



Monitoring Report of the Limited Voter Registration Exercise, Ghana

Prepared by

The Ghana Federation of Disability
Organisations (GFD)

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Background

The voter registration exercise in Ghana is a fundamental aspect of the country's electoral process, ensuring that citizens are able to exercise their democratic right to vote in free and fair elections.

In the early years after independence, voter registration was conducted manually, with citizens required to register at designated centers by providing basic personal information. In 2012, Ghana introduced a biometric voter registration system, marking a significant advancement in the electoral process. The Electoral Commission (EC) of Ghana is the independent body responsible for overseeing voter registration and ensuring that the electoral roll is accurate and up-to-date.

Voter registration in Ghana is governed by the 1992 Constitution and the Electoral Commission Act, 1993 (Act 451). Article 42 (Right to vote) of the Constitution stipulates that every citizen of Ghana of eighteen years of age or above and of sound mind has the right to vote and is entitled to be registered as a voter for the purposes of public elections and referenda.

Under these instruments, the qualification for registration includes being a citizen of Ghana, being 18 years of age or above, being of sound mind, being resident or ordinarily resident in an electoral area, and not being prohibited by any law in force from registering as a voter.

Temporary registration centers are set up across the country during registration exercises, providing convenient access for citizens to register. Permanent Electoral Commission (EC) offices also serve as registration points during continuous registration periods. Ensuring that this process is inclusive and accessible to persons with disabilities is crucial for upholding the principles of democratic participation and equality.

Over the years the GFD has pursued advocacy on the successful participation of persons with disabilities in a barrier-free electoral process in Ghana. Many initiatives, including the sensitisation and lobbying of the Electoral Commission (EC) of Ghana and other political parties for disability provisions and inclusion in the electoral process; engagements with the National Commission for Civic Education (NCCE) to increase public knowledge and consciousness towards positive attitudes; and empowering and orienting media personnel to increase and improve in the quality of reportage on disability issues during elections; have seen positive outcomes.

Ghana went to the polls to elect a new government for the next four years on the 7th December, 2020. This presented an opportunity for the Federation to engage with the relevant agencies to ensure that electoral processes were accessible to, and inclusive of persons with disabilities – including people with mental health conditions – as well as to advocate for political parties to commit to more inclusive development policies and programmes.

The Ghana Federation of Disability Organisations (GFD) and its affiliate members (with support from Ghana Somubi Dwumadie and funded by UK aid), undertook a series of interventions to ensure the inclusion of persons with disabilities before and during the 2020 elections. Key among them was the Parliamentary and Presidential election observation monitoring process where 150 persons with disabilities were trained and deployed with the objective of collecting data for evidence-based advocacy for full inclusion. The election observations revealed that 23.5% of the polling stations were set up at a location where steps were required to access them. Again, 14.9% of them were located at a place where there were exposed tree roots or there was sand/gravel hindering the voter with disability from accessing the polling station.

To promote inclusion and enhance accessibility in the upcoming electoral processes, the Ghana Federation of Disability Organisations with support from the Ghana Somubi Dwumadie identified the need to observe the registration exercise especially the activities of EC officials and assess how accessible the registration centers are for persons with disabilities. This observation activity aims to evaluate how well the voter registration exercise accommodates the needs of persons with disabilities in the identified regions and address potential barriers that might emanate in the 2024 parliamentary and presidential elections.

1. Introduction

The Electoral Commission of Ghana conducted a nationwide voter registration exercise in preparation for the December 2024 general election. The voter registration exercise which commenced on the 7th May was scheduled to conclude by 27th May 2024 but was however extended by two more days from the 27th to the 29th of May 2024. This was to allow for a mop-up and as compensation for the challenges that occurred in the first two days of the exercise. This 23-day exercise targeted individuals who have turned 18 years old since the last registration and those above 18 years but have not yet registered.

The Ghana Federation of Disability Organisations (GFD), with support from Ghana Somubi Dwumadie, trained and deployed a total of 18 persons with disabilities as independent and non-partisan observers to observe the ongoing limited Biometric Voter Registration (BVR) exercise by the Electoral Commission (EC).

1.1. Methodology

The observation exercise was conducted in 45 districts across 9 of the 16 regions of Ghana, with 5 districts observed in each region. Two regional representatives from the Ghana Federation of Disability Organizations (GFD), one male and one female, were selected from each of the identified regions. These monitors, who had various impairments including visual, hearing, and physical impairments, as well as albinism, were accompanied by their assistants and sign language interpreters.

The regions were subdivided into three zones: the coastal zone, the middle belt and the northern zone. Greater Accra, central region, western north regions comprised of the coastal zone. The middle belt consisted of Ashanti, Bono, Oti regions and the Northern, Upper East and Northeast regions constituted the Northern zone.

To ensure comprehensive data capture and analysis, open-ended questionnaires were used throughout the observation process. Additionally, interviews with electoral officers were conducted to supplement the information obtained from key informants.

Data entry, analysis, and report writing were undertaken by the regional representatives in collaboration with the Monitoring and Evaluation team at the secretariat.

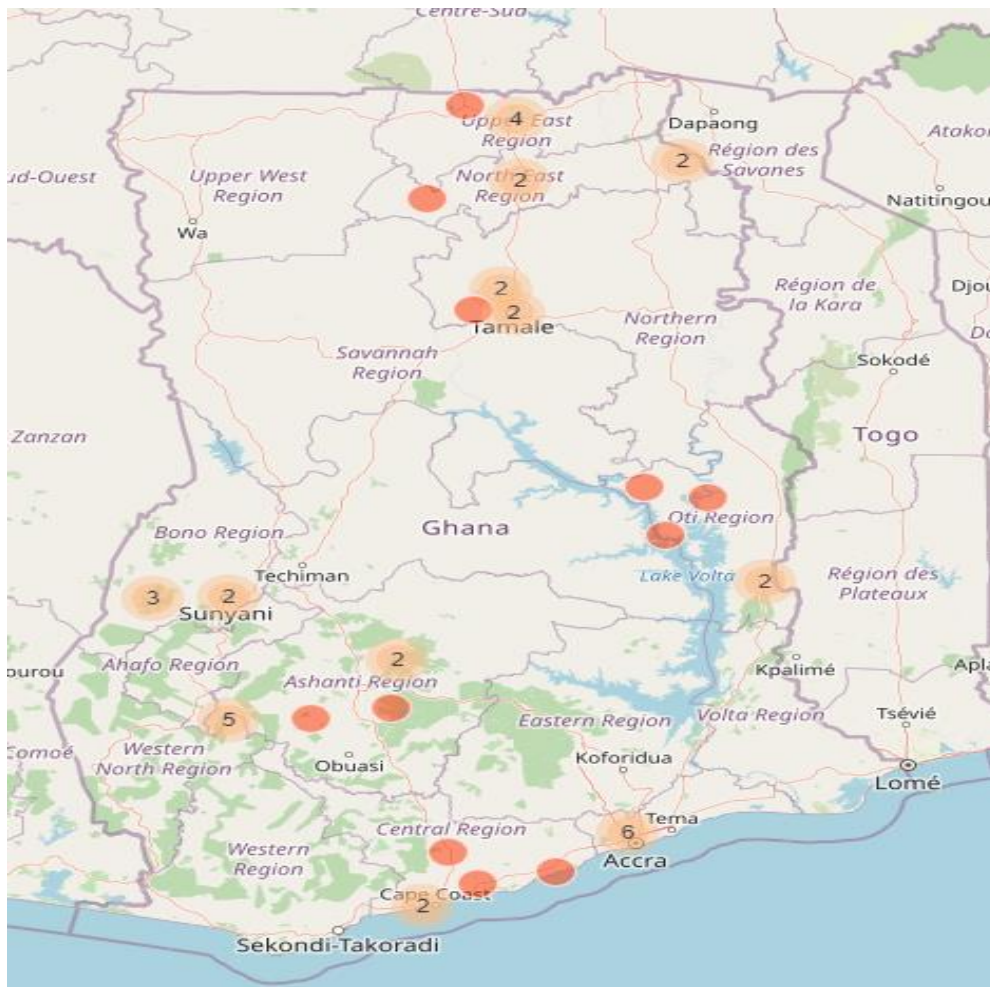
Table 1: Areas observed for the voter's registration exercise

Zones	Regions	Districts
Coastal	Greater Accra	Ga west
		Ga East
		Adentan Municipal
		Ablekuma North
		Ga South
	Central	Capecoast Municipal
		Mfantsiman district
		Efutu Municipal
		Komenda-Edina-Eguafo-Abirem Municipal
		Abura Asebu Kwamankese
	Western North	Sefwi Wiawso district
		Juaboso district
		Bibiani Anhwiaso Bekwai
		Aowin district
		Suaman Dadieso
Middle belt	Ashanti	Amansie South
		Amansie West
		Sekyere south
		Sekyere East
		Bosomtwe
	Bono	Sunyani west
		Sunyani East
		Berekum East
		Dormaa Central
		Dormaa East
	Oti	Krachi west
		Krachi East
		Krachi Nchumuru
		Kadjebi
		Jasikan
Northern	Northern	Sagnarigu
		Tolon
		Kumbungu
		Savelugu
		Tamale
	Upper East	Bolgatanga
		Bolga East
		Bongo

	Northeast	Kasena Nankanna
		Talensi
		West Mamprusi
		East Mamprusi
		Mamprugu Moaduri
		Yunyoo
		Nakpanduri

The map below shows the distribution of the registration centres monitored by the field monitors.

Figure 1: below A Map of Ghana Showing the Districts Where the Monitoring Exercise was Conducted¹



¹ The dotted areas on the map show location of the registration centres monitored. The numbers in the dots indicate number of centres around the particular location.

2. Key Findings

The findings have been categorized into five main sections as follows:

- Section A provides some basic background information about the monitors
- Section B provides an analysis and discussion of the findings regarding the accessibility of the registration centres
- Section C examines issues about accessible communication and communication materials.
- Section D looks at facilities and amenities, specifically, seating places for potential registrants.
- The final section (E) contains an analysis of key observations about the challenges encountered by the registration officials, their suggestions for improvements, and some data on the number of persons who have been able to register and their disability type.

2.1. Section B: Background of Field Monitoring Team

Each regional monitoring team was made up of two people, with a provision made for an assistant. The field teams were responsible for planning their movements to and from the districts which have been purposefully sampled for them. In all, 18 monitors and 5 assistants, made up of 2 males and 3 females took part in the exercise. The monitors were selected from diverse disability backgrounds. The National-level team that coordinated and supervised the monitoring included:

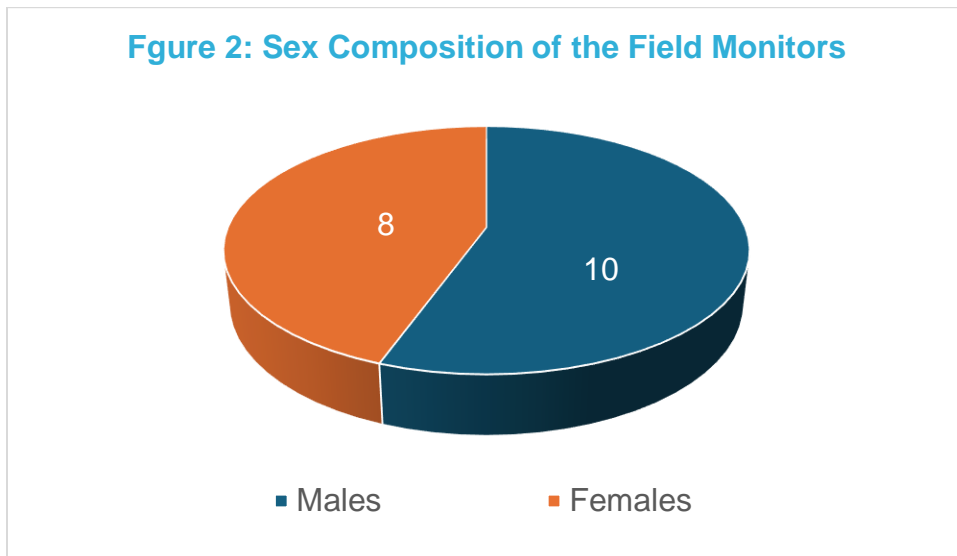
- Mr. Moses Fordjour, Activity/Team Lead, Monitoring and Evaluation Manager, GFD
- Mr. Richmond Dadzie, Coordinator, Monitoring and Evaluation Officer, GFD
- Mr Peter Anomah Kordieh K, Programmes Manager, GFD
- Miss Kwansa Panford, Administrator and Logistics Coordinator
- Nora Kankam Dadzie, Personal Assistant to the Programmes Manager



Photo Above Left: Field Monitor making the difficult journey to a registration centre in the North-East Region. Above Right: Monitoring Team holding a debriefing meeting with a district director in the North-East Region

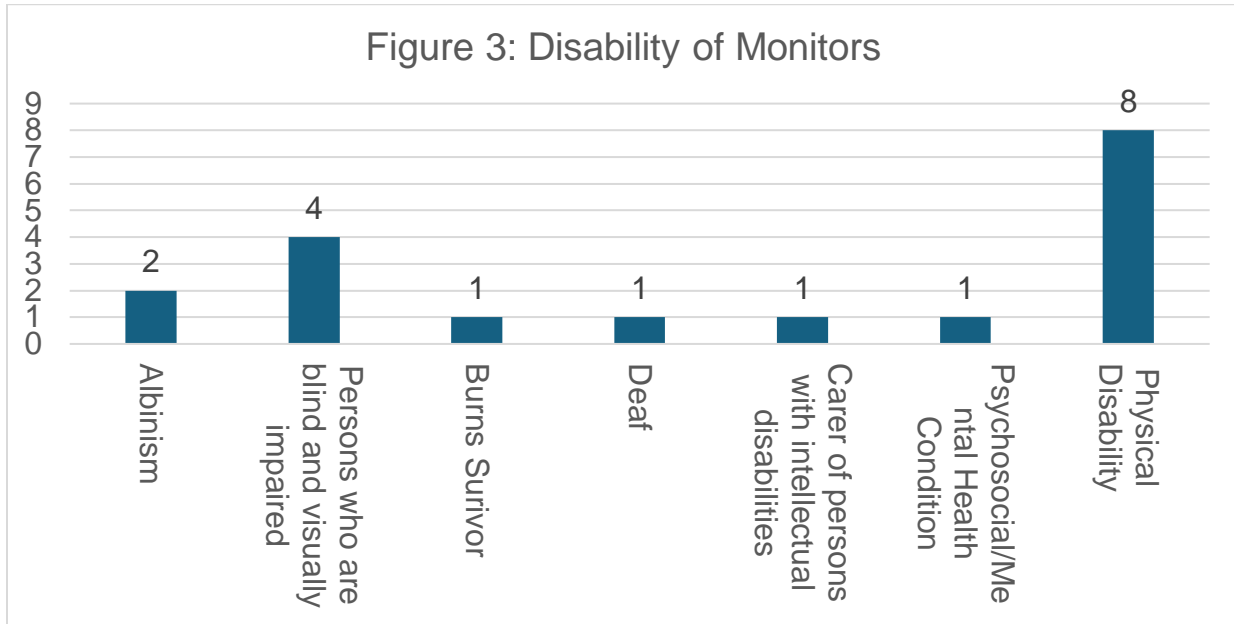
2.1.1. Gender

The majority of the 18 Field Monitors were males (56%), and 44% were female as shown in the chart below:



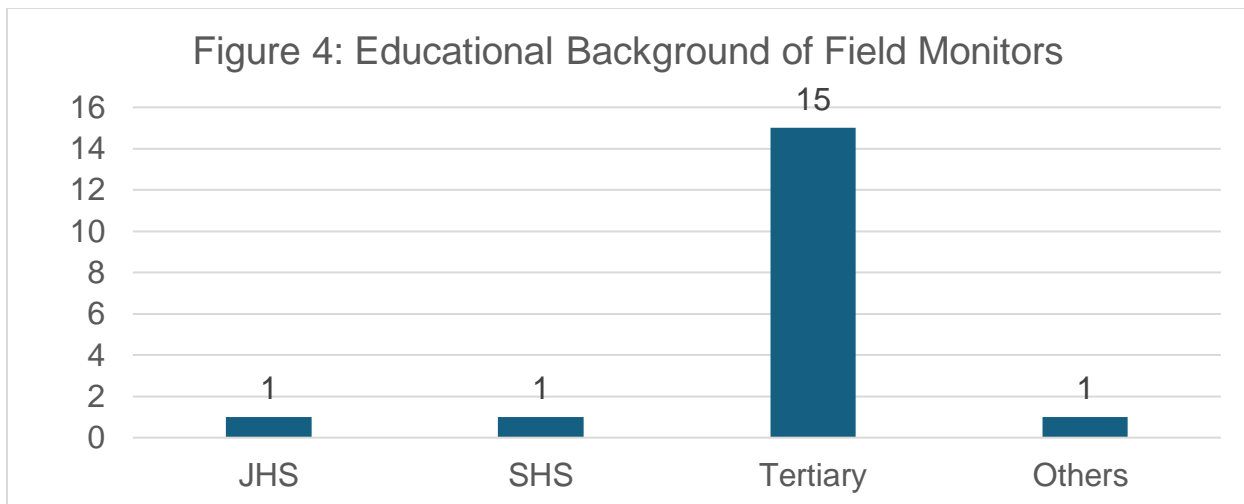
2.1.2. Disability of the Field Monitors

In terms of their disability background, 3 categories of disability dominate: 44.4% were persons with a physical disability; 22.2% were persons who are blind, and 11.1% were persons with Albinism. The rest are a person with mental health conditions, Deaf, Burn Survivor and a Carer of persons with intellectual disabilities.



2.1.3. Educational Level

A greater majority of the field monitors, about 83.33%, were people who had attained tertiary educational levels, as shown in the Chart below.

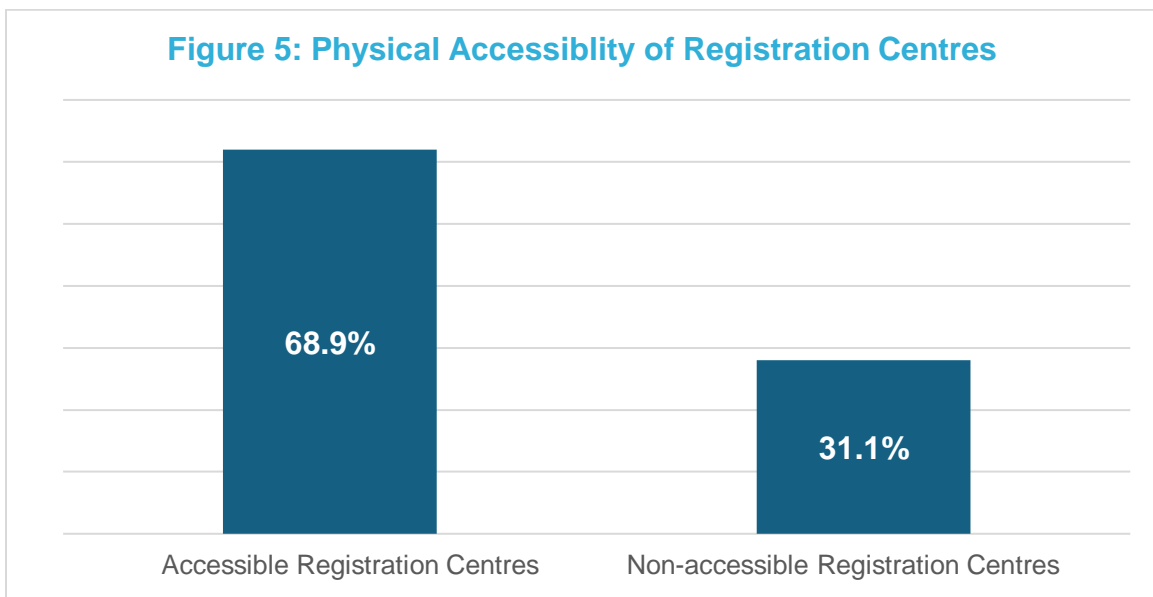


Given the diverse rich background of the field monitors, the project expected them to bring their knowledge and experience to bear on the exercise after receiving training on the monitoring tool and what was expected.

2.2. Section B: Physical Accessibility of Registration Centres

This section analyses the outcome of the monitoring reports of the field monitors regarding the physical accessibility of all the 45 registration centres which they monitored. The analysis shows that:

- Accessibility of the registration centres to persons with disabilities (including those with mobility impairments). From the data, the monitors have accessed that 68.9% of the registration centres were accessible for persons with mobility-related disabilities. However, a significant minority of 31.1% were found to be inaccessible. The lack of accessibility in these centres poses a potentially significant barrier that needs to be addressed in subsequent processes (see graph below).



Analysis: the issues with the accessibility of the centres, as presented in the table below, range from “Inaccessible environments which have uneven surfaces, erosion, large tree roots, etc

Accessibility Issues Identified	Frequency	%
Availability of ramps	9	19%
Inaccessible environment e.g. the presence of tree roots, uneven surfaces, etc	14	30%
Ramps are there but the quality is sub-standard	3	6%
Issues with facilities there, like washrooms, etc	7	15%
Multiple issues affecting different disability groups.	7	15%
Centres hosted in multi-storey buildings	5	11%
Others	2	4%

2.2.1. Wheelchair access to the registration centres

Some specific features were investigated by the field monitors, like access for persons who use wheelchairs. Regarding this, the data showed that 58% of the centres were accessible.

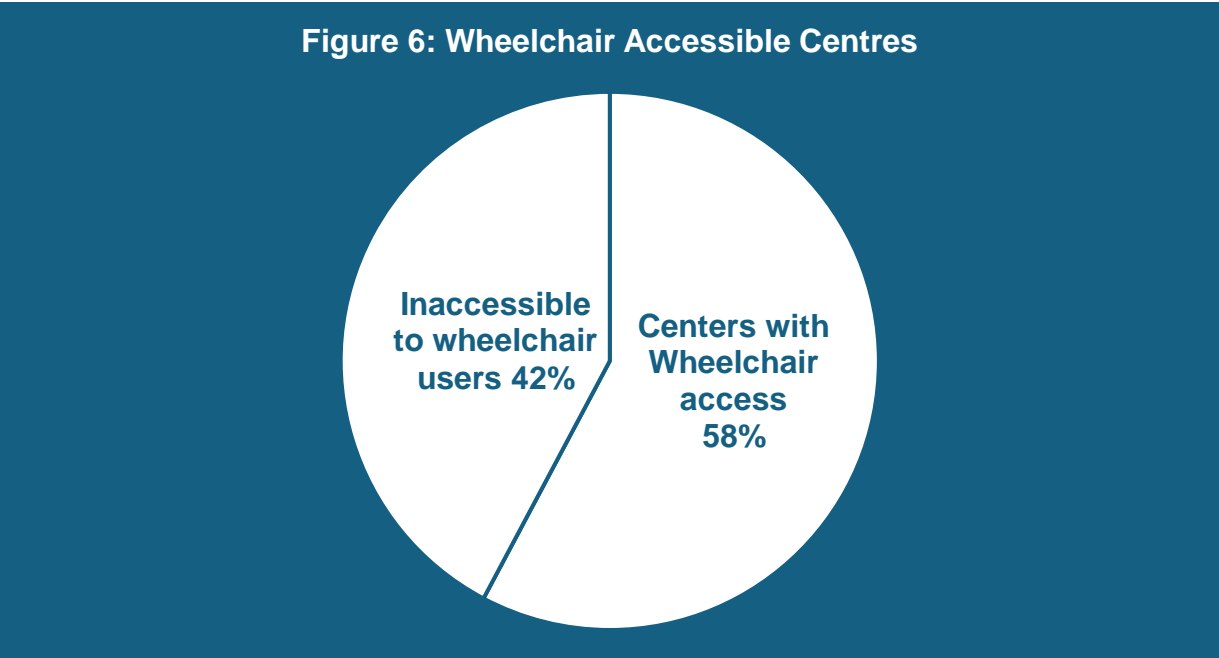




Photo: A Field Monitor walking on a ramp to access a registration Centre in the Bono Region

2.2.2. Provision of Ramps or lifts for access to different levels of the registration centres

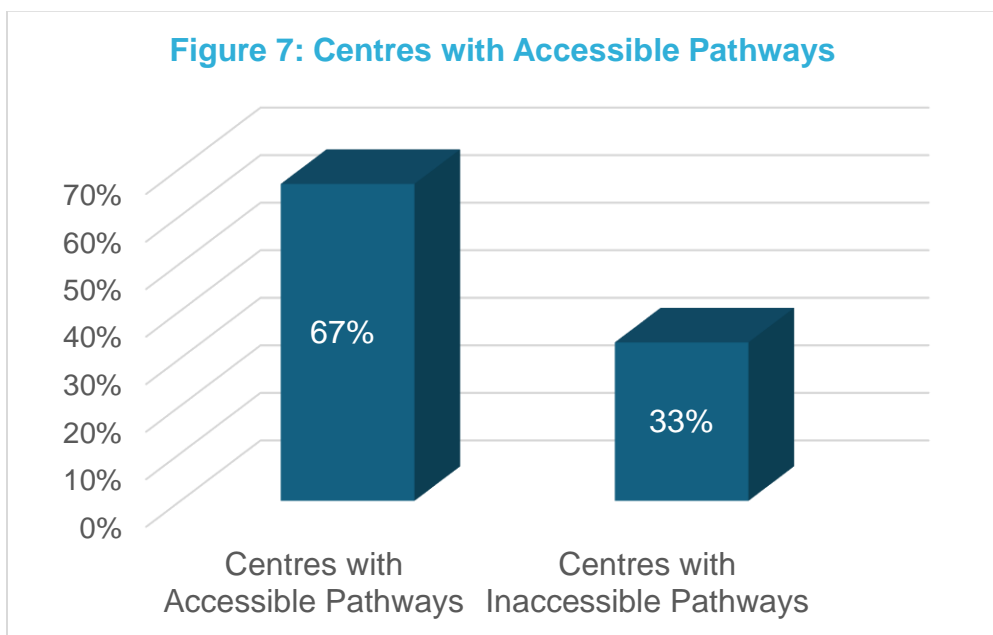
In some centres, they have different layers or levels of elevated places. The monitors found that in most of these centres, access would be provided up to a point and the rest of the process takes place at inaccessible places. For example, if the main entrances are accessible, the other elevated places of the building that are being used for the registration process would be found to be inaccessible. The table below, which analyses such scenarios, shows that only 44 % have shown consistency in making access available to all the levels while 56% have not.

Table 3: Number of Ramps or Lifts

	Number	%
Ramps to all the different levels/layers of registration centres	20	44%
Ramps are provided but not to all the different elevated levels at the centre	25	56%

Access to registration centres needs to be complete. Providing partial accessibility is not helpful for persons with disabilities. Significantly, when comparing the results of the above analysis to the ones above, the data shows that as the investigation pushes further for completeness, the level of accessibility of the centres reduces from 68% to 44%.

2.2.3. Centres with Accessible pathways and entrances (devoid of obstacles, steps, uneven surfaces, or obstructions)



From the data analysis, it emerged that 33% of the registration centres which were monitored did not have accessible pathways due to the presence of obstacles such as steps, uneven surfaces, and other obstructions.

The percentage breakdown of the accessibility issues identified across these 33% centres include:

- Obstructions at Entrance: 38.5%
- Ramp Issues: 23.1%
- Pathway Issues: 30.8%
- General Accessibility Comments: 15.4%

The table below provides additional notes from monitors regarding the accessibility issues identified with the pathways.

Issues Identified	Comments or notes from field monitors
Obstructions at Entrance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is an obstruction at the entrance to the main registration office which [prevents] white cane users and wheelchair users from accessing the office • The pathways and entrances have objects that obstruct movements, like steps • The entrance is not free from obstacles because there is a deep step down into the registration rooms • The entrances are not free from obstacles • Very poor entrance in terms of accessibility
Ramp Issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are potholes and the ramp is not accessible • There are no ramps • The pathway is not free from obstacles [and] the ramps are hidden behind the building
Pathway Issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There was a gutter so no wheelchair could pass there easily. • There is only one pathway and not accessible to a person with disabilities. • Very poor access routes • There is a pit in the corridor which impedes movement
General Accessibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The entrance is not conducive at all



Photo Above: A picture taken by a field monitor (with crutches) in the Bono Region showing him descending steps of an inaccessible entrance of a registration centre



Photo Above: One of the registration centres in the Oti region with open gutters and steps at the entrance which makes it physically inaccessible.

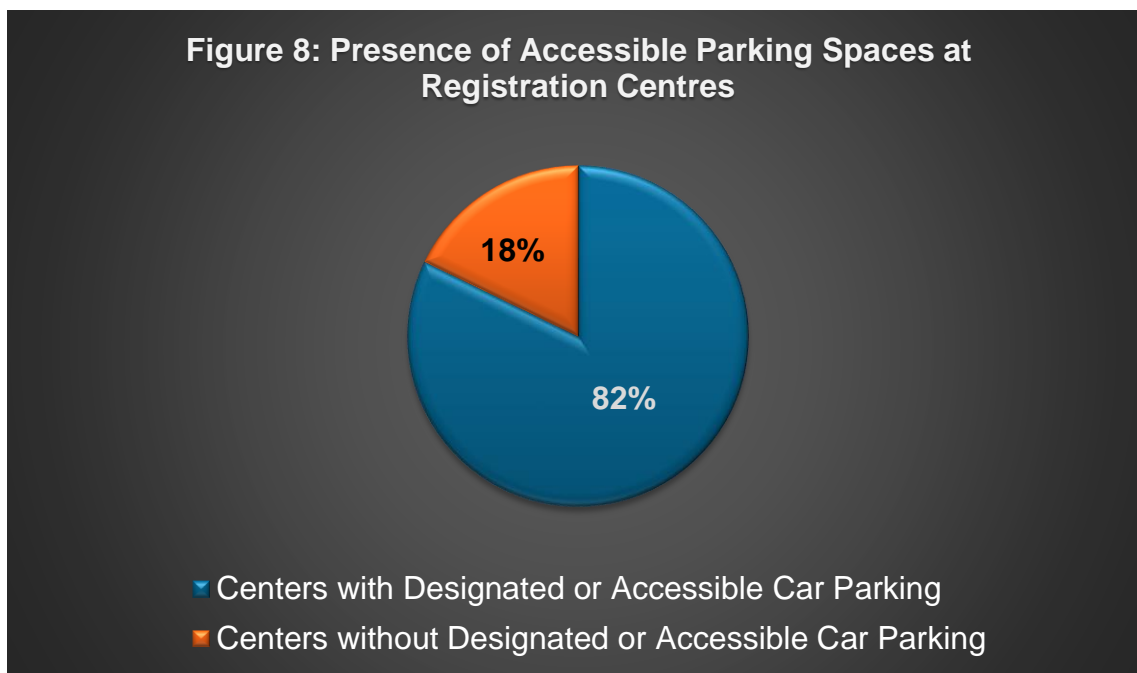


Photo Above: A picture of a registration centre in the Oti Region with the monitor standing at the top end of the ramp leading to the offices.

2.2.4. The presence of designated accessible parking spaces near the registration centres

In most of the centres that were monitored, there were available spaces for car parking for persons with disabilities. However, these centres are just open spaces where it would not be difficult to get a place to park. In 18%, there were no accessible parking spaces for persons with disabilities. These would make it difficult for a person with a disability to have easy access to the centres in case they came with a car or any means of transport.

The figure below shows the proportion of centres with and those without accessible parking spaces.



The percentage breakdown of the issues related to accessible disability car parking includes:

- No Parking Space (40%)
- Inadequate Parking Space (60%)

Some comments from field monitors regarding this include: 'No designated accessible parking space is available'; 'the parking space is small'; 'cars are supposed to park behind a wall which is a way out of the Centre', etc.

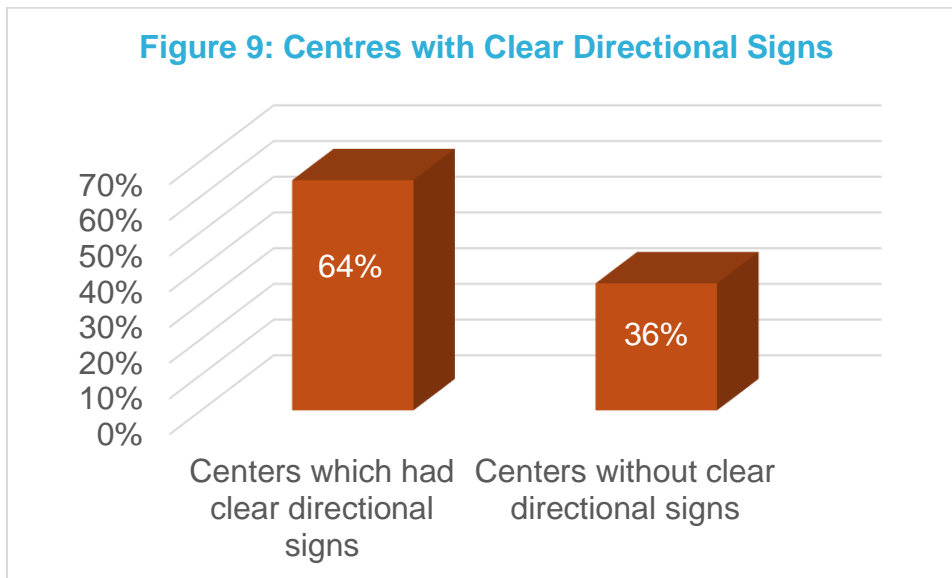
2.3. Section C: Information and communication

Access to information and communication is an important enabling factor. Therefore, the monitoring team examined the extent to which information about the registration process was accessible, given that the EC had generally been engaged in the need to improve information and communication. Towards this objective, the field monitors investigated such issues like:

- Whether there are clear and visible signs indicating the location of the registration centre
- Are the signage displayed in large print and easy-to-read fonts for individuals with visual impairments
- Is information about the registration process available in accessible formats, such as audio recordings or easy-to-read materials
- Are there trained staff available to provide assistance and support to persons with disabilities during the registration process
- Are there sign language interpreters or other communication aids provided for individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing
- Is information about the registration process communicated clearly and understandably for individuals with intellectual or cognitive disabilities

The following analysis shows the outcome.

Clear and visible signs indicating the location of the registration centre.



The figure above shows the proportion of centres with clear directional signs to assist persons with disabilities in locating them easily. It shows that while 64% had clear directional signs a significant minority of 36% did not. The percentage breakdown of the issues with those centres which did not have clear signages is as follows:

- No Clear and Visible Signs (22%)
- Center Visible Despite Lack of Signs (7%)
- Minimal or Indirect Signage (4%)
- Inadequate Signage (2%)

The following two quotes which have been sampled from the field monitors, capture the registration officials explaining the situation.

‘There are no clear visible signs but the place is visible you can see without any challenge’

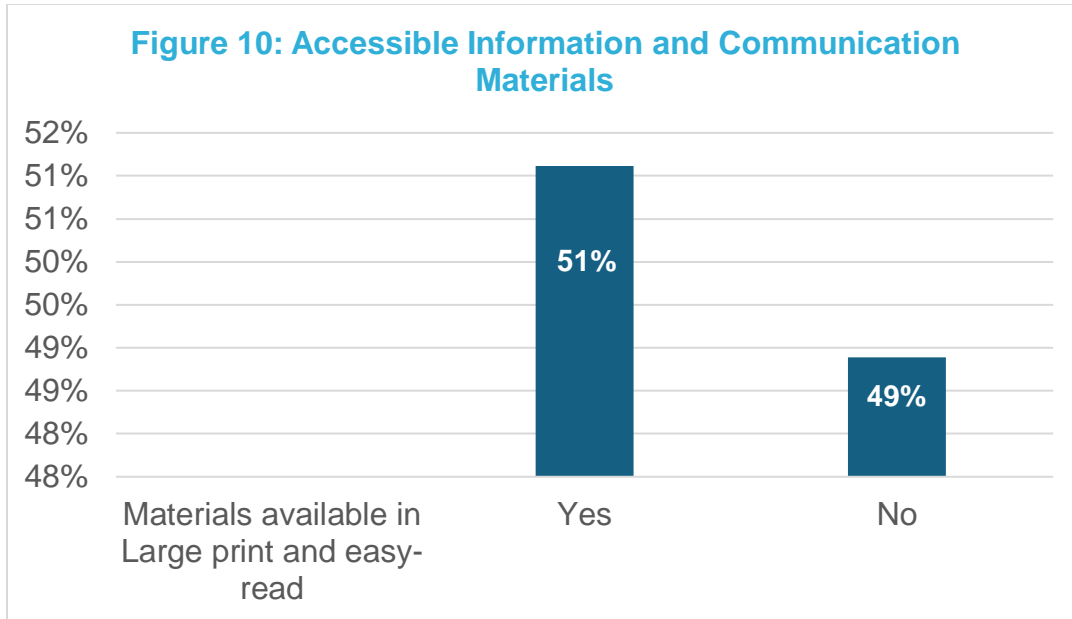
‘There were no visible signs but the centre was visible. As soon as you get to the assembly canopies were erected and you could see the people sitting down waiting for their turn’.

Photo Below: A registration centre in the Ashanti Region with no clear posters and also inaccessible physically



2.3.1. Presence of Accessible Versions of Information and Communication Materials

Information and communication materials about the registration process ought to be in accessible versions: easy-read, large fonts, and audio. The field monitors observed that 51% of the centres had information and communication materials displayed in large print and easy-read formats while a significant proportion of 49% lacked such materials on display, as shown in the figure below.



However, the absence of these accessible communication and information materials appears to be taken for granted as not having an impact on the participation of persons with disabilities in the registration process.

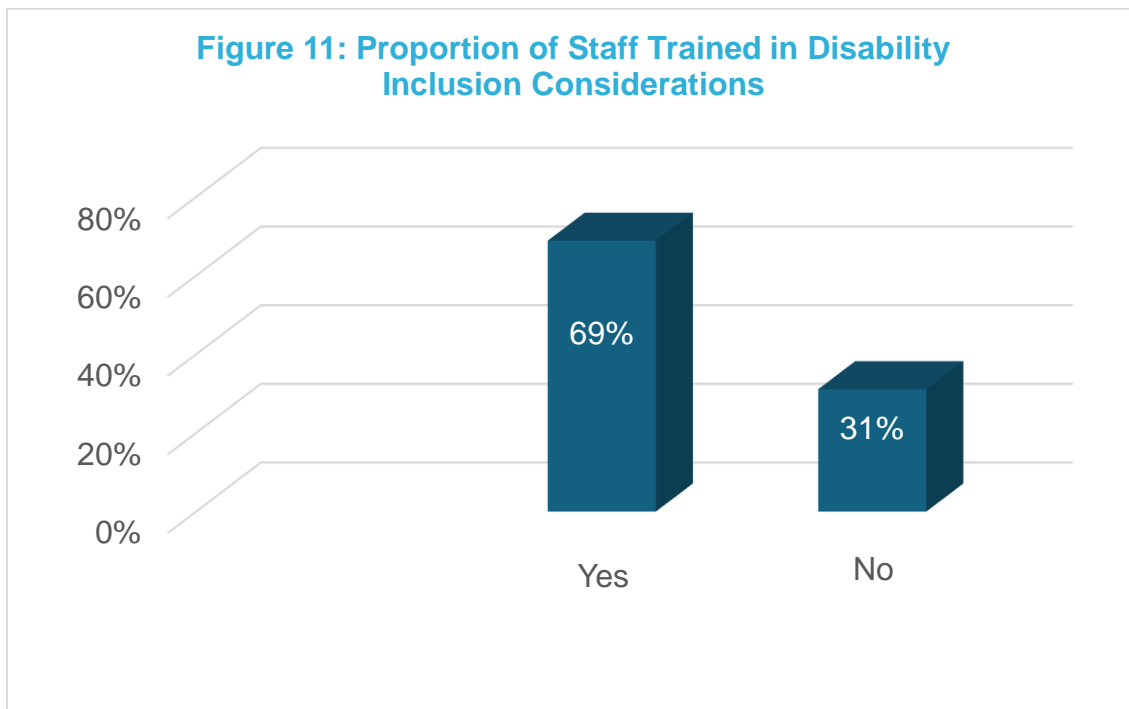
One monitor noted that "according to the officials, all the persons with visual impairment came with their Support Persons. They therefore promised to provide any support that the persons with disabilities may need. They attest to the fact that those with intellectual disabilities who came were there with their support Persons but then they answered all questions."

A key objective of inclusion is to promote independence and self-determination. This will be negatively impacted when reliance on support persons is made to replace the need for the incorporation of accessible communications.

2.3.2. Capacity of the Registration Staff in Disability Inclusion Considerations

The presence of trained staff managing the registration process is crucial for the promotion of inclusion and for them to be able to provide appropriate support for Persons with Disabilities during the registration process. Therefore, the monitors looked at whether the staff they interacted with had received any relevant training concerning the issues to look out for when dealing with persons with disabilities.

The field monitors inquired about whether registration officials were trained by the EC in how to assist persons with disabilities to go through the registration process. As shown in the chart below, 69% of staff interacted with by the monitors affirmed that they have been trained, while 31% said no. This results is a bit surprising because ordinarily, the EC's training for officials should be uniform across the country and should target all officials.

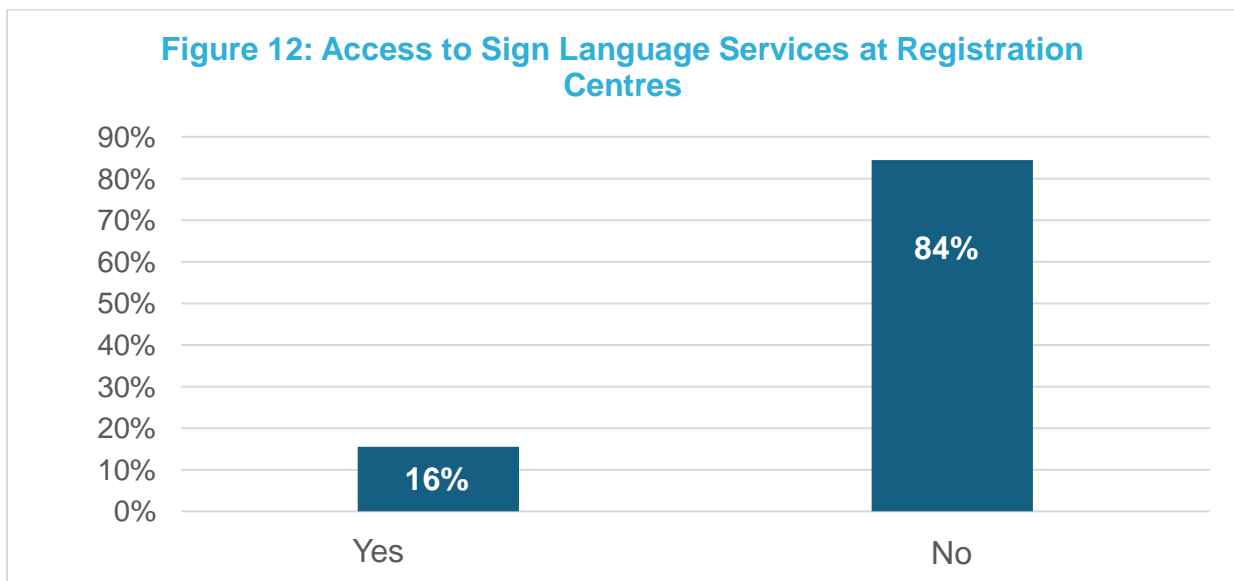


2.3.3. Access to Sign Language Interpretation Services by Registrants with Hearing Impairments

Communicating with the Deaf and Persons who are Hard of Hearing is particularly challenging without sign language interpretation services. The monitors therefore investigated these issues by interacting with the registration officials at the centres.

The analysis, as presented in the chart below, shows that access to sign language services at the centres was very low. This was reported in only about 16% of the centres monitored. From the responses, this does not appear to be officially assigned interpreters to the centres. Regarding this, the following responses were recorded by the monitors in the few areas which had access:

- ✓ 'Their teachers helped even though there were some on standby' (students)
- ✓ 'They came with their sign language interpreters'
- ✓ 'There was a lady with a knowledge of sign language'[who is a registration official]
- ✓ 'There was one person who volunteer to do that but all those with hearing impairment came with their interpreters'.
- ✓ 'There is a sign language interpreter at the centre to provide communication aid for individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing. The person is a permanent staff at the Jamasi School for the Deaf'.
- ✓ 'The EC boss himself is a sign language interpreter'



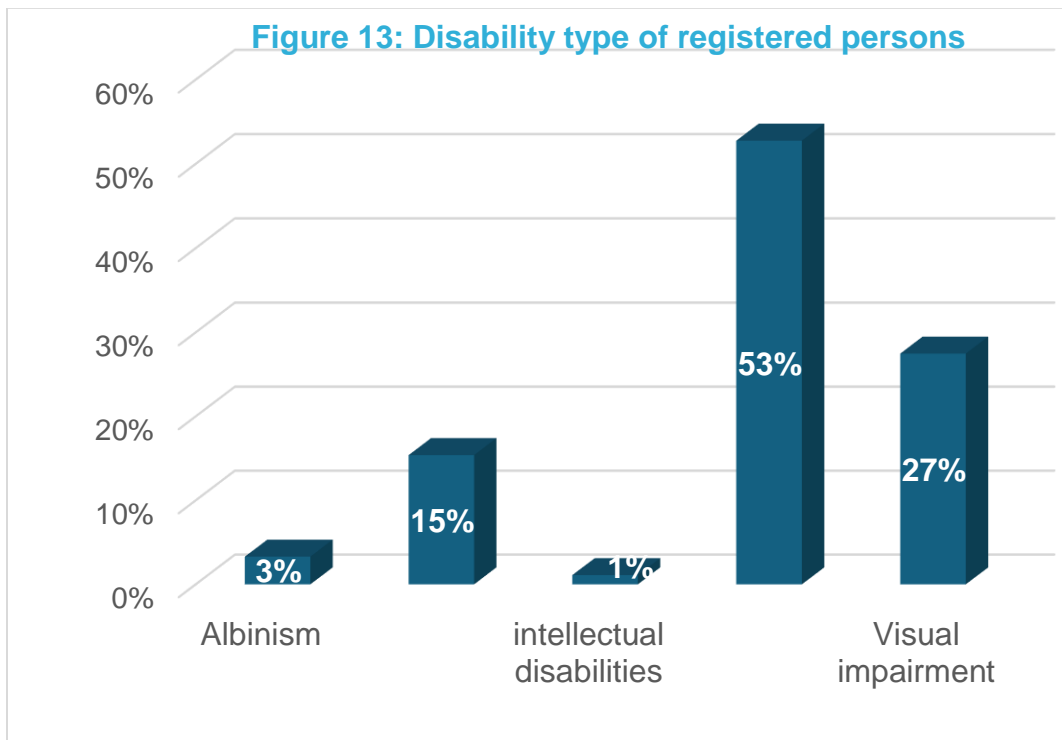
2.3.4. The Seating Places

Generally, seating places were provided at virtually all the registration centres monitored. Only one Centre did the monitor observe that there were no seating places provided. In most of these centres, it was observed that adequate shades were either provided or available for people to sit and wait for their turn. However, there were no priority seats reserved for persons with disability but by practice, people were willing to give up their seats for persons with disabilities who showed up and were found to be needing seats.

2.3.5. Number of Persons with Disabilities Registered

As part of the monitoring, the field monitors obtained partial data on the number of persons with disabilities registered at the time of their visit. Although incomplete, the numbers show that some 348 persons were registered across the 45 centres. This gives an average of about 8 persons per district. A comprehensive statistic about registered persons with disabilities will need to be accessed later from the EC to enable a fuller understanding of the extent of coverage and participation of persons with disabilities across the country. This objective is beyond the scope of this monitoring.

However, if the limited data obtained by the monitors is anything to go by, then it shows that the majority of those registered were persons with physical disabilities (over 50%), as shown in the chart below.



3. Conclusion

The limited voter registration exercise by the EC was countrywide. GFD, with support from partners, Ghana Somubi Dwumadie, carried out monitoring of the exercise in 45 centres, with a team comprising 18 regional-based field monitors, assistants and a national-level coordination team led by the head of Monitoring Evaluation and Knowledge management.

Each monitoring team had between 2 and five days in which to visit a sample of 5 centres. Except for one district, in the Oti region where the monitors could not meet with the registration staff who demanded to see an EC-endorsed accreditation, all the other field monitors were able to have good interactions with officials and agents at each centre.

Overall, the Monitors were not able to obtain a complete set of statistics about the number of persons with disabilities who registered. However, the data they managed to obtain show that persons with intellectual disability are the least registered. An average of about 8 persons with disabilities, according to the data obtained by the field monitors, were recorded across the 45 centres. Because of the challenges reported that indicate the distance to the registration was far from the average person in the district, there is a high possibility that persons with disabilities who qualify may have been unable to register.

Generally, over 60% of the centres monitored were reported to be physically accessible. But a significant minority of about 31% of centres were not accessible physically. This is unacceptable, given the level of engagement that members of the disability community have had with the electoral commission. The Disability Federation, prior to the registration exercise, had had fruitful meetings with the commissioners in Accra during which issues about accessibility were raised. The Federation was also involved in drafting directives which were communicated to their officers on the field regarding disability inclusion and other accessibility protocols.

3.1. Key challenges identified

Accessibility Issues: Entrances and Ramps

1. There were major issues with the physical accessibility of a substantial proportion of registration centres which were lacking in accessible ramps and difficult for people with mobility difficulties.

Lack of Sign Language Interpreters

2. A significant absence of sign language interpreters, affecting communication with Deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals was reported in some of the centres.

Low Participation and Distance Issues

3. Observations about low turnout and difficulties related to the distance from home to the registration centre.

4. Suggestions for improvements

1. **Enhanced Physical Accessibility:** The EC needs to address the need to select centres which do not pose accessibility challenges.
2. The GFD needs to further engage the commission to offer some guidance on how to select accessible centre or make centres accessible to persons with disabilities.
3. **Provision of Sign Language Interpreters:** the EC needs to ensure the availability of sign language interpreters to assist Deaf and hard of hearing individuals by liaising with the Ghana National Association of the Deaf (through GFD) to identify sign language interpreters in the localities/districts.
4. **The EC needs to improve Signage and Communication Materials:** there is a need for the EC to consider the provision of clearer, more readable signages, the use of PA systems with audio versions of communication materials should be considered at all centres for visually impaired persons and people who have difficulties reading the information displayed at the registration centres.
5. **Increase Education and Publicity:** The GFD needs to collaborate with the National Commission for Civic Education (NCCE) and the EC to conduct more outreach and education to inform persons with disabilities about the registration process and available resources.
6. The EC should collaborate with GFD to build the capacity of the election officials on disability inclusion. The training may include how to identify the needs and support for persons with disabilities, including persons with mental health conditions, cognitive and intellectual disabilities.

Acknowledgements

This activity was made possible by the support of Ghana Somubi Dwumadie (Ghana Participation Programme). The 18-field monitoring team and their assistants and the team at the secretariat of the Ghana Federation of Disability Organisations have made a great contribution to the success of the activity. However, the GFD remains solely responsible for any shortcomings in this report.

Appendix 1 Monitoring Tool

Ghana Federation of Disability Organisations (GFD)

Voter Registration Accessibility Monitoring Tool

Section A: Basic Information

- i. What time did you arrive at the registration centre?.....
- ii. Date of Monitoring:
- iii. Region:
- iv. District:
- v. Enter the geo-location of the registration centre
- vi. Names of Monitors:
 - a. Name----- Gender..... Type of Disability..... Contact Number.....
 - b. Name----- Gender..... Type of Disability..... Contact Number-----
 - c. Name of Assistant:

Section B: Physical Accessibility of Registration Centre:

1. Are the registration centres easily accessible to persons with disabilities, including those with mobility impairments?

Please provide details here:

2. Is there wheelchair access available to enter the registration centre?

Please provide details here:

3. Are there ramps or lifts provided for access to different levels of the registration centre?

Please provide details here:

4. Are pathways and entrances free from obstacles such as steps, uneven surfaces, or obstructions?

Please provide details here:

5. Are there designated accessible parking spaces available near the registration centre?

Please provide details here:

Section C. Information and communication.

6. Are there clear and visible signs indicating the location of the registration centre?

Please provide details here:

7. Is the signage displayed in large print and easy-to-read fonts for individuals with visual impairments?

Please provide details here:

8. Is information about the registration process available in accessible formats, such as audio recordings or easy-to-read materials?

Please provide details here:

9. Are there trained staff available to provide assistance and support to persons with disabilities during the registration process?

Please provide details here:

10. Are there sign language interpreters or other communication aids provided for individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing?

Please provide details here:

11. Is information about the registration process communicated clearly and understandably for individuals with intellectual or cognitive disabilities?

Please provide details here:

Section D: Facilities and Amenities:

12. Is there seating provided for individuals who may require breaks during the registration process?

Please provide details here:

Number of Persons with Disabilities Registered so far

Section E: Additional Comments/Notes:

Note : for this section, you need to talk to an official or the agents at the centre

What challenges have been encountered so far regarding the registration of persons with disabilities.....

What suggestions, if any do they have to overcome the challenges?
.....

Number of Persons with Disabilities Registered so far.....

Conclusion

What time did you leave the registration Centre?.....

Please add any relevant photos you took.....