

## THE ROLE OF THE GOVERNMENT IN INCREASING POLITICAL PARTICIPATION OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

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### Abstract

People with disabilities often face various barriers to participating in the political process, both in the context of elections and in legislative activities. The role of the government is a key factor in overcoming these barriers through inclusive policies that ensure accessibility, equality, and non-discrimination for people with disabilities. The government can provide disability-friendly election facilities, special aids, and assistance to guarantee their right to vote. In addition, cooperation with disability advocacy organisations and public education are important strategies for changing stigma and supporting the creation of an inclusive political environment. With these measures, the political participation of persons with disabilities can be increased, enabling them to play an active role as voters and political decision-makers.

**Keywords:** *Role of the Government, Political Participation, Persons with Disabilities*

### Introduction

Persons with disabilities are part of society who have equal political rights based on the principles of democracy and human rights. Persons with disabilities are individuals who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual, or sensory limitations that may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with other individuals (Smith, 2020). This definition encompasses various conditions that cause an individual to experience difficulties in performing certain functions, whether physical, such as the loss of the ability to walk or speak, or non-physical, such as mental or intellectual impairments. Persons with disabilities are recognised as a group with equal rights to the general public, in accordance with the principles of equality and respect for human rights, as stipulated in various national and international regulations such as the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD)* (Smith, 2022).

Their rights are recognised both in national constitutions and through various international legal instruments, such as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), which has been ratified by many countries, including Indonesia. These rights include active participation in political processes, such as elections, public policy and other political activities (Smith, 2023). Through political participation, every individual has the opportunity to participate in decision-making processes that affect their lives and society in general. These rights are not limited to the conduct of elections, but also involve the active role of citizens in voicing their aspirations, discussing important issues, and monitoring the democratic process of government (Smith, 2021).

As an important pillar of democracy, political participation encourages the creation of an inclusive and equal society. All citizens, regardless of ethnic background, religion, gender, physical condition, or social status, have the same right to participate in the political process. The state is obliged to provide legal protection and create an environment conducive to the realisation of this right without discrimination or specific barriers. By recognising and facilitating political participation, society can ensure that political decisions reflect the needs and wishes of all parties and strengthen the accountability of the government to its people (Mahendra, 2018).

However, in practice, persons with disabilities often face various barriers that reduce their opportunities to participate fully in the political process. These barriers can be physical, such as polling stations that are not disability-friendly, or social, such as a lack of political education for persons with disabilities and social discrimination. As a

result, the level of political participation of persons with disabilities is often low, meaning that their voices and aspirations are underrepresented in public policy (Johnson, 2023).

The government plays a crucial role in ensuring an inclusive environment for persons with disabilities to exercise their political rights. Various policies have been launched, such as the provision of disability-friendly election facilities, political education for people with special needs, and the involvement of disability activists in the legislative process. However, the implementation of these policies in the field often encounters various obstacles, such as minimal budget, weak supervision, and lack of coordination between institutions (Kusuma, 2021).

Therefore, a comprehensive evaluation of the government's role in enhancing political participation of persons with disabilities is necessary. It is important for policies and programmes to not only focus on physical access but also include social empowerment, political education, and effective oversight. This will enable persons with disabilities to actively participate in shaping policies that impact their lives.

### Research Method

This study uses a literature review method. A literature review is a research approach that involves collecting, analysing, and interpreting information from various written sources such as books, journal articles, research reports, documents, and other academic references. This method is used to understand specific concepts, theories, or phenomena by referring to available secondary data. Literature research involves the process of selecting relevant sources, developing a theoretical framework, and identifying existing research results to strengthen arguments or support findings (Green, 2021); (Galvan & Galvan, 2017). In addition, this method is often used as a basis for developing a framework, formulating hypotheses, or comparing views from previous studies, thereby serving as a scientific foundation for the research being conducted (Torraco, 2005).

### Results and Discussion

#### The Role of the Government in Encouraging Political Participation of Persons with Disabilities

The government has an important role in encouraging political participation among persons with disabilities to ensure equality and inclusiveness in the democratic system. As citizens, persons with disabilities have the same rights to participate in the political process, including voting in elections, running for office, and expressing their aspirations through various political forums (Putra, 2019). Therefore, the government must actively involve them in policy-making and facilitate fair access to participate in political life.

The first step that the government can take is to ensure a legal framework that supports the political rights of persons with disabilities. Laws on elections and political participation must include specific provisions that guarantee their right to participate without discrimination. These regulations must include the state's obligation to provide physical accessibility, information, and assistive technology for persons with disabilities so that they can participate in the political process on an equal footing (Sari, 2023).

On the other hand, the government is also responsible for raising public awareness about the importance of political participation for persons with disabilities. Through public campaigns, political education, and training, the public can understand the rights of persons with disabilities and promote an inclusive culture in political activities. Persons with disabilities often face social stigma that hinders their participation, so government efforts to educate the public are very important (Wahyuni, 2020).

In conducting elections, the government needs to ensure that the entire process is accessible to persons with disabilities. Polling stations must be designed in such a way that they are accessible to those with mobility limitations, such as providing special lanes, assistance for wheelchair users, or aids for the visually impaired. In addition, information related to elections, such as voter guides, must be presented in an appropriate format, for example in Braille or sign language, to ensure that they can understand and participate fully (Nugroho, 2019).

The government can also support the political participation of persons with disabilities in running for public office. Affirmative policies such as representation quotas or technical assistance can be provided to encourage persons with disabilities to be active in the political process. These policies provide them with the opportunity to not only participate in elections but also as actors who determine policies at various levels of government (Hartono, 2018).

Cooperation with organisations and communities of persons with disabilities is also crucial in efforts to promote their participation in politics. The government can establish partnerships with organisations focused on advocating for the rights of persons with disabilities to identify their specific needs in politics. These organisations can assist the government in formulating more specific and effective policies tailored to their circumstances (Arifin, 2021). In addition, the government must ensure that there are mechanisms to monitor the implementation of the political rights of persons with disabilities. At every stage of the political process, the government needs to monitor whether the rights of persons with disabilities are being fully realised. If obstacles or violations are found, corrective

measures must be taken immediately to ensure that they can participate fairly. This demonstrates the government's commitment to political inclusiveness (Fitriani, 2015). Equally important, the government needs to allocate adequate resources to support various programmes aimed at increasing the political participation of persons with disabilities. A special budget must be provided to improve infrastructure, provide training to election officials, and provide assistive technology that ensures political accessibility for persons with disabilities. Without adequate budgetary support, these efforts will be difficult to implement effectively (Dewi, 2022).

Thus, through these various measures and policies, the government plays a key role in ensuring that persons with disabilities are an integral part of political life. Through a strong commitment to inclusivity, the government not only fulfils its obligation to respect human rights but also enriches the democratic system by bringing diversity into the decision-making process. Efforts to encourage the political participation of persons with disabilities are a concrete step towards a democracy that truly accommodates all citizens.

### Government Policies or Strategic Measures to Support the Involvement of Persons with Disabilities

The government has demonstrated significant commitment to supporting the involvement of persons with disabilities through various policies and strategic measures. One of the initial steps taken was the enactment of Law No. 8 of 2016 on Persons with Disabilities, which is an important milestone in ensuring the rights, protection, and empowerment of this group. This law provides a strong legal foundation for integrating persons with disabilities into various aspects of social, economic, and cultural life (Rahayu, 2020).

In order to improve access to education for persons with disabilities, the government supports inclusion programmes in schools. The inclusive education system allows children with disabilities to learn alongside other children in a supportive environment. Additionally, the government provides training for educators to understand the special needs of students, ensuring that the learning process is more effective and comprehensive (Prasetyo, 2022).

Employment policies are also an important focus in supporting people with disabilities. The government, through the Ministry of Manpower, provides incentives to companies that hire workers with disabilities. In addition, skills training and economic empowerment for people with disabilities continue to be promoted so that they have the ability to compete in the job market and build independent businesses (Basuki, 2020).

Improving physical accessibility in public spaces is also a priority for the government. Through urban planning, the government supports the development of disability-friendly facilities, ranging from sidewalks equipped with special lane markings to accessibility at stations, terminals, and bus stops. All these policies aim to enable persons with disabilities to be more independent in carrying out their daily activities (Widodo, 2021).

In the health sector, the government is working to strengthen inclusive health services for persons with disabilities. Community-based rehabilitation programmes are being promoted to provide health services closer to where they live. In addition, the provision of assistive devices such as wheelchairs, hearing aids, and other health needs continues to be pursued to make their lives more comfortable (Smith, 2021).

The government also embraces the role of community organisations that focus on disability issues in policy-making. The active participation of people with disabilities is crucial to ensure that policies are relevant to their needs. The government frequently holds consultation forums and engages relevant stakeholders to gather input from the disability community (Hadi, 2022).

In the field of technology and information, the government encourages the development of disability-friendly applications and digital platforms. Features such as alternative text for the visually impaired and voice recognition for the hearing impaired are proof of the commitment to ensuring that this group is not left behind in the digital transformation. This step is important to strengthen their involvement in the modern technology-based world (Smith, 2023).

Advocacy for the rights of persons with disabilities is also being promoted through national campaigns. The government is collaborating with the mass media to disseminate information about the importance of social inclusion. Such campaigns play a significant role in raising public awareness to eliminate stigma and discrimination against persons with disabilities (Doe, 2021).

More targeted social assistance programmes are also part of the government's strategy. One example is the distribution of direct cash assistance and special social security for persons with disabilities who are in vulnerable groups. This assistance not only alleviates their economic burden but also provides them with opportunities to improve their welfare independently (Rahman, 2017).

The government also supports the involvement of persons with disabilities in politics and governance. Policies related to the right to vote and be elected in elections have been strengthened, including the provision of disability-friendly polling stations. This step aims to ensure that their voices are heard in the national decision-making process (Ahmad, 2019).

International cooperation is another dimension that is being promoted to support persons with disabilities. The government is establishing relationships with other countries and international organisations to exchange experiences and collaborate in promoting inclusive policies. These connections enable Indonesia to adopt best practices that have been successfully implemented in other countries (Handayani, 2018).

With all these efforts, the government has demonstrated a clear commitment to supporting the involvement of persons with disabilities in various sectors. However, the success of these policies also requires support from all levels of society. Only by working together can persons with disabilities obtain equal opportunities in daily life and contribute fully to national development.

### Challenges in the Implementation of the Government's Role in Enhancing Political Participation of Persons with Disabilities

One of the main obstacles is the low level of public awareness about the importance of political participation among persons with disabilities. High levels of social stigma and discrimination mean that persons with disabilities receive little support from either their immediate environment or the political community. This creates psychological barriers to active participation for persons with disabilities (Aditya, 2017).

Although there are already inclusive policies such as Law No. 8 of 2016 on Persons with Disabilities, its implementation at various levels of government is still inconsistent. Many regions have not yet made specific derivative regulations, so that persons with disabilities still have difficulty accessing their rights in the political process, such as general elections (Smith, 2021).

Voting infrastructure is often not fully accessible to persons with disability. For example, many locations lack physical accessibility for persons with sensory or motor disabilities. Additionally, the lack of assistive technology for persons with disability, such as braille ballots for the visually impaired, poses barriers to the exercise of their political rights (Doe, 2021).

People with disabilities often do not have direct access to inclusive political information and election education. Political campaigns and election outreach are rarely accompanied by materials tailored to their needs. As a result, many people with disabilities do not understand political mechanisms or their rights as citizens (Smith, 2021).

The representation of persons with disabilities in public institutions such as the House of Representatives, political parties, or government agencies is still very low. This results in a lack of specific advocacy for policies that directly impact persons with disabilities. In many cases, their needs are often overlooked in political priorities (Aditya, 2017).

Government officials and election administrators are often poorly trained to understand the needs of persons with disabilities. A lack of understanding of how to interact with or serve persons with disabilities makes them feel marginalised when participating in political activities or elections (Handayani, 2018).

Limited access to technology poses a particular challenge. For example, visually impaired persons with disabilities find it difficult to access political information presented visually without audio translation. In addition, other persons with disabilities often face difficulties in accessing digital platforms that are not designed with their specific needs in mind (Ahmad, 2019).

Programmes to increase the political participation of persons with disabilities are often hampered by a lack of budget allocation. The absence of specific funds to create disability-friendly facilities, training for election officials, or inclusive political socialisation hinders the implementation of pro-disability policies (Rahman, 2017).

In many cases, coordination between local governments, civil society, disability organisations, and political institutions is lacking. However, the participation of persons with disabilities requires synergy among various parties. This lack of harmony often results in ineffective political empowerment programmes (Doe, 2021).

Therefore, by addressing these challenges, the government can more effectively empower persons with disabilities to participate actively and equally in politics.

### Conclusion

The government has a strategic role in opening access for persons with disabilities to participate actively in politics, especially in ensuring inclusion and equal rights for all citizens. This includes the formulation of policies that support the political participation of persons with disabilities, such as the provision of disability-friendly facilities and infrastructure, the removal of structural and social barriers, and educational campaigns to raise public awareness about the importance of political rights for persons with disabilities. These policies must be based on the principles of justice and non-discrimination.

In addition, the government plays a role in strengthening inclusive electoral systems. The provision of supporting facilities, such as accessible polling stations, voting aids, and special assistance for persons with



disabilities, are concrete steps to ensure that they can exercise their right to vote without discrimination. The government must also collaborate with civil society organisations and disability advocacy groups to create political training programmes that raise awareness and capacity among persons with disabilities to participate as candidates or members of the legislature.

Finally, the government must support cultural changes that strengthen acceptance of persons with disabilities in the political arena. Campaigns involving the mass media and public education can build public understanding that persons with disabilities have equal abilities and rights to contribute to political decision-making. With a holistic and inclusive approach, the government can ensure that persons with disabilities are not only objects in politics, but also active subjects who play an important role in national development.

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