

IMPACT OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN ELECTIONS (VAWE) ON PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES IN ZAMBIA



Policy Brief

While VAWE has increasingly gained recognition as a serious barrier to women's political participation, the unique vulnerabilities faced by women with disabilities remain insufficiently documented, both in academic research and policy discourse.



Zambia National
Women's Lobby (ZNWL)

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Message from the Executive Director – Mr Golden Nachibinga

The right to participate in public life and political processes is central to any democracy. Yet, as this policy brief shows, women with disabilities in Zambia continue to face profound and intersecting barriers that prevent them from exercising that right on equal terms. The manifestations of Violence Against Women in Elections (VAWE) against women with disabilities are complex ranging from structural inaccessibility and exclusionary procedures to subtle intimidation, information gaps, and weak pathways for redress. These challenges not only undermine the principle of universal suffrage but also erode the dignity and autonomy of many Zambian women.

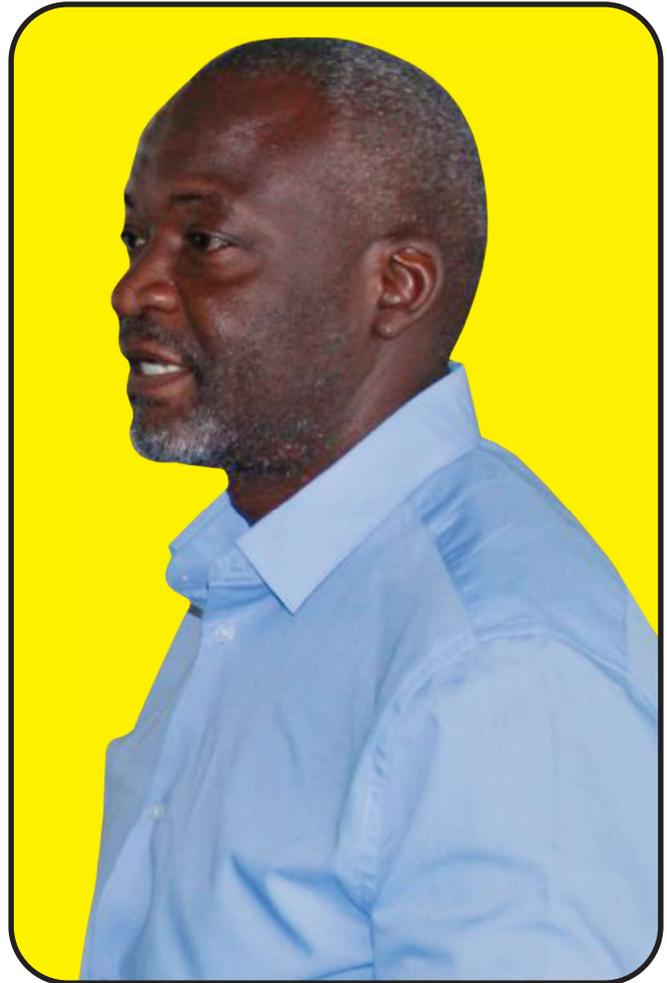
The Zambia National Women's Lobby (ZNWL) is proud to present this evidence-informed brief, which combines careful desk review and firsthand accounts to illuminate the scale and nature of the problem. Our intention is practical; to provide a clear, actionable roadmap for policymakers, electoral managers, political parties, civil society, and development partners to ensure elections that are safe, accessible, and, inclusive for all women.

We call on duty-bearers and partners to treat these findings as a mandate for urgent reform. by prioritizing accessibility, strengthening reporting and enforcement mechanisms, and investing in meaningful inclusion, we can close the gap between legal commitments and lived realities. ZNWL remains committed to working with partners, organizations of persons with disabilities, and communities to turn these recommendations into concrete change.

Warm regards,

Mr Golden Nachibinga

**Executive Director,
Zambia National Women's Lobby (ZNWL)**



**Zambia National
Women's Lobby (ZNWL)**

Message from the Project Coordinator (Gender & Disability) – Mr Norman Banda

Women with disabilities are integral to Zambia's democratic fabric, yet their experiences during electoral cycles are often invisible in policy debates and oversight processes. This brief surfaces the barriers that too often remain unspoken: inaccessible polling environments, compromised ballot secrecy, limited avenues for reporting violence, and the absence of disability-sensitive political party practices. These are not technicalities they are matters of rights, dignity and representation.

As project coordinator for gender & disability at ZNWL, I have seen first-hand how targeted, practical interventions can transform participation. The recommendations in this brief are therefore intentionally pragmatic: they prioritise measures that can be implemented within existing systems while also calling for systemic reforms that will secure longer-term inclusion. Crucially, the brief emphasises partnerships between the Electoral Commission, government ministries, political parties, OPDs, civil society and the media as the most sustainable pathway to change.

We offer this brief as a tool for advocacy and programmatic action. We urge electoral authorities, party leaders, and development partners to adopt the measures proposed and to resource them adequately. Doing so will not only uphold Zambia's international and constitutional obligations but also enrich our democracy by ensuring that every woman, regardless of ability, can participate safely and fully.

Sincerely,

Mr Norman Banda

**Project Coordinator (Gender & Disability),
Zambia National Women's Lobby (ZNWL)**



**Zambia National
Women's Lobby (ZNWL)**

Executive Summary

Women with disabilities in Zambia continue to face entrenched barriers that limit their full, safe, and equal participation in electoral processes. This policy brief presents key findings from qualitative interviews with key stakeholders and women with disabilities, complemented by existing literature and legal frameworks. The evidence reveals that inaccessible polling stations, compromised voting autonomy, widespread intimidation, weak enforcement of laws, exclusion by political parties, and non-responsive justice systems create a political environment that systematically disadvantages women with disabilities. These vulnerabilities are exacerbated by the lack of disability-disaggregated data, making their experiences largely invisible in formal electoral monitoring and policymaking.

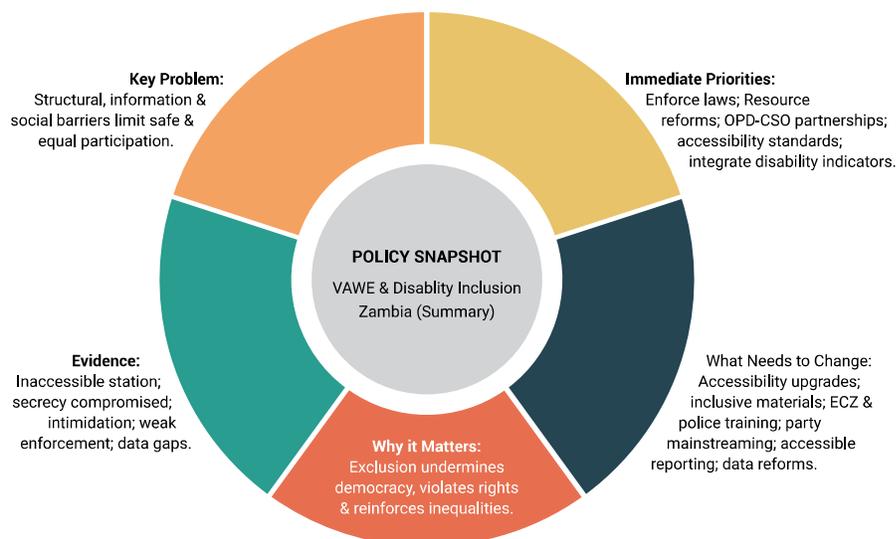
Despite Zambia's strong legal commitments including the Persons with Disabilities Act, the Gender Equity and Equality Act, and international obligations under CEDAW and the CRPD implementation gaps remain wide. Women with disabilities frequently encounter structural barriers such as steep staircases, poorly designed polling layouts, inaccessible information formats, and election officers with limited disability training. These factors combine to compromise ballot secrecy, undermine autonomy, and expose women to heightened risks of Violence Against Women in Elections (VAWE), including verbal abuse, intimidation, and social hostility. Moreover, political parties rarely mainstream disability inclusion, limiting leadership opportunities and reinforcing systemic underrepresentation.

Addressing these challenges requires deliberate and well-coordinated reforms. The brief calls for improved accessibility across polling stations, investment in inclusive voting materials, targeted capacity-building for ECZ officers and police, disability-mainstreamed political party processes, accessible reporting pathways, and routine disability-disaggregated data collection. Such interventions will strengthen Zambia's democratic culture, uphold human rights commitments, and ensure that no woman is left behind in political life.

The Impact of Violence Against Women in Elections (VAWE) on Persons with Disabilities in Zambia

Prepared by CERCS for: Zambia National Women's Lobby (ZNWL) November, 2025

Policy Snapshot: VAWE & Disability inclusion



1. Background and Rationale

Violence Against Women in Elections (VAWE) remains a persistent barrier to democratic participation in Zambia. While significant progress has been made toward improving gender representation, women continue to face intimidation, harassment, structural exclusion, and institutional discrimination during electoral cycles. However, the vulnerabilities of women with disabilities who face compounded forms of discrimination due to both gender and disability remain one of the least documented and least addressed dimensions of VAWE.

Women with disabilities experience unique risks stemming from inaccessible environments, harmful social norms, and weak institutional protections. Their participation in electoral processes whether as voters, candidates, observers, or campaign actors is shaped by intersecting structural barriers and discriminatory attitudes. Yet national policy frameworks, political party systems, and electoral procedures have not been adequately adapted to meet their needs.

This policy brief synthesises findings from a desk review and key informant interviews conducted with women with disabilities, Disability Rights Watch (DRW), and senior members of the Zambia National Women's Lobby (ZNWL). It highlights the ways in which VAWE affects women with disabilities and provides evidence-based recommendations for strengthening electoral inclusion, autonomy, safety, and justice.

2. Problem Statement

Women with disabilities face systemic exclusion from electoral and political spaces due to a combination of physical inaccessibility, attitudinal discrimination, social stigma, and institutional weaknesses. These factors both increase their exposure to VAWE and reduce their ability to seek protection or redress. Despite progressive national laws and regional commitments, the absence of operational mechanisms that specifically address VAWE experienced by women with disabilities results in:

- compromised voting autonomy and secrecy,
- limited access to justice,
- reduced political representation,
- heightened exposure to intimidation and manipulation,
- and near invisibility in national electoral data.

The lack of disability-disaggregated election monitoring further obscures the true scale of the problem. Without intentional reform, women with disabilities will continue to be structurally marginalised from democratic processes.

3. Methodology

These brief draws evidence from:

a) Desk Review

A review of Zambian laws (Persons with Disabilities Act, Gender Equity and Equality Act, Electoral Process Act), regional frameworks (SADC Gender Protocol), and inter-national conventions (CEDAW, CRPD). Reports by DRW, ZNWL, Hivos, and The Carter Center were reviewed to contextualise VAWE and disability inclusion.

b) Key Informant Interviews (KIIs)

Four qualitative interviews were conducted with:

- woman with a disability with voting experience,
 - a representative from Disability Rights Watch (DRW),
 - the ZNWL Project Coordinator (Gender & Disability),
 - the ZNWL Executive Director.
- Data were analysed using thematic analysis, integrating descriptive and interpretive coding to identify core patterns and experiences.

4. Key Findings

1. Structural and Environmental Barriers to Participation

Interviews revealed that women with disabilities face persistent structural and environmental barriers that shape every stage of their participation in electoral processes. These barriers are not occasional or incidental; they are embedded features of the polling environment that consistently undermine autonomy, safety, and equal participation. Respondents described polling stations situated in buildings with steep staircases, uneven ground, narrow entrances, and interiors that lack mobility friendly layouts. Such features create immediate physical exclusion for women with mobility limitations, and a strong perception that these spaces were never designed with their participation in mind.

One participant explained the experience of arriving at a polling station and finding that the structure itself prevented independent access:

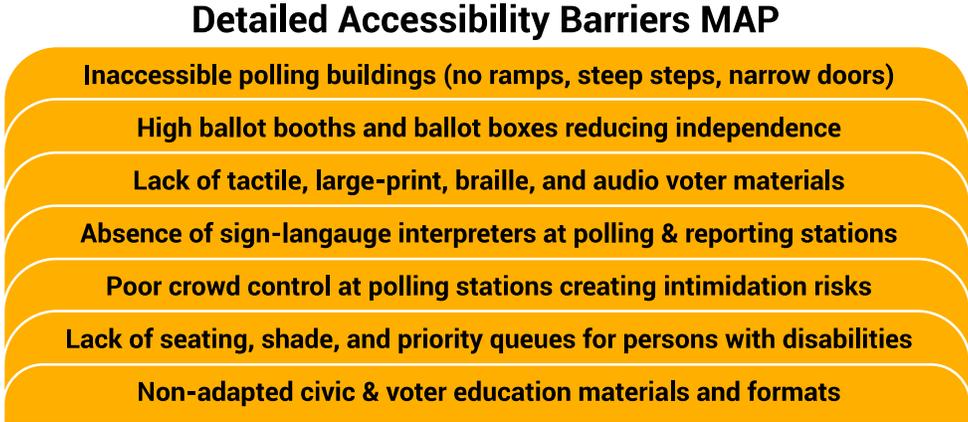
*"The stairs were too steep and there was no railing. I could not enter without being lifted by strangers."
(interviewee 1, personal communication, 2025)*

Even for those who manage to enter, the internal configuration of polling stations often compounds exclusion. Voting booths are frequently elevated well above wheelchair height, and ballot boxes are placed on high platforms, forcing women with disabilities to rely on polling officials or companions to cast their votes. This arrangement compromises ballot secrecy and heightens the risk of undue influence, stripping women of the right to vote privately and independently.

Information accessibility is equally inadequate. None of the respondents had ever encountered Braille or large print materials, tactile ballots, or audio guidance at polling stations. Deaf voters experienced similar exclusion due to the absence of sign-language interpreters. These limitations leave women with disabilities dependent on verbal instructions or third-party assistance, which many described as uncomfortable or undignified. The combined effect of inaccessible environments and limited information reinforces their sense of marginalisation within civic and political life.

Figure 1 highlights the key structural, physical, and informational barriers that restrict the independent and safe participation of women with disabilities in elections, showing how inaccessible environments undermine autonomy, safety, and inclusion.

Figure 1: Accessibility Barriers Map



The “Detailed Accessibility Barriers Map” highlights the range of structural, physical, and informational barriers that prevent women with disabilities from participating fully, independently, and safely in electoral processes. The diagram demonstrates that accessibility challenges are not limited to infrastructure alone; they extend to the entire electoral environment, from the moment a voter arrives at a polling station to how they receive civic information and engage with officials.

At the most visible level, inaccessible buildings characterised by steep steps, narrow entrances, and a lack of ramps or handrails immediately limit access for women with mobility, visual, or physical impairments. Once inside, high ballot booths and ballot boxes significantly reduce voting independence and compromise ballot secrecy, forcing many women with disabilities to rely on others for assistance. This loss of autonomy increases vulnerability to coercion or vote manipulation.

The barriers also extend to **information accessibility**. The absence of tactile ballots, large print, Braille, simplified-text materials, or audio formats makes it difficult for women with sensory or intellectual disabilities to understand voting procedures. The lack of sign-language interpreters at polling stations further marginalises deaf women, creating confusion, dependence, and exclusion.

Environmental and crowd-related barriers also feature prominently in the map. Poor queue management, overcrowded entrances, and noisy, chaotic environments create intimidation and safety risks, particularly for women with disabilities who may feel over-whelmed, exposed, or unsafe. The absence of seating areas, shade, and priority queues makes the electoral experience physically exhausting and discouraging, especially for women with chronic pain, limited mobility, or psychosocial disabilities.

Finally, the diagram shows that civic and voter education processes themselves are often inaccessible, as information is not tailored or adapted for diverse disability needs. This gap leaves many women with disabilities uninformed about changes in procedures, their rights, or what to expect on election day further widening the participation gap.

Taken together, this map illustrates how **multiple, compounding accessibility barriers create a systematic pattern of exclusion**. Removing these barriers is essential for ensuring that women with disabilities can participate in elections with dignity, independence, and equality.

2. Reduced Autonomy and Compromised Ballot Secrecy

The experiences shared by respondents illustrate a voting process in which women with disabilities frequently lose control over how they participate. While the principle of the secret ballot is intended to protect electoral integrity, inaccessible voting procedures render this right difficult to exercise. Many women must rely on others polling staff, family members, or community volunteers to guide them through the process or physically cast their vote. This dependency increases the possibility of coercion, manipulation, or unwanted influence over their political choices.

One woman highlighted this subtle but pervasive loss of agency:

*"Before I even asked for help, the polling staff stood next to me insisting they would assist because they assumed I couldn't manage."
(interviewee 1, personal communication, 2025)*

Respondents also reported that long, crowded, and poorly managed queues contribute to feelings of pressure and loss of autonomy. Many described experiencing impatience from other voters or being hurried along in ways that diminished their sense of equality and dignity. For women with disabilities, especially those with mobility difficulties, being pushed to the front of the line or rushed through the process was described as both embarrassing and disempowering rather than supportive.

Overall, the combination of physical barriers, attitudinal assumptions, and procedural shortcomings restricts women with disabilities from exercising their right to vote independently. Their accounts reveal a system where autonomy is compromised not through explicit discrimination, but through the cumulative effect of poorly adapted electoral processes and persistent social biases about disability.

3. Exposure to Violence, Intimidation, and Social Hostility

The testimonies of respondents show that women with disabilities are exposed to multiple forms of violence, intimidation, and social hostility in electoral settings. VAWE manifests not only as overt physical aggression but also through insults, dismissive attitudes, and public humiliation, all of which create an emotionally hostile atmosphere. Women recalled being stared at, spoken to harshly, or discouraged from participating, with remarks that reinforced both gendered and ableist stereotypes.

One respondent recalled being directly demeaned at a polling station:

*"Someone said I shouldn't be voting because I can't even stand properly. It was very humiliating."
(interviewee 2, personal communication, 2025)*

Participants further described how political rallies and campaign gatherings are often inaccessible, chaotic, and unsafe. The presence of aggressive party cadres, loud environments, and unmanaged crowds creates spaces where women with disabilities feel physically vulnerable. Many avoid such events entirely, not due to political disengagement but out of fear for personal safety. This avoidance significantly reduces their opportunities to hear party messages, engage with political actors, or participate in campaign processes.

The intersection of gender and disability intensifies exposure to risk. Women with disabilities are widely perceived as less likely to defend themselves or report abuse, making them easier targets for intimidation or harassment. Their experiences are frequently overlooked in mainstream election monitoring, leaving them without visibility or protection. This layer of vulnerability positions women with disabilities among those most at risk of experiencing VAWE while simultaneously being least supported by existing response systems.

Figure 2 illustrates how women with disabilities experience VAWE as a continuous cycle: inaccessible environments reduce autonomy, increasing exposure to intimidation and harassment, while weak reporting and enforcement reinforce exclusion from political participation.

One woman highlighted this subtle but pervasive loss of agency:

Figure 2: Cycle of VAWE Experienced by Women with Disabilities

Detailed Cycle of VAWE Experienced by Women with Disabilities



This circular diagram highlights a powerful truth: for women with disabilities, violence in elections is not an isolated incident it is a continuous cycle shaped by systemic barriers at every stage of the electoral process.

The cycle begins with inaccessible environments, where polling stations, information, and procedures are not designed for women with disabilities. These barriers immediately compromise their independence and ballot secrecy, forcing many to rely on others simply to vote.

This loss of autonomy makes women with disabilities more vulnerable to intimidation, harassment, and manipulation, whether at polling stations, in party structures, or in community spaces. Yet when violence occurs, most incidents go unreported, not because they are insignificant, but because reporting channels are inaccessible, unresponsive, or unsafe.

Weak reporting leads to weak enforcement laws exist, but they are not implemented in ways that protect women with disabilities. As a result, exclusion becomes normalised: women with disabilities remain absent from leadership, marginalised in parties, and invisible in election data.

This is why the cycle continues.

The diagram shows clearly that breaking any part of this cycle, improving accessibility, strengthening reporting, enforcing protections, or empowering leadership, creates an opportunity for systemic change. It demonstrates why targeted, disability-inclusive electoral reforms are not optional but essential for building a democratic system where every woman can participate freely, safely, and with dignity.

4. Weak Enforcement of Legal and Policy Frameworks

Although Zambia's legal and policy environment contains progressive provisions supporting the rights of persons with disabilities and prohibiting gender-based discrimination, respondents emphasised a persistent gap between written commitments and actual practice during elections. Legislation such as the Persons with Disabilities Act, the Gender Equity and Equality Act, and the Electoral Process Act outlines obligations for accessibility, equal participation, and protection from violence. However, interview data revealed that these obligations are seldom translated into operational standards, training, or monitoring systems that would ensure inclusion at polling stations or within political processes.

Institutions responsible for electoral management and protection frequently lack the practical tools and resources needed to implement the laws effectively. Respondents noted that accessibility guidelines are inconsistently applied, with many polling stations failing even the most basic requirements such as ramps, accessible signage, or inclusive communication materials. As a result, enforcement becomes dependent on the discretion of individual officers, rather than on systematic institutional procedures.

One participant summarised this gap by noting:

*"We have very good laws, but in elections you can't feel their presence. Nothing on the ground shows they are being enforced for women with disabilities."
(interviewee 4, personal communication, 2025)*

This dichotomy between policy and practice undermines trust in the electoral system and creates an environment where exclusion becomes normalised. Without active enforcement mechanisms, regular audits, or accountability measures, women with disabilities continue to experience elections in ways that do not align with the protections guaranteed to them under national legislation.

5. Political Party Exclusion and Leadership Barriers

Interviews revealed that political parties remain one of the least inclusive spaces for women with disabilities. Despite their central role in shaping Zambia's democratic processes, most parties lack the policies, internal mechanisms, or institutional capacity required to meaningfully support the participation of women with disabilities. Respondents highlighted several structural challenges, including inaccessible meeting venues, nomination systems that assume mobility and extensive financial resources, and a general absence of targeted support for women with disabilities aspiring to political leadership.

Women with disabilities often face social and attitudinal barriers within party structures as well. Their political capacities are frequently underestimated, and they encounter doubt regarding their ability to campaign or hold leadership roles. These perceptions interact with social stigma, creating an environment where women with disabilities feel marginalised or tokenized. One interviewee captured this sentiment clearly:

*"Even when you show interest in participating, they don't really take you seriously. They think disability means you cannot handle politics."
(interviewee 3, personal communication, 2025)*

This lack of inclusion deprives women with disabilities of opportunities to shape political agendas, influence policy, or represent their communities. As long as political parties do not proactively integrate disability inclusion into their internal processes, women with disabilities will remain significantly underrepresented in leadership and decision-making spaces.

Figure 3 illustrates the key institutions responsible for disability-inclusive elections, showing how each stakeholder contributes to accessibility, protection, advocacy, and inclusive participation for women with disabilities.

Figure 3: Stakeholders Roles in Disability-Inclusive Elections

**Stakeholders Roles in Disability-Inclusive Elections
(Pie-chart conceptual diagram)**



This pie-chart conceptual diagram illustrates the coordinated roles of key stakeholders responsible for creating disability-inclusive elections in Zambia. Each segment represents a critical actor whose contributions are essential for ensuring that women with disabilities can participate safely, independently, and on equal terms throughout the electoral cycle.

At the core of the framework is the Electoral Commission of Zambia (ECZ), whose regulatory authority allows it to set accessibility standards, develop operational guide- lines, train polling officials, and ensure that election materials are available in formats accessible to all voters. Political parties form another key segment, as they determine whether internal structures, nomination processes, and campaign environments are inclusive and free from discrimination or violence. Their ability to implement disability- sensitive grievance mechanisms directly influences the participation of women with disabilities in leadership and candidate spaces.

The Police and Victim Support Units (VSU) serve as protection actors, providing safe and accessible reporting pathways, interpreters, and timely responses to electoral violence incidents. ZNWL and DRW occupy a major advocacy and community engagement role, strengthening civic education, monitoring VAWE risks, and building the capacity of institutions to uphold the rights of women with disabilities. Organisations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs) contribute essential technical expertise by advising on accessibility, conducting audits, and ensuring that the lived experiences of women with disabilities inform policy and practice. Finally, the media plays a pivotal role in shaping public perception, raising awareness, and communicating information in inclusive and accessible formats.

Together, these stakeholder roles form an interconnected system where each actor's contribution reinforces the others. The diagram demonstrates that disability-inclusive elections cannot be achieved by one institution alone progress depends on a coordinated ecosystem of regulatory, protective, advocacy, technical, and communication actors working collaboratively to remove barriers and prevent violence against women with disabilities.

6. Reporting and Justice Access Gaps

Respondents described significant challenges in reporting incidents of violence, intimidation, or discrimination during the electoral period. Many police stations lack accessible infrastructure, appropriate communication channels, or officers trained to handle disability-related cases sensitively. Women with disabilities often face additional barriers such as the absence of sign-language interpreters, communication difficulties, or physical inaccessibility of reporting facilities, making it difficult to engage with law enforcement effectively.

These weaknesses in the justice system discourage survivors from reporting VAWE, reinforcing patterns of silence and under-reporting. Participants expressed concerns about confidentiality and noted that the presence of a third party such as an interpreter or assistant can compromise their privacy or expose them to further stigma.

One respondent emphasised how these constraints affect trust in the system:

*"You cannot report comfortably when you need someone else just to help you talk to the police. It doesn't feel safe."
(interviewee 2, personal communication, 2025)*

Without accessible reporting mechanisms or clear follow-up procedures, women with disabilities are left with limited recourse when they experience electoral violence. This undermines both their safety and their confidence in the justice system, perpetuating a cycle where VAWE against women with disabilities remains largely unrecorded and unaddressed.

7. Lack of Disability-Disaggregated Data

Zambia (ECZ), observer missions, and CSOs, rarely collect or analyse data on disability, making it difficult to understand how women with disabilities engage in elections or experience violence. This lack of clarity results in their near invisibility in official statistics, policy discussions, and monitoring reports.

Participants stressed that without disability-specific data, institutions cannot design or target interventions effectively. Monitoring bodies may capture VAWE incidents more broadly, but without disability markers, the experiences of women with disabilities remain hidden.

As one interviewee explained:

*"If there is no data that shows how women with disabilities vote or face challenges, it is like their issues don't exist at all."
(interviewee 4, personal communication, 2025)*

This data gap has far-reaching implications. It limits advocacy, constrains planning, and prevents evidence-based reforms. Without deliberate efforts to collect disability-disaggregated information, policymakers, CSOs, and national institutions cannot meaningfully address the unique risks and barriers affecting women with disabilities in electoral contexts.

5. Conclusion

The evidence demonstrates that women with disabilities in Zambia face persistent, intersectional barriers that limit their participation in elections and expose them to unique forms of VAW. While laws exist, implementation gaps, institutional weaknesses, structural inaccessibility, and inadequate reporting systems continue to undermine their rights.

Strengthening inclusion requires deliberate, coordinated action implementing accessibility standards, improving reporting systems, reforming political party structures, enhancing representation, and collecting meaningful disability-disaggregated data. These reforms are not only aligned with Zambia's constitutional and international obligations but are also crucial to building a more inclusive democracy where all women can participate freely, safely, and with dignity.

6. Recommendations

The findings from this study highlight the need for a comprehensive reform agenda driven by policy, practice, and institutional strengthening. To achieve meaningful and sustainable inclusion of women with disabilities in Zambia's electoral processes, the following recommendations are proposed.

- Improving accessibility in electoral environments remains an immediate priority. The Electoral Commission of Zambia should adopt and enforce national accessibility standards for polling stations, ensuring availability of ramps, adequately designed booths, accessible queues, and signage suitable for diverse impairments. These adjustments must be accompanied by the provision of accessible voting materials, including tactile ballots, large-print instructions, and sign-language interpretation for deaf voters. Without structural and informational accessibility, the right to vote cannot be exercised independently or safely by voters with disabilities.
- Strengthening institutional capacity is also critical. ECZ officers, police officers, and election support staff require targeted training in disability inclusion, communication support, and prevention of VAW against women with disabilities. This capacity-building should be institutionalised rather than offered as ad hoc workshops. A mandatory framework for disability- and gender-sensitive electoral administration will ensure consistency across all polling stations and improve the integrity of the voting process.
- Political parties must also become active enablers of inclusion. Parties should adopt internal disability inclusion policies, ensure that meetings and candidate selection processes are accessible, and establish mechanisms to support women with disabilities aspiring to leadership positions. Deliberate mentorship, financial support, and awareness-raising within party structures can strengthen the participation of women with disabilities in political leadership and decision-making.
- Furthermore, accessible, confidential, and survivor-centered reporting mechanisms for electoral violence must be developed. Police stations should adopt minimum accessibility standards, and reporting pathways must cater for the needs of women with various impairments. Integrating sign-language services, accessible communication channels, and strong follow-up procedures will increase confidence in seeking justice and reduce underreporting.
- Finally, disability-disaggregated data should be routinely collected and integrated into electoral monitoring tools, voter registration processes, VAW documentation, and national gender equality reporting. Without reliable data, women with disabilities remain invisible within the electoral system. Prioritising evidence generation will significantly enhance policymaking, funding decisions, and program design across institutions.

7. Call to Action

Ensuring the full inclusion of women with disabilities in Zambia's electoral processes is not only a legal obligation it is a democratic imperative. As the country continues to strengthen its governance systems, stakeholders across all levels must commit to transforming elections into spaces where every woman can participate freely, safely, and with dignity. Electoral reforms must be adequately resourced, disability inclusion must become a standard practice, and mechanisms to prevent and respond to VAWE must be accessible and effective.

We call upon the Electoral Commission of Zambia, political parties, law enforcement agencies, organisations of persons with disabilities, civil society, development partners, and the media to embrace collective responsibility in advancing these reforms. By aligning efforts, mobilising resources, and prioritising inclusive practices, Zambia can set a regional benchmark for disability-inclusive democracy. The time for incremental change has passed what is needed now is decisive, coordinated, and sustained action to ensure that no woman is excluded from exercising her fundamental political rights.

8. About the Project

This policy brief forms part of ongoing collaborative efforts between the Zambia National Women's Lobby (ZNWL) and Disability Rights Watch (DRW) to strengthen gender-responsive and disability-inclusive governance processes. The project aims to generate evidence, amplify voices of women with disabilities, and influence institutional reforms that advance their participation in public life. Through research, advocacy, and partnerships, the project seeks to ensure that electoral systems, political parties, and justice mechanisms uphold the rights of women with disabilities and contribute to a more inclusive democracy.

