

SOCIETY FOR SPECIAL PERSONS®



Society for Special Persons (SSP) is established in March 2007. SSP mainly focuses on Accessible & Inclusive community for the Empowerment of people with Disabilities It is registered with Social Welfare Department under "Voluntary Social Welfare Agencies, Registration & Control Ordinance

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ACCESSIBLE PAKISTAN

(SSP-Campaign)

Activity Report of SSP- Multan, **under ACCESSIBLE PAKISTAN Campaign.**

GENERAL ELECTIONS 2013,

- 1. FIRST ACCESSIBLE POLLING STATION NA 149, Multan**
- 2. ACCESSIBILITY AUDIT**

Reported By, Zahida Hameed
(President, Society for Special Persons, Multan)

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Introduction:

In modern democracies, people elect their representatives through the process of elections. Electoral success depends, along with other things, on high voter turnout. In other words, greater participation of people in elections means better results and the emergence of better political leaders. In developing countries of the world, normally, people are too occupied with winning their daily bread to bother about who gets into the corridors of power. Casting a ballot can mean waiting for hours in queues. In the face of stringent economic conditions, they consider it a waste of time to go and cast their votes. Whatever the reasons may be for low turnouts, it goes without saying that ballot is the means by which people can bring to power people who can deliver. Amid all this din and clamor, we forget to make elections accessible to Persons with Disabilities (PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES (PWDS). Inaccessible elections leave out Persons with disabilities (PWDS) and they are unable to express their views, and to show their power of voting.

On May 11, 2013 SOCIETY FOR SPECIAL PERSONS tried to make special arrangements (Accessible Polling Stations) to set a model to ensure the active participation of the persons with disabilities in the General Elections 2013. Society for Special Persons held meetings with foreign and national teams of observers. It organized a dialogue on the political rights of the disabled in which people from various walks of life participated and stressed that PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES (PWDS) should be provided facilities during the elections. Representatives of political parties and the election commission also participated in the dialogue and assured that the recommendations of the dialogue will be considered in designing accessible elections.

Proceeding

SOCIETY FOR SPECIAL PERSONS Multan- Pakistan arranged in two teams to observe the elections. One team was headed by Nadir Khan, the Vice President of the NGO. He worked from dawn to dusk and provided help to the disabled in getting access to the polling stations; the other team was headed by Zahida Hameed (president).



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There were no availability of wheel chair for Persons with disabilities (PWDS) in the polling stations and no one told Presiding Officer to how he attend the person who is in wheel chair and stairs were there instead of ramp for Persons with disabilities (PWDS). Many Persons with disabilities (PWDS) did not cast their vote due to inaccessible arrangements. There was no list of registered Persons with disabilities (PWDS) with presiding officer and observer could not know to know that how many Persons with disabilities (PWDS) are going to cast their vote and at which polling station.

1. Accessible Polling Station (Model)

SOCIETY FOR SPECIAL PERSONS had made special arrangement to ensure the smooth participation of persons with disabilities in the Election 2013 NA 149, Polling station 245 & 246, we utilized our own resources made, model polling station for the disabled voter we built ramp, brought wheelchairs to assist Persons with disabilities (Pwds) voters and facilitated disabled voters through attendant services.

- Wheelchair
- Ramp
- Attendant Services
- Visual impaired Persons
- Sign Language Interpreter for hearing impaired Persons with Disabilities

Team One

1	Nadir Khan	NA 149 Polling Station 245, 246 Multan
2	Rana Arif	
3	Yasir Hameed	
4	Arif Anwar	
5	Saluman Waqas	
6	M. Shahid	
7	Faisal	



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Polling starts at 8:00 A.M. at the canal department office. Two teams of SOCIETY FOR SPECIAL PERSONS members arrived there at 7:45 A.M. with the passage of time voters' start coming to



the polling station. First team had list of Persons with disabilities (PWDS) who want to cast vote they have 3 vehicle and they provide them pick and drop facility from their houses

to the polling both. Other team

was in

the polling station and they provide them the facility of guidance and accessibility. SOCIETY FOR SPECIAL PERSONS's members made this polling station accessible through ramps on stairs and they also made ballot box accessible .they provide attairder ship from vehicle, provided them wheel chair and took them in the polling station and gave them all attendance they needed i.e (the physical handicap persons) . When any visual impaired person arrived to the polling station with first team than the second team took them and gave them complete attendance. They provided them in the polling station and helped them through complete procedure in casting their vote to their decided candidate. When any hearing impaired person arrived to the polling station, our members provided them a sign language expert attairder, who help them in complete procedure to cast their vote.



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List of the Persons with disabilities (PWDS) voters facilities by the SOCIETY FOR SPECIAL PERSONS members, NA 149 Polling Station 245, 246 Multan is given below:

Sr. #	Name	Contact Information	N.I.C No.
1	Zarina Khanam	Gelani colony (061-4545089)	36302-4955210-8
2	Musarat Khanam	Shadman Colony old bhawalpur road Multan	36302-0336324-0
3	Dr.Ubaid-Ullah	0323-6263883	36302-0333301-5
4	M.Akhter	0333-6107462	36302-1790179-1
5	Shahzad Ahmad	0321-6363030	36302-6524932-7
6	Aqeel Abbas	0346-7111977	36302-7025089-3
7	Farhat Mustafa	H.no. 588 Altaf town tariq road P/O nawah sher multan	36302-0482364-7
8	M.Tariq	Tariq road H.no.25/2 , street no.2 altaf town multan	36302-9173680-1
9	Mansab Arif	17-Altaf town tariq road Multan	36302-5877219-6
10	Abdul Azeez	H.no.F-7176/9 dhoop street district jail road multan	36302-4350987-9
11	Muzafar Ali	Tariq road h.no.17 muhala altaf town cant Multan	36302-4719123-1
12	Javed Fazal	Abdali road H.no.7 muhala sheesh mehal park Multan	36302-5460157-1
13	Hameeda Begum	Old bhawalpur road H.no.2523/9 muhala shadman colony Multan	36302-6301524-0
14	Malik Shabeer	Shadman , Multan	36302-7447818-9
15	M.Arif	H.No.26/2 tariq road street 3 muhala altaf town Multan	36302-1596709-3
	Abdul Majeed	Nishter collage road gali no.3 muhala dhoop sari Multan	36302-0535231-1
17	Ghullam Mohi-ud-Din	H.no.24-D ,W.No.9 Altaf town P/O nawan shaher Multan	36302-4809053-9
18	Malik Abdul Ghafaar	Jail road ,H.No,2543/14,muhala dhoop sari Multan	36302-7979173-1

Conclusion:

1. Society for Special Persons provided the complete guide line to the Persons with disabilities (PWDS) to cast their vote
2. SOCIETY FOR SPECIAL PERSONS provided wheel chair facility to the Persons with disabilities (PWDS) and insured their vote
3. SOCIETY FOR SPECIAL PERSONS provided attendance to the 2 visually impaired persons and ensured their vote casting

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4. SOCIETY FOR SPECIAL PERSONS provided sign language attainer to the 3 hearing impaired persons and ensured their vote casting
5. SOCIETY FOR SPECIAL PERSONS made polling station completely accessible for all four categories of PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES (PWDS)
6. Through the SOCIETY FOR SPECIAL PERSONS struggles such a large number of Persons with disabilities (PWDS) casted their votes

❖ Accessibility audit for persons with disabilities

Society for Special Persons has conducted Accessibility audit for persons with disabilities under the supervision of Election Commission of Pakistan with the support of **Special Talent Exchange Programme (STEP) Islamabad** and **CBID Network Pakistan**. They provided us Election Observer Cards.

S#	Name
1	Zahida Hameed
2	Syed Ajaz Ahmad Shah
3	Asif Iqbal
4	Ahmad Yaar
5	Adnan Nesar
6	Tahir Shahzad (Visually Impaired)
7	M. Arshad (Visually Impaired)

Teams 2 tried to focus on the following aspects of the participation of Persons with disabilities (PWDS) in the elections 2013:

1. Physical Barriers
2. Attitudinal barriers
3. Informational barriers
4. Legislative barriers
5. Physical Accessibility to the Polling Station
6. Accessibility of the ballot box
7. Secrecy issues for person with visual impairment during casting vote with the help of assistance
8. Attitude of polling station staff
9. Other barriers such as transportation and reaching to polling station
10. The number of disabled who casted Vote

List of the Persons with disabilities (PWDS) voters facilities by the Society for Special Persons members, different Polling Station Multan is given below:

S#	Polling Station Name	Name of Voter with Disabilities	Nature of Disabilities
1	District Health Development Centre	Anam Asif	Polio
2	Government Girls Elementary School Itehad Colony	Subika Adnan	Polio
3	Government Girls High School number 2, walayatbal	Samina	Muscular Dystrophy
4	Government Degree college for Women, Shah Rukne Alam Colony NA 150	Sadia shazad	Person with Visually Impaired
5	Government Girls High School number 2, walayatbal	Zahida Hameed	Polio
6	M/C primary school Farooq Pura NA-150 Multan	M Akeel	Person with Visually Impaired
7	Chak BB 549 Machi wala Burey Wala, Vehari	Sued Intiaz Huasain Shah	Person with Visually Impaired
8	NA -149 MB Girls high school Chah Bord wala		Person with Visually Impaired
9	Wapda office Chah Bord wala		Person with Visually Impaired
10	Nusrat ul islam primary school Chah Bord wala		Person with Visually Impaired
11	Bukhari school No;1 Boys	Hafiz Muhammad Ashraf	Person with Visually Impaired
12	Bukhari school for girls		Person with Visually Impaired
13	Qasim bella primary school for girls		Person with Visually Impaired
14	Government Degree college for Women, Shah Rukne Alam Colony NA 150	Tahir Shazad	Person with Visually Impaired
15	NA 49 PP 197	M Arshad	Person with Visually Impaired
16	Government Girls High School number 2, walayatbal		Polio
17	Labor Office near anti corruption office NA 149	Arif Anwar	Polio
18	Government Boys Elementary School V Block New Multan	Yasir Hameed	Polio

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19	Labor office, near Ameerabad Park,	Arif Anwar	Polio
20	Union Council Office Piran Ghaib road, Multan	Rana Arif	Polio
21	Government Walayat Hussain	Nadir Khan	Polio
22	Government Elementary Boys School New Multan	Adana Nisar	Polio
23	Government Elementary Boys School New Multan	Asif Iqbal	Polio
24	Govt M C Primary School Farooq Pur	M Rafi	Polio
25	Government Johar High School, Pul Shedi Lal.	Shahid Malik	Polio
26	Government Primary School, V Block New Multan	Ahmad yar	Polio
27	Government Primary School Bo e Wala	Tanveer Ahmad	Person with Hearing Impaired
28	Wapda Office Khanewal road	Muhammad Arshad	Person with Hearing Impaired
29	NA-148, PP-202	Ameer Hamza 36303-2435878-3	Persons with Physically Challenged
30	NA-148, PP-202	Muhammad Ahmad 36303-0732055-1	Persons with Physically Challenged
31	NA-148, PP-202	Safdar Huaain	Persons with Physically Challenged
32	NA-148, PP-202	Muhammad Azal 36303-5389829	Persons with Physically Challenged
33	NA-148, PP-202	M.Rafiq 36303-5504242-3	Persons with Physically Challenged
34	NA 149, PP 194, Vocational center Writers Colony	M Naveed	Persons with Physically Challenged
35	NA 149, PP 194, Vocational center Writers Colony	Gulshan Shahzadi	Persons with Physically Challenged
36	NA 148, Govt Boys High School 2 Sameja Bad	Naveed Shahd	Persons with Physically Challenged

The teams included people with hearing and sight impairment. The teams arranged three vehicles with self help bases. They had four wheelchairs in the vehicles. They went to homes of various Persons with disabilities (PWDS) and brought them in their vehicles to polling stations. When they visited various polling centers, they came to know that the officials had no knowledge about the number of disabled people living in their constituency. There were no ramps and no wheelchairs. Some polling stations had placed the ballot box on the first floor of the buildings, with no ramps leading to it. Therefore, Persons with disabilities (PWDS) could not access the ballot boxes in such buildings. No guidance had been



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provided to the presiding officers of the polling stations about how to serve PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES (PWDS).

They had no knowledge of how many disabled voters had been registered in their constituency.



The volunteers realized that the election officials should develop data about the whereabouts of the Persons with disabilities (PWDS) so that volunteers can easily help them come to polling stations. They also realized the importance of setting up a

communication centre where the problems of the disabled could be communicated.



The volunteers of the NGO also talked to the election officials and requested them to improve election accessibility for the disabled.

They've not only observed the provision of disabled-friendly facilities but they've also set up a model polling station where they provided ramps and wheelchairs for PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES (PWDS)

At this polling center, they've invited Persons with disabilities (PWDS) to do their part for the nation despite their disabilities. Thus, a good number of Persons with disabilities (PWDS) have turned up on the polling station to vote for their favorite candidates. Kind-hearted volunteers have provided them with wheelchairs.



With the help of ramps, the persons with disabilities could smoothly wheel through the various procedures required for ballot.

Zahida Hameed said, 'At the model polling station for the disabled, there are people that who had never cast their votes in life. This is an important day in the history of the country because today the disabled have not only casting their votes for the first time in life but have helped other Persons with disabilities (PWDS) in casting their votes at



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the model polling station. She stressed that the disabled should have their representatives in the parliament of the country because the disabled are also part of the society.

The NGO officials stress that the disabled can influence the formation of government in the country through their votes. The election officials should develop data about the disabled. The election commission should provide resources to the volunteers and training to its staff on how to handle the disabled when they come out to vote. This model polling station was the first 'drop of rain'. They hope that election officials will set up similar polling stations for Persons with disabilities (PWDS) across the country in future.

The NGO representatives assert that Persons with disabilities (PWDS) are actually 'uniquely baled' people. But, most of us fail to see how this is so. Although some parts of their bodies are paralyzed, it does not mean that they are not sensible enough to cast their votes. These people do go through difficulties. They have their opinions that should be brought forth. If they have no say in the political process of the country, their suffering is likely to be multiplied. They have a right to ease of voting and we should try, in countries where this issue is present or prevalent, to improve the voting experience for the disabled. The same officials maintain that elections can be made more accessible with new Web technologies, through the use of which, disabled individuals could vote from the comfort of their homes.

1. Accessibility is largest barrier in Pakistan, the polling stations were not accessible for a



PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES (PWDS) but if included help of two to three persons from society then yes, we can say that the polling stations were accessible.

2. Their attitude towards Persons with disabilities (PWDS) is becoming positive and this is what we observed in

polling stations, the positive approach of presiding officers, the cooperation of policemen and guards standing at the gates really filled up the gap of accessibility issue.

3. Informational barrier hasn't been of concern because television is the best mode of information that lives in our houses and our media has done this job of spreading information remarkably well.



The Persons with disabilities (PWDS), we talked to in polling stations were fully aware of where to go and what to do already, they didn't have any doubt about voting criteria

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and methodology in their minds. Above all, the election officers in polling stations were also helpful in this aspect and they provided their full support to PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES (PWDS) as the request by SSP.

Despite of all the barriers and obstacles, we were astonished to see that a lot of Persons with disabilities (PWDS) participated in Elections and they proved

to be an important and integral part of our society..

CASE STUDY

Anam,

A women with Disabilities voter said that she used to see her friends and members of her family casting their votes. But nobody ever asked her if she wanted to cast her vote. With the help of the NGO volunteers, she was able to cast her vote for the first time in life



Samina

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Bibi **(Muscular Dystrophy)**

Belongs to Muhallah Ghulam Abad and casted her vote for first time in her life because nobody help her to for casting vote and to get him to polling station. She is member of SOCIETY FOR SPECIAL PERSONS and her Organization helped her to make ease to access to polling station and casted vote and feel pleasure in Government girls number 2 school Walayatabad...



Subika Qureshi is also a woman with Disabilities and she has victimized by Polio. SOCIETY FOR SPECIAL PERSONS team went to Subika's home to take him with them to polling station (Govt Girls Middle School Itihad Colony) for casting vote. At the polling station there

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were no arrangement to attend the Special Persons properly and neither availability of wheel chair nor ramp.



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Zahida Hameed

Is women with disabilities and Election Observer from Election Commission of Pakistan and casted his vote.



Nadir Khan

Is a person with disabilities casted his vote and feel very confident.



Asif Iqbal

Is a person with disabilities and Election Observer from Election Commission of Pakistan and casted his vote.

Adnan Nisar
Is a person with disabilities casted his vote and feel very confident.



Media Coverage

Geo coverage it Live, Saama, PTV, Hero Channel, and At 11:00 P.M workers of electronic and

print media arrived at that polling station and take the coverage of this complete procedure. President of SOCIETY FOR SPECIAL PERSONS Miss. Zahida Hameed address media and told them about the progress of SOCIETY FOR SPECIAL PERSONS in the casting of vote of PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES (PWDS)s. She informed them that SOCIETY FOR SPECIAL PERSONS is taking solid steps to ensure the



presence of Persons with disabilities (PWDS) in this polling. She told about the whole procedure of this polling and also informs that SOCIETY FOR SPECIAL PERSONS is the first one who takes this step for PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES (PWDS)s. SOCIETY FOR SPECIAL PERSONS made this polling station accessible first time in the history of Pakistan. This polling station is the role model for who Pakistan. This polling station model will help in future to make polling station accessible in Pakistan.



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Tribune Express (This Media Coverage supported by Special Talent Exchange Programme (STEP) Islamabad. This is what exactly happened in Pakistan in the general elections that were held on May 11, 2013. A news report by Sehrish Wasif of the Express Tribune (May 15, 2013) highlighted the problems Persons with disabilities (Pwds) had to face at polling stations. She said that the latter were



Marginalising the disabled

Lack of facilities discouraged PWDs from casting votes

In some instances polling booths were inaccessible, no wheelchairs were available

SEHRISH WASIF
ISLAMABAD

The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) violated its strategic goal by not making polling stations accessible to persons with disabilities (PWDs) across the country, depriving them of their legal right to vote due to which their turnout remained less than one per cent.

Civil society representatives who observed elections from a disability perspective told *The Express Tribune* that before the general election 2013 the ECP had assured them that all polling stations would be made accessible to PWDs

“We utilised our own resources and made model polling stations for the disabled. We built ramps and brought wheelchairs to assist PWDs

Society for Special Persons
President Zahida Qureshi

under its strategic goal number 14, “Marginalised Groups including Women, Minorities and Persons with Disabilities” aimed to ensure their participation in the

electoral process.

They said the majority of polling booths lacked facilities such as wheelchairs, ramps and staff to assist persons with sight or hearing impairment.

Zulqarnain Asghar, advocacy and communications manager at Initiative for Raising Awareness, Development and Assimilation of the Handicapped said a polling booth was established on the first floor of Asif Public School, Rawalpindi in NA-52 which was inaccessible for PWDs.

Another polling booth set

up in Aisha Lasani Model School Rawalpindi had no ramp and a polling station set in Asif Public School was located in a very congested place where it was difficult to move about in a wheelchair.

Sharing his experience, he said the returning officer at Asif Public School was not aware of the special computerised national identity cards for PWDs. “Some PWDs who were first-time voters were deprived of their right due to lack of facilities,” he said.

Special Talent Exchange Programme (STEP) President Atif Sheikh said his team

MONITORING

80

disabled people observed the election process at 139 polling stations from a disability prospective in 15 districts

visited polling booths established in some areas of C-Sector and observed that they were all inaccessible to PWDs.

He said STEP in collabora-

tion with other NGOs formed a team of 80 people who all were suffering with various forms of disabilities and observed the election process at 139 polling stations from a disability prospective in 15 districts.

Society for Special Persons President Zahida Qureshi, who is based in Multan, said, “We utilised our own resources and made model polling stations for the disabled. We built ramps and brought wheelchairs to assist persons with physical disabilities.” She said none of the polling booth she and her team visited were disabled-friendly.

not made accessible to persons with disabilities. They ‘lacked facilities such as wheelchairs, ramps and staff to assist persons with sight or hearing impairment’. This deprived them of ‘their legal right to vote due to which their turnout remained less than one per cent’



Suggestion from Persons with Disabilities Voters

1. There should be legislation for rights of Special People and their active playing role in society.
2. List of disabled persons should be with Presiding Officer in elections.
3. There should be information cell for Persons with disabilities (PWDS) in elections.
4. Communication gape also creates hurdles, to remove this problem there should be a person for attending Persons with disabilities (PWDS) and help them to casting their vote.
5. There should be complaints hearing person at polling stations.
6. ECP have to arrange meetings with Persons with disabilities (PWDS) before one Month of elections for make ensure accessible polling station.

Expected Outcomes

1. To take this step in history of Pakistan will be written in golden words because the disabled are in the activity of vote casting.
2. Most important is that the disabled persons are being attended by the persons same (disabled) like them.
3. Many Persons with disabilities (PWDS) casted their vote with help of their friends.
4. Media coverage is a clicking sign to Election Commission and as well to Govt. of Pakistan to take attention for Special people for vote casting.
5. Persons with disabilities (PWDS) observers also took part in elections to make elections easy and accessible for other PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES (PWDS).
6. Disabled people first time participated in election as an election observer that is good sign for the empowerment of disabled people
7. A large number of Persons with disabilities sensitized their political rights, and they casted their votes.
8. Society for Special Persons set a good example of self reliance to develop a Accessible polling Station as a Model for voters with Disabilities and community.
9. People (Male/Female) were sensitized and aware about the accessibility of Persons with Disabilities as the result of this model polling station organized by Society for Special Persons