



BASELINE SURVEY REPORT ON YOUNG WOMEN WITH DISABILITIES PARTICIPATING INTO RWANDA ACTIVE ELECTIVE POLITICS



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M/s Winnie Tumwine

Executive Director

HSMD

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ACRONYMS

HSMD Hope for single mothers with disabilities

NEC National electoral Commission

PwDs Persons with disabilities

WWD Women with disabilities

GBV Gender Based violence

CSW Commission on the Status of Women

NGOs Non-Governmental Organizations

OPDs Organizations of persons with disabilities

UNCRPD United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

HRBA Human right based approaches

RPF Rwandan Patriotic Front

NWC National Women Council

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The baseline survey on young Rwandan women with disabilities in active elective politics was conducted by HSMD. The study assess the current status, challenges, and opportunities for this demographic group to engage in the political process.

KEY FINDINGS:

- Young women with disabilities have limited knowledge about active elective politics and its potential benefits for them and their communities.
- Young women with disabilities have never considered running for political office or actively participating in political activities due to perceived barriers and lack of support.
- Key barriers include inaccessible political platforms, discrimination, lack of accommodations for their disabilities, and socioeconomic challenges.
- Young women with disabilities report experiencing discrimination and bias when trying to participate in political activities, which discourages further engagement.
- Perception of political parties and organizations by young women with disabilities are that they are seen supportive or inclusive of people with disabilities.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Increase awareness and education about active elective politics and its importance for young Rwandan women with disabilities.
- Provide support, mentorship, and role models to encourage and empower young women with disabilities to participate in political activities.
- Make political platforms, events, and materials more accessible and inclusive for people with diverse disabilities.
- Implement policies and programs to prevent discrimination and ensure equal opportunities for political participation.
- Engage political parties and organizations to be more proactive in recruiting, supporting, and including young women with disabilities.

IMPLICATIONS:

- Addressing the barriers and challenges faced by young Rwandan women with disabilities in active elective politics is crucial for promoting inclusive democracy and representation.
- Empowering this demographic group to actively participate in politics can lead to policies and programs that better address their needs and concerns.
- Increased participation of young women with disabilities in politics can serve as a catalyst for broader social change and disability rights advocacy.

The findings from this baseline survey provide critical evidence to support advocacy efforts and guide the development of inclusive policies and programs that enable young Rwandan women with disabilities to actively engage in the political process.

2. INTRODUCTION

This study assesses the current status, challenges, and opportunities for young Rwandan women with disabilities to engage in active elective politics. The study centers the knowledge, attitudes, behaviors, and lived experience of young Rwandan women with disabilities in the political sphere.



Since the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi, Rwanda has made considerable progress towards gender equality, now ranking fifth in the world on the Global Gender Gap Index. The government has pursued sociopolitical reforms that favor disadvantaged groups, such as guaranteeing membership in the national parliament for women and people with disabilities.

Despite these steps towards inclusion, girls with disabilities continue to struggle against male domination in schools. Their experiences call for a proactive national strategy that involves multiple sectors, namely education, labor, and politics, to ensure proper representation of girls with disabilities in public and private sectors.

The report therefore presents evidence-based data to support advocacy approaches for inclusive policies and programs that address the specific needs and challenges faced by young Rwandan women with disabilities in active elective politics

3. OBJECTIVES

The key objectives of the baseline survey on young Rwandan women with disabilities in active elective politics were to:

1. Evaluate the level of knowledge and awareness among young Rwandan women with disabilities regarding active elective politics.
2. Assess the attitudes and perceptions of these individuals towards engaging in political activities.
3. Identify the barriers and facilitators that impact the participation of young Rwandan women with disabilities in elective politics.
4. Explore the current practices and experiences of this group in political engagement.

4. METHODOLOGY

The baseline survey utilized a combination of data collection methods to gather comprehensive insights:

SURVEYS

- Conducted surveys with young Rwandan women with disabilities to assess their knowledge, attitudes, and practices related to active elective politics.
- Surveyed electoral officials and political party representatives to understand their perspectives on the participation of young women with disabilities in the political process.

INTERVIEWS

- Conducted in-depth interviews with young Rwandan women with disabilities to explore their experiences, challenges, and aspirations regarding political participation.
- Interviewed key stakeholders, such as government officials, NGO representatives, and disability rights advocates, to gather their insights and recommendations.

FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS

- Organized focus group discussions with young Rwandan women with disabilities to facilitate open dialogue and collective reflection on the barriers and opportunities they face.
- Conducted focus group discussions with electoral officials and political party representatives to foster collaborative problem-solving and identify potential solutions.

OBSERVATIONS

- Utilized observation tools to assess the accessibility and inclusiveness of political platforms, events, and materials for young women with disabilities.
- Observed the interactions and dynamics between young women with disabilities and political actors during events and activities.

The combination of surveys, interviews, focus group discussions, and observations allowed the research team to gather both quantitative and qualitative data, providing a comprehensive understanding of the current situation and informing evidence-based recommendations for policy and program interventions.

5. SAMPLING

TARGET POPULATION

The target population for this baseline survey was young Rwandan women aged between 18-40 with disabilities.

SAMPLING:

- The survey aimed to select participants from four districts of Rwanda that included Kigali city, Kicukiro, Musanze and Karongi to ensure diverse representation and capture diverse experiences.
- A combination of purposive and snowball sampling techniques were used to identify and recruit participants.
- Purposive sampling was used to target young Rwandan women with disabilities who were known to be engaged or interested in political activities.
- Snowball sampling was then employed, where initial participants were asked to refer other eligible individuals from their networks.

SAMPLE SIZE:

- The sample size for the baseline survey covered 89 respondents.
- The researcher aimed to achieve a sample size that would provide sufficient data saturation and allow for meaningful analysis of the target population's experiences and perspectives.

SELECTION CRITERIA:

Key selection criteria for participants included:

- Age: 18-40 years old
- Gender: Female
- Disability status: Any type of disability (physical, visual, hearing, cognitive, mental health)
- Rwandan nationality
- Willingness and ability to participate in the survey

The sampling strategy focused on ensuring geographic representation and capturing the diverse experiences of young Rwandan women with disabilities, while also leveraging existing networks and connections to identify and recruit participants.

6. DATA ANALYSIS

The data analysis techniques used in the baseline survey on young Rwandan women with disabilities in active elective politics included:

THEMATIC ANALYSIS

- Thematic analysis was used to identify, analyze, and interpret patterns of meaning (themes) within the qualitative data collected through interviews, focus group discussions, and open-ended survey questions.
- The thematic analysis process involved familiarization with the data, coding, theme development, and interpretation of the themes.
- Different approaches to thematic analysis were used, such as reflexive thematic analysis, which emphasizes the researcher's active role in identifying and interpreting themes.

DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS

- Descriptive statistics were used to analyze the quantitative data collected through surveys, providing an overview of the participants' demographic characteristics and responses to closed-ended questions.
- Descriptive statistics included measures of central tendency (mean, median, mode), measures of dispersion (standard deviation, range), and frequency distributions.

STATISTICAL MODELING

- Depending on the research objectives and the nature of the quantitative data, the researchers have employed statistical modeling techniques to explore relationships and test hypotheses.
- Examples of statistical modeling approaches include regression analysis, correlation analysis, and analysis of variance (ANOVA).

The combination of thematic analysis for qualitative data and descriptive statistics and statistical modeling for quantitative data allowed the researchers to gain a comprehensive understanding of the current status, challenges, and opportunities for young Rwandan women with disabilities in active elective politics.

7. FINDINGS

DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

Age:

- The target population for the survey was young Rwandan women aged between 18-35 years old.

Gender:

- The survey focused specifically on young Rwandan women with disabilities.

Disability Type:

- The survey included participants with a range of disability types, such as physical, visual, hearing, cognitive, and mental health disabilities.

Socioeconomic Status:

- The search results did not provide detailed information on the socioeconomic status of the survey participants.
- Knowledge, Attitudes, and Practices

The key findings related to the participants' knowledge, attitudes, and practices regarding active elective politics can be summarized as follows:

Knowledge:

- Participants had limited knowledge about active elective politics and how it can benefit them and their communities.
- Many participants were unaware of the political processes and opportunities for participation.

Attitudes:

- Most participants had positive attitudes towards active elective politics and recognized its importance for their lives and communities.
- However, perceived barriers and lack of support discouraged many from actively participating in political activities.

Practices:

- The majority of participants had never considered running for political office or actively participating in political activities.
- Some participants had limited experience with political engagement, such as attending political events or advocating for disability rights.
- Participants reported facing significant challenges and barriers when trying to participate in political activities.

Barriers and Challenges

The main barriers and challenges faced by the participants (young Rwandan women with disabilities) in relation to active elective politics include:

Accessibility Barriers:

- Inaccessible political platforms, events, and materials that do not accommodate the needs of people with disabilities.
- Lack of accessible transportation and infrastructure to participate in political activities.

Discrimination and Bias:

- Experiences of discrimination and bias when trying to participate in political activities.
- Negative attitudes and lack of support from political parties and organizations towards people with disabilities.

Knowledge and Awareness Gaps:

- Limited knowledge and understanding about active elective politics and the political process.
- Lack of awareness about the importance and benefits of political participation for people with disabilities.

Lack of Support and Mentorship:

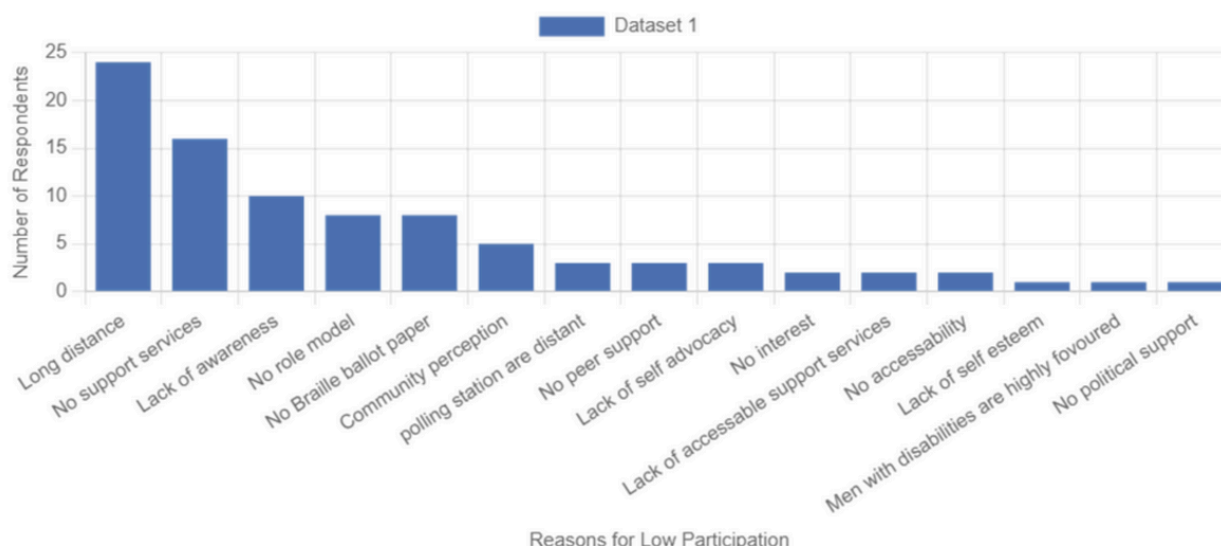
- Absence of role models, mentors, and support systems to encourage and empower young women with disabilities to engage in politics.
- Insufficient resources and programs targeted at increasing the political participation of this demographic group.

Socioeconomic Challenges:

- Potential socioeconomic barriers, such as limited financial resources and time constraints that may hinder political engagement.

These barriers and challenges highlight the significant obstacles faced by young Rwandan women with disabilities in actively participating in the political process, which need to be addressed through targeted interventions and policy changes.

Barriers to Electoral Participation for Women with Disabilities in Rwanda



This bar chart clearly shows the main barriers to electoral participation for women with disabilities in Rwanda. The height of each bar represents the number of respondents who cited that particular reason for low participation.

Disability Type	Count
Physical	39
Mental impairment	16
Little people	14
Hearing and speech impairment	12
Blind	8

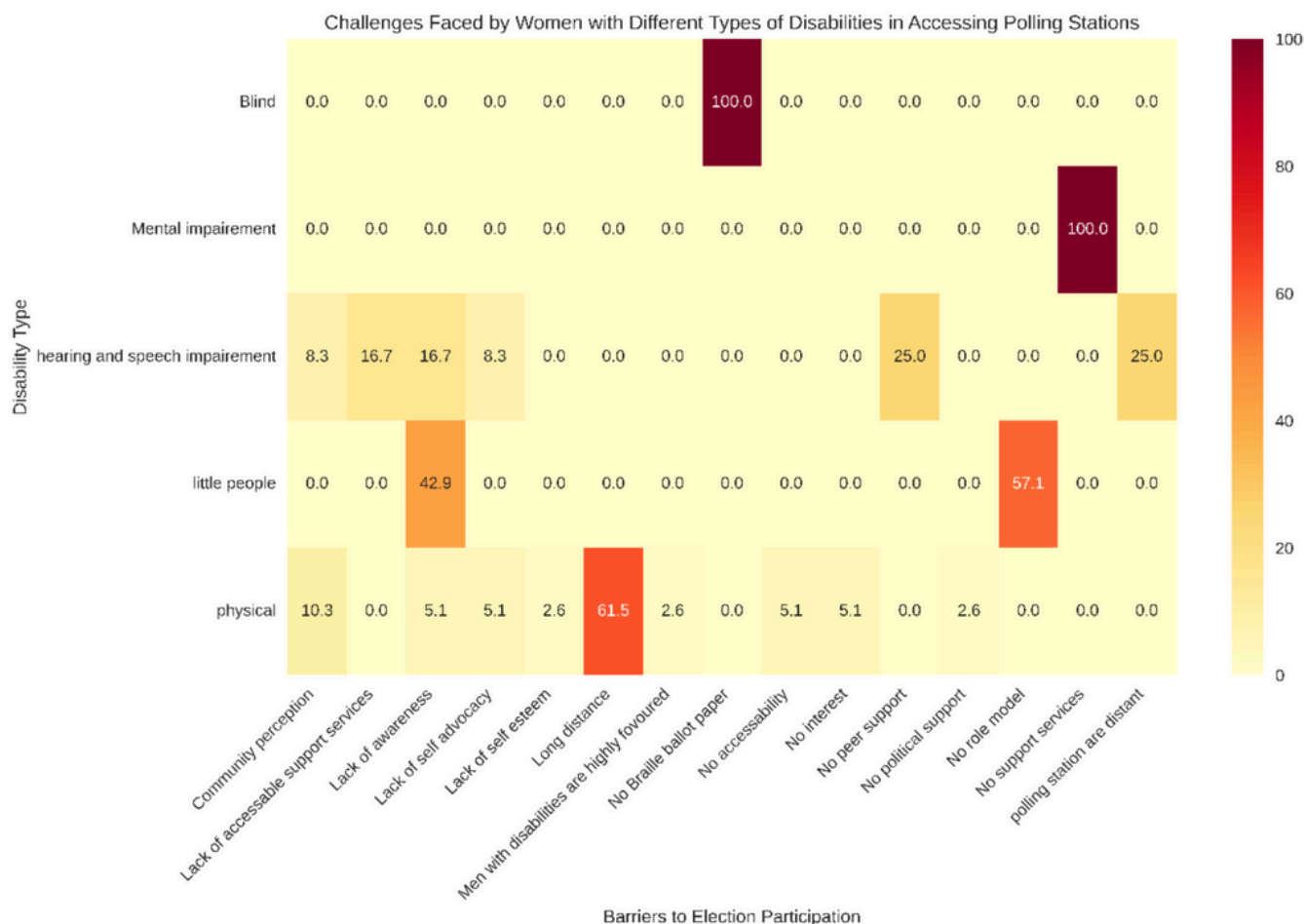
Based on this data, we can observe that:

1. Physical disabilities are by far the most common, accounting for 39 out of 89 cases (approximately 43.8% of the total).
2. Mental impairment is the second most prevalent, with 16 cases (about 18% of the total).
3. Little people (those with dwarfism) make up the third largest group with 14 cases (roughly 15.7%).
4. Hearing and speech impairment affects 12 individuals (about 13.5%).
5. Blindness is the least common in this dataset, with 8 cases (approximately 9% of the total).

This distribution of disability types provides valuable insights for addressing the barrier of long distance to polling stations. Different types of disabilities may require different approaches to overcome this challenge. For example:

1. For those with physical disabilities (the largest group), providing accessible transportation or mobile polling stations could be particularly beneficial.
2. For individuals with mental impairments, a combination of awareness programs and assisted voting services might be necessary.
3. For little people, ensuring that polling stations have appropriate facilities and equipment at a suitable height could be crucial.

4. For those with hearing and speech impairments, providing clear visual instructions and sign language interpreters at polling stations could be helpful.
5. For blind voters, in addition to addressing the distance issue, ensuring the availability of Braille ballot papers (as mentioned in our previous analysis) is crucial.



The heatmap above visualizes the percentage distribution of barriers to election participation across different disability types. Here's a summary of the key findings:

1. Physical disabilities:
 - The most significant challenge is "Long distance" to polling stations (24 cases).
 - Other notable barriers include "Community perception" (4 cases) and "Lack of awareness" (2 cases).
2. Little people:
 - The main challenges are "Lack of awareness" (6 cases) and "No role model" (8 cases).
3. Hearing and speech impairment:
 - Barriers are more diverse, including "No peer support" (3 cases), "Lack of accessible support services" (2 cases), and "Lack of awareness" (2 cases).
4. Mental impairment:
 - The primary challenge is "No support services" (16 cases).
5. Blind individuals:
 - The most significant barrier is "No Braille ballot paper" (8 cases).

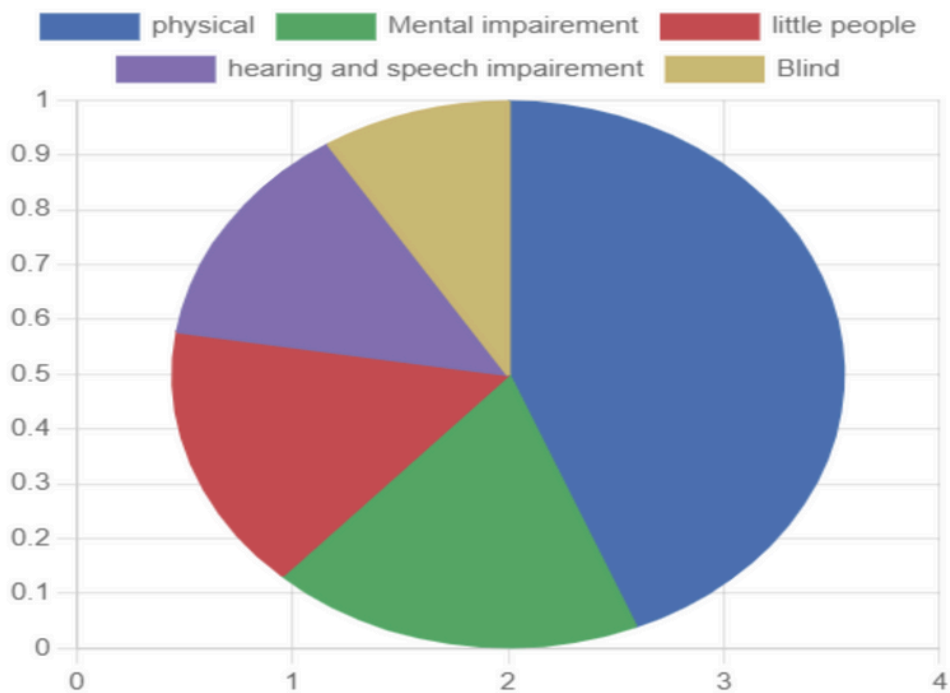
Cross-tabulation of Disability Types and Election Participation Barriers:

	Community perception	Lack of accessible support services	Lack of awareness	Lack of self-advocacy	Lack of self esteem	Long distance	Men with disabilities are highly favored	No Braille ballot paper	No accessibility	No interest
Blind	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	8	0	0
Mental impairment	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Hearing and speech impairment	1	2	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Little people	0	0	6	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Physical	4	0	2	2	1	24	1	0	2	2

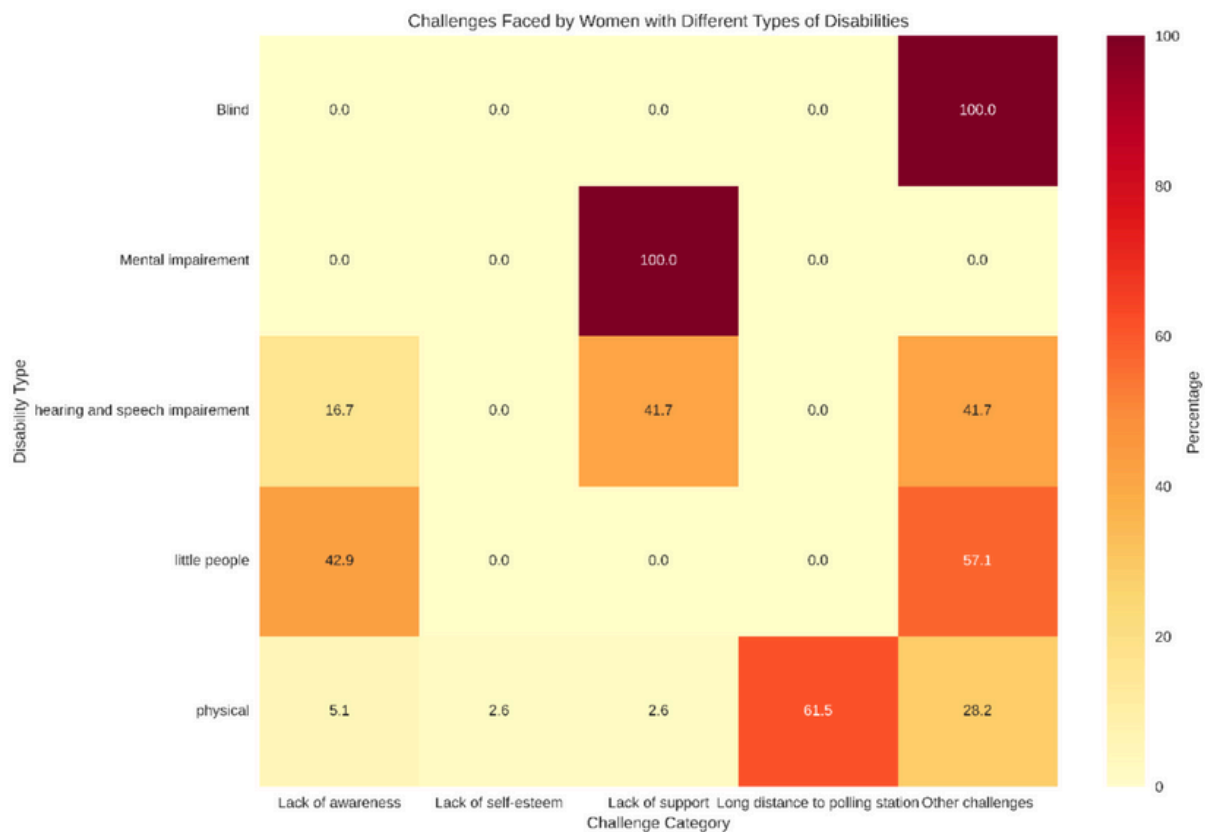
This cross-tabulation provides a detailed breakdown of the specific challenges faced by each disability type. It's clear that different disabilities face unique barriers in accessing polling stations and participating in elections. For example, blind individuals primarily struggle with the lack of Braille ballot papers, while those with physical disabilities are most affected by the long distances to polling stations.

Specific challenges faced by women with different types of disabilities in accessing polling stations, we need to examine the data more closely. Let's start by looking at the distribution of disability types and then explore the reported challenges for each group.

Distribution of Disability Types among Women in the Survey



This pie chart shows us the proportion of different disability types and the specific challenges reported by women with each type of disability.



This heatmap and percentage breakdown reveal several key insights about the challenges faced by women with different types of disabilities:

1. Blind women: 100% reported a lack of awareness as their primary challenge.
2. Women with mental impairments: All of them (100%) cited a lack of self-esteem as their main obstacle.
3. Women with hearing and speech impairments: They face a mix of challenges, with 41.67% reporting a lack of support, another 41.67% facing other unspecified challenges, and 16.67% struggling with a lack of awareness.
4. Little people (women with dwarfism): Their main challenges are split between long distances to polling stations (42.86%) and other unspecified challenges (57.14%).
5. Women with physical disabilities: This group faces the most diverse set of challenges. The majority (61.54%) report other unspecified challenges, while 28.21% struggle with a lack of awareness. A small percentage also face issues with long distances to polling stations (5.13%), lack of self-esteem (2.56%), and lack of support (2.56%).

These results highlight that different types of disabilities present unique challenges in accessing polling stations. The most common issues across all groups appear to be lack of awareness and various unspecified challenges, which may require further investigation. It's also notable that physical accessibility (long distance to polling stations) is a significant issue for little people but less so for other groups.

To improve access to polling stations for women with disabilities, targeted interventions could be designed based on these specific challenges. For example:

1. Awareness campaigns for blind women and those with physical disabilities.
2. Self-esteem building programs for women with mental impairments.
3. Support systems for women with hearing and speech impairments.
4. Improved transportation or mobile polling stations for little people.
5. Further investigation into the "other challenges" faced by various groups, especially those with physical disabilities.

This analysis provides a foundation for developing more inclusive and accessible voting processes for women with different types of disabilities.

9. DISCUSSION

Key Insights

Based on the findings from the baseline survey on young Rwandan women with disabilities in active elective politics, several key insights and implications is derived:

Lack of Knowledge and Awareness

- The limited knowledge and understanding among participants about active elective politics and its importance highlights the need for targeted awareness campaigns and civic education programs.
- Increasing knowledge and awareness can empower young women with disabilities to recognize their political rights and the potential impact of their participation.

Attitudinal Barriers

- Despite positive attitudes towards political participation, perceived barriers and lack of support discourage many young women with disabilities from actively engaging in politics.
- Addressing negative societal attitudes and stereotypes through awareness-raising and sensitization efforts is crucial for creating an enabling environment for political participation.

Accessibility Challenges

- Inaccessible political platforms, events, and materials pose significant barriers to the participation of young Rwandan women with disabilities.
- Ensuring accessibility through the implementation of universal design principles and reasonable accommodations is essential for inclusive political processes.

Lack of Support and Mentorship

- The absence of role models, mentors, and support systems limits the opportunities for young women with disabilities to develop their political leadership skills and aspirations.
- Providing targeted support, mentorship, and capacity-building programs can empower and encourage young women with disabilities to actively participate in politics.

Intersectional Discrimination

- Young Rwandan women with disabilities face intersectional discrimination based on their gender and disability status, which further marginalizes them in the political sphere.
- Addressing intersectional discrimination through an intersectional approach that considers the unique challenges faced by this demographic group is crucial for promoting inclusive political participation.

The key insights from the baseline survey highlight the urgent need for a comprehensive and multifaceted approach to address the barriers and challenges faced by young Rwandan women with disabilities in active elective politics. This includes awareness-raising, accessibility improvements, capacity-building, and targeted support programs, as well as legislative and policy reforms to create an enabling environment for their political participation and representation.

Limitations

Key limitations and barriers faced by young Rwandan women with disabilities in active elective politics include:

Accessibility Barriers

- Inaccessible political platforms, events, and materials that do not accommodate the needs of people with disabilities.
- Lack of accessible transportation and infrastructure to participate in political activities.

Discrimination and Bias

- Experiences of discrimination and bias when trying to participate in political activities.
- Negative attitudes and lack of support from political parties and organizations towards people with disabilities.

Knowledge and Awareness Gaps

- Limited knowledge and understanding about active elective politics and the political process.
- Lack of awareness about the importance and benefits of political participation for people with disabilities.

Lack of Support and Mentorship

- Absence of role models, mentors, and support systems to encourage and empower young women with disabilities to engage in politics.
- Insufficient resources and programs targeted at increasing the political participation of this demographic group.

Socioeconomic Challenges

- Potential socioeconomic barriers, such as limited financial resources and time constraints, which may hinder political engagement.

10. RECOMMENDATIONS

Policy Recommendations

Based on the key findings and insights from the baseline survey, here are some policy-level recommendations to address the barriers and challenges faced by young Rwandan women with disabilities in active elective politics:

Accessibility Legislation and Enforcement

- Enact comprehensive accessibility legislation that mandates the accessibility of political platforms, events, and materials for people with disabilities.
- Establish clear accessibility standards and guidelines, and ensure rigorous enforcement and monitoring mechanisms.
- Allocate dedicated funding for the implementation and maintenance of accessible infrastructure and accommodations.

Anti-Discrimination Policies

- Strengthen anti-discrimination laws and policies to protect people with disabilities, especially women, from discrimination in the political sphere.
- Implement robust complaint mechanisms and accountability measures to address incidents of discrimination and bias.
- Conduct awareness-raising campaigns to challenge negative societal attitudes and stereotypes towards people with disabilities in politics.

Inclusive Political Participation Policies

- Develop and implement policies that mandate the inclusion and representation of people with disabilities, including women, in political decision-making processes.
- Establish quotas or reserved seats for people with disabilities in elected bodies and political party structures.
- Provide financial and logistical support to political parties and organizations to promote the participation of young Rwandan women with disabilities.

Capacity-Building and Mentorship Programs

- Invest in capacity-building and leadership development programs specifically targeted at young Rwandan women with disabilities.
- Establish mentorship and networking initiatives to connect aspiring young women with disabilities with experienced political leaders and role models.
- Ensure the accessibility and inclusiveness of these programs to address the diverse needs of participants.

Intersectional Approach to Policymaking

- Adopt an intersectional approach in the development and implementation of policies related to political participation, ensuring that the unique challenges faced by young Rwandan women with disabilities are addressed.
- Involve representatives from the disability rights movement and women's rights organizations in the policymaking process to ensure their perspectives are reflected.
- Collect and analyze disaggregated data on the political participation of people with disabilities, with a focus on the intersections of gender, disability, and other identity factors.
- These policy-level interventions and changes can help create an enabling environment that empowers and supports young Rwandan women with disabilities to actively engage in the political process, ultimately promoting inclusive democracy and representation.

Program Recommendations

Recommended program-level interventions and strategies to support young Rwandan women with disabilities in active elective politics:

Capacity-Building and Leadership Development Programs

- Develop and implement tailored training programs to build the political knowledge, skills, and leadership capacities of young Rwandan women with disabilities.
- Topics could include political processes, campaign management, public speaking, negotiation, and advocacy.

- Provide mentorship opportunities by pairing aspiring young women with experienced political leaders and role models with disabilities.
- Organize networking and peer-learning events to foster a supportive community and facilitate knowledge-sharing.

Accessibility and Accommodations Support

- Establish a fund or grant program to support young Rwandan women with disabilities in accessing necessary accommodations and assistive technologies for political participation.
- This could include funding for accessible transportation, sign language interpreters, screen readers, or other assistive devices.
- Collaborate with organizations of persons with disabilities (OPDs) to identify and address the specific accessibility needs of participants.

Political Engagement and Advocacy Initiatives

- Implement programs that encourage and facilitate the active engagement of young Rwandan women with disabilities in political activities, such as voter registration drives, candidate forums, and policy advocacy campaigns.
- Provide training and resources on effective advocacy strategies to empower participants to advocate for their rights and interests.
- Organize awareness-raising campaigns to challenge negative societal attitudes and promote the political participation of young women with disabilities.

Inclusive Political Party and Candidate Support

- Develop and implement programs to support political parties and candidates in becoming more inclusive and accessible for young Rwandan women with disabilities.
- This could include training on disability inclusion, accessibility audits, and the provision of reasonable accommodations.
- Encourage political parties to actively recruit and support young women with disabilities as candidates and party representatives.

Intersectional Collaboration and Networking

- Foster collaboration and networking between the disability rights movement, the women's rights movement, and other relevant stakeholders to address the intersectional challenges faced by young Rwandan women with disabilities.
- Facilitate joint advocacy efforts and the development of inclusive policies and programs.
- Encourage the participation of young Rwandan women with disabilities in existing women's and disability rights organizations and networks.
- These program-level interventions and strategies aim to empower, support, and enable young Rwandan women with disabilities to actively participate in the political process, ultimately promoting inclusive democracy and representation.

11. CONCLUSION

Key Takeaways:

- Participants had limited knowledge about active elective politics and its potential benefits for them and their communities.
- Most participants faced significant barriers to political participation, including inaccessible platforms, discrimination, lack of support, and socioeconomic challenges.
- Participants reported experiencing bias and discouragement when trying to engage in political activities.
- Political parties and organizations were not seen as being inclusive or supportive of young women with disabilities.

Overall Significance:

- The baseline survey highlights the urgent need to address the barriers and challenges faced by young Rwandan women with disabilities in order to promote inclusive democracy and representation.
- Empowering this demographic group to actively participate in politics can lead to policies and programs that better address their specific needs and concerns.
- Increased participation of young women with disabilities in the political process can serve as a catalyst for broader social change and disability rights advocacy.
- The findings from the survey can inform the development of targeted interventions and policy reforms to create an enabling environment for the political participation of young Rwandan women with disabilities.

The baseline survey provides critical evidence-based data to support advocacy efforts and guide the implementation of inclusive policies and programs. By addressing the barriers identified in the survey, Rwanda can take significant strides towards ensuring that young women with disabilities have an equal voice and representation in the political sphere.

12. REFERENCES

1. The blog post "Women's Education and Political Participation" by Donatilla Kanimba from the Rwanda Union of the Blind, which addresses the barriers to political participation faced by women and girls with disabilities.
2. The UNDP article "Democracy is about people; democracy is about participation", which highlights Rwanda's progress in women's political representation and UNDP's work to support women's political empowerment in the country.
3. The master's thesis "Women's Participation in Parliament The Case of Rwanda" by Eszter Zaborszky , which provides a broader analysis of women's political representation in the Rwandan parliament.

13. APPENDICES

1. Data Collection Instruments
2. Additional Data