electoral process.
3. The right to vote is secrecy is a cornerstone of any free and fair election and democratic society. Denying that right to voters with disabilities undermines democracy and is a violation of a universal right. This requires addressing the design of ballot and process by introducing:
 - a) Mechanised voting systems which must apply the principle of universal design, enabling voters with mobility or sight impairments to use the same machines like all other citizens
 - b) Paper ballot systems must have provisions for (tactile, braille, etc.) to ensure that voters with visual impairments can cast an independent and secret ballot
 - c) Off-site voting procedures must be available to voters who cannot vote at public polling stations and must ensure ballot secrecy
4. The electoral system must provide for options for disabled voters to mark ballot directly without assistance.
 - a) Assisted voting is one effective measure to enable citizens' exercise their right to vote though the right is often violated. The decision to be assisted in the process of voting must be made by the voter him/herself
 - b) Assisted voting mechanisms must include safeguards to protect the universal right to secret vote, so as to protect the voter from manipulation and ensure the secrecy of the vote. The safeguards include:
 - I. The right of a voter to determine who provides assistance
 - II. The requirement that the assistant satisfies all criteria for voting as established by electoral laws
 - III. The requirement that the electoral agency provides an official assistant in cases where the voter requiring assistant does not or cannot bring assistant
 - IV. the requirement that the assistant is formerly obliged to ensure the intent and secrecy of the vote
 - V. that violation of this obligation shall result in penalty
5. Off-Site Voting
Off-Site Voting measures should include;
 - I. Sufficient resources to enable election authorities use off-site voting mechanisms. Ensure that all citizens can exercise their electoral rights
 - II. Outreach Campaign – to ensure that individuals are aware of the availability of off-site voting, deadline and processes
 - III. Consultation by election authorities with democratically run organisations of persons with disabilities and other concerned parties, to identify effective off-site voting



mechanisms, such as voting in advance, postal voting, voting at institutions, hospitals and homes etc.

- IV. Consultation with stakeholders on how to register people who will require the off-site voting scheme
6. Guidelines for ensuring secrecy and security for mobile voting
The following safeguards for voting are derived from those established by the organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe's Office of Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, these include:
 - a) A procedure must be in place to identify voters using mobile facilities to prevent double voting
 - b) Mobile voting should be used only in cases where it is very difficult for the voter to travel to the polling station
 - c) Observers and monitors should be permitted to accompany the mobile ballot team and boxes to collation centres
 - d) The number of ballot papers taken out for mobile use should be in accordance with the number later retained and recorded and officially certified by all stakeholders
7. Promulgation of Instructions
To meet the needs of citizens with disabilities to fully participate and exercise their electoral right, Government and electoral authorities should support non-partisan institutions to educate polling staff, election authorities and society about electoral rights of persons with disabilities. YAD's hope is that PwDs will one day claim their rightful place in shaping the electoral, political, economic and social destiny of our motherland Zimbabwe.

Produced by:

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