Audits on Election Accessibility for Persons with Disabilities in Haiti

June 2016
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Acknowledgments

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- Centre National de Défense des Droits des Handicapés (CNDDH)
- Foyer d’Amor
- Le Centre Saint-Vincent pour Enfants Handicapés
- Organisation des Enfants Démunis et Handicapés (OEDHH)
- Organisation des Handicapés en Action pour les Progrès (OHAP)
- Organisation Haïtienne pour la Réhabilitation des Handicapés (OHRA)
- Réseau Associatif National pour l’Intégration des Personnes Handicapées (RANIPH)
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- Société Haïtienne d’Aide aux Aveugles (SHAA)

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About IFES

The International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) supports citizens’ right to participate in free and fair elections. Our independent expertise strengthens electoral systems and builds local capacity to deliver sustainable solutions.

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- Providing technical assistance to election officials
- Empowering the under-represented to participate in the political process
- Applying field-based research to improve the electoral cycle

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### Acronyms

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<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Definition</th>
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<tr>
<td>AGENDA</td>
<td>General Election Network for Disability Access</td>
</tr>
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<td>BEC</td>
<td>Bureaux Electoraux Communaux (Communal Electoral Office)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BED</td>
<td>Bureaux Electoraux Départementaux (Departmental Electoral Office)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BSEIPH</td>
<td>Bureau du Secrétaire d’Etat à l’Intégration des Personnes Handicappées</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CEP</td>
<td>Conseil Electoral Provisoire (Provisional Electoral Council)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CRPD</td>
<td>United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities</td>
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<tr>
<td>CSO</td>
<td>Civil society organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DPO</td>
<td>Disabled people’s organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IFES</td>
<td>International Foundation for Electoral Systems</td>
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<td>USAID</td>
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## Terms to know

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Term</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Accessible</strong></td>
<td>A location, building, work environment, service or program that is easy to approach, enter, operate, participate and/or use in a safe and independent way by persons with disabilities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Accessible formats</strong></td>
<td>Print, audio or visual information that is accessible to persons with disabilities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Assistive tool</strong></td>
<td>A device that aids completion of a task or other function that might otherwise be difficult or impossible. An example of an assistive device is a magnifying glass or a tactile ballot guide.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Braille</strong></td>
<td>A writing system comprised of raised dots sometimes used by people who are blind or have low vision. In Haiti, braille literacy is low, so many persons who are blind or have low vision recommend audio or tactile formats.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Disability</strong></td>
<td>In Haiti, Article 2 of the <em>Loi Portant sur L’intégration des Personnes Handicapées</em> defines a person with a disability as a person who has an ongoing physical, psychosocial, intellectual or sensory condition (or “incapacity”) that reduces their capacity to perform physical, sensory, cognitive or psychological tasks. It is important to understand that Haiti’s disability law emphasizes that “disability”, in its broadest sense, is a result of limitations in activities or participation in society, not of an individual with a condition.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Disabled persons’ organization (DPO)</strong></td>
<td>A civil society organization that is run by and for persons with disabilities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Easy-to-read</strong></td>
<td>Text where the content, language and illustrations are simplified for ease of use by persons with low literacy skills, who are non-native speakers of a language, or who have intellectual disabilities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Inclusion</strong></td>
<td>When persons with disabilities are involved in an activity, service or event on an equal basis with other citizens, including leadership positions, instead of just having accommodations that might segregate persons with disabilities from other citizens.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Intellectual disability</strong></td>
<td>Term used when there are limits to a person’s ability to learn at an expected level and function in daily life. Examples of an intellectual disability include Down syndrome and some types of autism.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Psychosocial disability</strong></td>
<td>A condition that affects cognition, emotion and/or behavior. Two examples of psychosocial disabilities are Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and bipolar disorder.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tactile</strong></td>
<td>Raised symbols, dots or letters that can be used when people are not fluent in braille.</td>
</tr>
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</table>
I. Introduction

Haiti has been a democracy since 1987, after the adoption of a new Constitution. Though it has encountered profound political and electoral challenges in the past three decades, it perseveres and continues to revise and reform its political processes. As these changes occur, it is an ideal opportunity for its election management body, disabled persons’ organizations (DPOs), and other election stakeholders to consider the needs of its traditionally marginalized citizens, such as persons with disabilities, to ensure that election procedures and processes are accessible and inclusive of all Haitian citizens from the beginning.

Using international guidelines established by the World Health Organization and the World Bank, there are an estimated 1.5 million men, women and children with disabilities in Haiti. Many of these disabilities were acquired as a result of a devastating earthquake that occurred on January 12, 2010, though in the absence of a new population census or statistical studies so far, the full impact remains unknown.

Significant societal, economic, linguistic and legal barriers mean that Haitians with disabilities are usually far behind their peers in accessing basic services and rights, such as the right to political participation. In Haiti, it is not uncommon for men and women with disabilities to be excluded from electoral registry or unable to access information about when, where and how to participate in elections. As a result, many persons with disabilities are essentially barred from political life. They vote at a much lower rate than persons without disabilities in Haiti. They are also far less likely to run for office, be a poll worker or be an election observer.

This is contrary to several laws that Haiti has agreed to uphold that protect the right of persons with disabilities to an inclusive and accessible election. For example, Haiti’s Electoral Decree of 2015 states that election materials should be available in braille and in sign language, allows persons with physical disabilities to choose their own assistants, and offers a reduced registration fee for political parties where persons with disabilities are at least 10% of their membership. In 2012, Haiti passed a disability rights law, the Loi Portant sur L’intégration des Personnes Handicapées, in which equal access to political processes is underlined as a priority in Articles 58 and 59.
Since 2009, Haiti has also been a party to the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), a landmark international disability rights treaty. Article 29 guarantees that persons with disabilities have the right to participate in political processes, and that procedures and materials should be made accessible. It is also important to note that the rights described in the CRPD apply to persons with different types of disabilities, including persons with visual, hearing, psychosocial, physical and intellectual disabilities; all should have equal recognition before the law (Article 12).

To assess the extent to which disability rights laws have yet to be fully implemented in Haiti, a series of parliamentary and presidential elections held in 2015 provided a timely opportunity for DPO representatives to conduct election access audits, enabling DPO representatives to identify both positive actions and areas for improvement. With assistance from the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES), a pilot audit was initiated for the first Election Day in August 2015, and later expanded into a national audit during elections held in October 2015.

Treaties and Laws Protecting the Right to Political Participation by Haitians with Disabilities

- Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Article 21)
- International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (Article 25)
- UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (Articles 12 and 29)
- Inter-American Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Persons with Disabilities (Article 3)
- Loi Portant sur L’intégration des Personnes Handicapées (Articles 58 and 59)
- Electoral Decree of 2015 (Articles 9, 92.1, 115, 157, 157.1, and 157.2)
II. August 2015 Parliamentary Elections

On August 9, 2015 Haiti held its first round of parliamentary elections, with a second round planned in October. Citizens were asked to elect members to the Senate and to the Chamber of Deputies. During the parliamentary elections, a pilot team of 30 Haitians with disabilities conducted Haiti’s first election access audit at 15 polling stations in the capital of Port-au-Prince. Auditors scrutinized schools and marketplaces selected as polling stations by the Provisional Electoral Council (Conseil Électoral Provisoire, or CEP) in order to determine how accessible and inclusive voting procedures were for persons with disabilities on Election Day.

II.1. Methodology

*Data collection.*

Election access audit data was collected using a short-term audit checklist that was initially developed by the General Election Network for Disability Access (AGENDA) and then contextualized by Haitian DPO representatives and disability rights leaders in July 2015. For example, a question about parking lots was omitted, as they are neither common nor regulated with consistency in Haiti. At the suggestion of DPO leaders, the final checklist was made available in both French and Haitian Creole (or *kreyòl*).

*Recruiting auditors.*

Disability rights representatives from more than 10 DPOs headquartered in Port-au-Prince were invited to attend an introductory meeting in July 2015. Many who attended this meeting volunteered to either join the audit or assist in recruiting auditors from their networks, eventually accounting for 15 auditors. An additional 15 were recruited through the office of the Secretary of State for the Integration of Persons with Disabilities (*Bureau du Secrétaire d’Etat à l’Intégration des Personnes Handicapées*, or BSEIPH), after BSEIPH joined as an audit partner. Of the 30 auditors, 22 had a physical disability, 7 had a visual disability and 1 had a hearing disability. Fifteen auditors were men, while 15 auditors were women.

*Training auditors.*

All auditors were asked to join a training held on July 31 at the BSEIPH office in Port-au-Prince. The concept and purpose of an election access audit was introduced and reviewed, as well as identifying core standards for accessibility such as the appropriate gradient of access ramps. A briefing held on August 7, two days before the election, allowed IFES staff to explain in detail any Election Day procedures, particularly policies related to security and how access needs would be met. For example, auditors would each be provided with a phone card to ensure they had enough...
minutes to reach emergency contacts if needed. Buses would be provided to pick up and drop off auditors at designated points near auditors’ homes. Auditors were also reminded to work together as a team to complete the checklist.

**Audit teams.**

Auditors were paired together to create 15 audit teams. For security, IFES also assigned all of its local staff as team supervisors to be available to address security or other concerns that might arise on Election Day, and to coordinate transport for auditors. Each audit team had at least one supervisor.

**Audit locations.**

Polling centers were chosen to represent a diverse range of city locations, but yet be close enough that supervisors could retrieve auditors quickly in the case of a security concern. Audit teams were deployed to 15 pre-selected polling centers in the *communes* (neighborhoods) of Carrefour, Delmas, Kenskof, Port-au-Prince (downtown), Pétion-Ville and Tabarre.

**II.2. Audit Findings**

From morning to early afternoon on August 9, auditors watched amid noise and crowds, tracking how many voters and staff were persons with disabilities and quietly examining the physical structure of the polling stations, many spotting common issues such as uneven stairs and floors, extreme difficulty reading the voting rolls, dimly-lit voting rooms with little privacy and ballot boxes that were placed too high to reach for some voters.

Physical accessibility was a profound concern. Nearly all of the polling centers had uneven outdoor grounds, making it difficult for voters using wheelchairs or mobility devices, or who are blind or have low vision, to navigate confidently. Eight polling centers were reported to have sidewalks or walkways that could allow a person using a wheelchair or who has a visual disability to safely access the main entrance, but there were usually additional obstacles. For example, at least one polling center had a sidewalk cluttered with debris, cars or the wares of street vendors. Five polling centers required visitors to climb stairs to enter the main building, and of these, only two had handrails of any kind.
Of the persons with disabilities that arrived to vote, most had physical disabilities. At eleven polling centers, auditors noted the presence of voters with physical disabilities (but no voters using a wheelchair were present). Auditors at four polling centers identified the presence of at least one voter with a visual disability; of those, in three polling centers they noted that CEP poll workers permitted an assistant to accompany the voter with a visual disability. At the remaining fourth polling center, one poll worker refused to allow a voter with a visual disability to have an assistant. At two polling centers, auditors noticed older persons with mild hearing disabilities, but no voters who were deaf and used sign language were observed. No persons with intellectual or psychosocial disabilities were observed voting.
Was there at least one voter with a hearing disability at your polling center? 

Yes  No

Was there at least one voter with an intellectual or psychosocial disability at your polling center? 

Yes  No

Disability representation amongst CEP staff and poll workers on Election Day was non-existent at the 15 polling centers. However, at one polling center auditors identified a voter who is a member of a political party and who had a physical disability.

During Election Day, no audit team noticed any accessible materials at polling centers. For example, there was no audio version of the ballot, or a tactile ballot guide that voters with visual disabilities could use. Instructions for how to complete and cast a ballot were not available in accessible formats such as sign language or easy-to-read.

At a debriefing held four days after the election at the BSEIPH’s office, auditors expressed their surprise at discovering the full extent of the inaccessibility of the voting places they visited. As observer Luckner Médélus noted, “It is one thing to hear about it and be told about it, but it is another thing to see it for yourself!”
III. October 2015 Parliamentary and Presidential Elections

On October 25, 2015 Haitian citizens visited the polls for the second round of the parliamentary elections and the first round of the presidential and municipal elections. In 22 constituencies, a first round of parliamentary elections were held as they were cancelled during the August election. Building on the success of the pilot audit held during the parliamentary elections in August, a second audit was expanded nationwide to six different Haitian cities for the country’s legislative and presidential elections held on October 25, 2015.

III.1. Methodology

*Data Collection.*

Election access audit data was collected via the short-term checklist that previously adapted and used by auditors during the August election. The questions remained the same for consistency, and the checklist was made available in both French and Haitian Creole.

*Recruiting auditors.*

To expand the pilot audit nationwide, IFES collaborated with BSEIPH regional coordinators to identify and recruit 30 men and women with disabilities from the cities of Cap-Haïtien, Gonaïves, Hinche, Jérémie and Les Cayes. In each of the five cities, there were a total of 6 auditors. Additionally, the 30 auditors from the first pilot audit returned to conduct a second audit in the capital of Port-au-Prince, for a total of 60 auditors overall.

Of the 60 auditors, 35 were men with disabilities and 25 were women with disabilities. Forty-nine auditors had a physical disability, while 10 had a visual disability and 1 had a hearing disability. Though particular efforts were taken to recruit more men and women with hearing disabilities in the new locations, these efforts were unsuccessful as many family members cited security concerns as a reason for their preference to not permit relatives who were deaf or hard-of-hearing to participate.

*Table 1 - Gender distribution of auditors with disabilities*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>City</th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Port-au-Prince</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cap-Haïtien</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>66.7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>33.3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Les Cayes</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>66.7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>33.3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jérémie</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>83.3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>16.7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gonaïves</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>33.3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>66.7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hinche</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>83.3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>16.7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Training auditors.*

To train the auditors in the remote cities, a training of the trainers (ToT) was held for five BSEIPH regional coordinators in Port-au-Prince on October 16 and 17. The regional coordinators then returned to their city and hosted a training for the auditors on October 21, 22 or 23. For the auditors in Port-au-
Prince, a combined training and briefing was hosted on October 23 to refresh key concepts related to election accessibility, as well as reminding auditors of security procedures and policies.

Audit teams.

Auditors were paired together to create 15 audit teams in Port-au-Prince and 3 audit teams each for Cap-Haïtien, Les Cayes, Jérémie, Gonaïves and Hinche. For security reasons, IFES also assigned all of its local staff as team supervisors to be available to address security or logistical concerns that might arise on Election Day, and to coordinate transport for auditors. Each audit team had at least one supervisor.

Audit locations.

Fifteen new polling centers in the Port-au-Prince metropolitan area were visited by audit teams, while three polling centers each were observed in Cap-Haïtien, Gonaïves, Hinche, Jérémie and Les Cayes, for a total of 30 polling centers observed nationwide.

Polling centers were selected to both represent the diversity of the city and to be close enough that assistance could be provided quickly in case of security concerns. In Port-au-Prince, audit teams were deployed to polling centers in the communes of Carrefour, Centre-Ville, Delmas, Pétion-Ville and Tabarre. In the northern city of Cap-Haïtien, auditors visited the Ville du Cap and Acule du Nord communes, whereas in the southern city of Les Cayes audit teams visited the First Sector (Bourdet) and the Seventh Sector (Laurent). In Jérémie, teams were deployed to Ville de Jérémie and Ville de Reseaux; in Hinche, Centre-Ville and the Sixth Sector (Sarazin); and finally, in Gonaïves, the First Sector (Pont Tamarin) and Ville des Gonaïves.

III.2. Audit Findings

On October 25, auditors in all six cities traveled to schools, government buildings, churches, sports centers, public markets and other institutions chosen as polling places by the CEP. Of the 30 polling centers examined by auditors, 25 locations were close to public transit, while 5 polling centers were not. However, it should be noted that strict CEP regulations on public transit and traffic during Election Day likely had a significant impact on the ability of voters with physical or visual disabilities to arrive safely and quickly to their assigned polling stations.

If voters with disabilities were able to arrive at the polling station, many encountered difficult physical or structural obstacles. In half of the polling centers observed, the roads leading to the main entrance were littered with holes, large puddles of water, loose gravel, or other debris that prevented easy access by persons with physical or visual disabilities. Though 20 polling centers had sidewalks nearby, 15 of these were blocked by street vendors, vehicles or litter.
Upon arrival at the polling centers, auditors wrote that 13 polling centers required voters to climb stairs, with no accessible alternative such as a ramp or lift for persons with physical disabilities. In 9 polling centers, auditors realized the door was too narrow for persons using wheelchairs to enter, and in 7 polling centers, the door remained closed, which would likely make it difficult for people with physical disabilities such as arthritis, who have difficulty gripping door handles, to efficiently enter and exit the space.

Auditors in Port-au-Prince, who had conducted an audit during the August election, noted that there was an improvement in support from CEP poll workers for voters with physical and visual disabilities during the October election. In general, CEP poll workers in Port-au-Prince were observed as being more patient and considerate than in the previous election, generally giving priority to voters with disabilities as they arrived. However, it appeared that CEP poll workers were still not adequately equipped with strategies for communication with voters who are deaf or hard-of-hearing, an essential component of their training as sign language interpreters were not available at any observed polling station.

For the October election, several voters with physical, visual and hearing disabilities arrived to vote at the polling centers in Port-au-Prince, and a couple of CEP poll workers with physical disabilities worked at some of the polling stations. Outside of Port-au-Prince, however, significantly fewer voters or CEP poll workers had disabilities.

In all polling centers, the voting guides and ballots were not available in accessible formats for voters with visual, hearing or intellectual disabilities, inhibiting their ability to vote independently and in secret. For example, the absence of a tactile ballot guide meant that voters with visual disabilities could only
vote with the support of an assistance, instead of voting independently. For voters with low literacy skills, with often includes people with hearing or intellectual disabilities, there were no easy-to-read materials such as posters or brochures available to explain the voting process. For more information on easy-to-read materials, see the box below.

In general, voting booths were not designed in a way that effectively protects the secrecy of voters. The low edges made it easy for voters and others to reasonably guess who was voting for whom. In 19 polling centers, the voting booths were not at accessible heights where persons with physical disabilities or of short stature could easily complete their ballot. In 22 polling centers, ballot boxes were not placed at an accessible height where voters with physical or visual disabilities could easily deposit their ballot.

After Election Day, a large debriefing was held on October 29 in Port-au-Prince for all 60 auditors and five regional coordinators from BSEIPH to share their audits, thoughts and experiences. Several auditors noted that many access issues – including building structures, readiness of CEP poll workers and limited transportation options – were not unique to Port-au-Prince and could be seen in cities across Haiti. By the end of the day, they had crafted a preliminary list of recommendations for improvement for future elections.

**What does “easy-to-read” mean?**

3. **The right to vote**
   
   When people vote in elections, they can choose who will run your country, region or city.

   The Convention says that people with disabilities have the same right to vote as anyone else.

   In Peru, many people with disabilities do not vote. There are different reasons why people with disabilities do not vote.

   Easy-to-read uses simplified text and pictures to help make news stories easier to read and understand for people who have low literacy skills or who have an intellectual or learning disability.

   To produce easy-to-read content, it is best to seek guidance from a disability organization in your country that works with people with intellectual and/or learning disabilities.
IV. Recommendations

The findings from both the August and the October elections of a combined 45 polling centers (15 in August and 30 in October) demonstrate that there are several areas for improvement in regards to supporting an accessible election. An accessible election is defined as an election that provides facilities and election-related services that can be easily used by persons with disabilities and is free from discrimination or other barriers to full political participation. In an accessible election:

- The right to vote independently, freely and in secret is protected and upheld for persons with all different types of disabilities.
- Political parties and the organizations who implement and evaluate elections are inclusive and supportive of voters and candidates with disabilities.
- Accommodations are provided for persons with disabilities upon request.
- Election processes, events and materials are designed from the beginning to be as accessible as possible for all people, including those with disabilities.

To further promote accessible elections in Haiti, the following recommendations were provided by Haitian election auditors with disabilities after their audits during the August and October 2015 elections.

IV.1. Conseil Electoral Provisoire (CEP)

Short-term recommendations

1. Allow transit options for persons with disabilities on Election Day. For example, perhaps the CEP could make an exception in its public transit regulations so that voters with physical and visual disabilities are able to use public transit to arrive at their assigned polling center.

2. Produce inclusive and accessible civic and voter education campaigns. All official information about the elections should be made available in accessible formats. For example, voting guides should be available in easy-to-read formats to support populations with low literacy skills, such as persons who are deaf, whose native language is not French or Creole, or who have an intellectual disability. A single message should be shared in both visual formats (posters,
television, brochures) and audio formats (radio, television, megaphones). Messages should also be inclusive and representative of men and women with disabilities.

3. **Where possible, select the most accessible buildings to serve as polling centers.** Look for buildings where the polling center can be on the ground floor, with either a ramp or flat ground where persons with wheelchairs can enter indoors easily, with at least one door wide enough for voters with wheelchairs to enter. Ideally, there would also be an accessible toilet nearby.

4. **Provide voting guides in accessible formats.** Instructions on how to vote should be provided in easy-to-read brochures or posters with large print and in an audio format. An audio format is recommended instead of braille, because braille literacy is low in Haiti.

5. **Coordinate with an organization of people who are blind or have low vision to develop a tactile ballot guide.** This will allow voters who are blind or have low vision to vote independently, reducing the risk of fraud by their assistants. The tactile ballot guide does not have to be in braille; instead, it can use raised letters, dots or symbols for each candidate. If a tactile ballot guide is created, poll workers and voters alike will need to be taught how to use it.

6. **Provide training to CEP poll workers on interacting with and supporting voters with disabilities.** As part of its regular training for CEP staff members, the CEP could include a module on disability rights and elections. In addition, the training could help foster basic sign language for some staff, who can then teach others or work with poll workers who are deaf.

7. **Train CEP poll workers on how to develop and post evacuation plans for polling centers.** Most polling centers currently only have one place to enter and exit, so if a crowd panics or tries to leave a room quickly, poll workers should be prepared to support persons with disabilities in exiting safely.

8. **Coordinate inclusion and accessibility efforts with Haitian DPOs.** Local organizations of Haitians with disabilities are some of the best resources available for solving different accessibility and inclusion challenges. Their input, combined with the CEP’s knowledge and expertise on elections, would greatly help facilitate inclusive and accessible elections for all.

**Long-term recommendations**

9. **Revise Article 157 of the Electoral Decree.** Article 157 of the current decree states that if a competent medical authority has declared that a person has a psychosocial or intellectual disability, then they are automatically prohibited from voting. However, there are several
problems in having this type of law. Most notably, it discriminates against a group of people solely because of their disability, which does not comply with national or international human rights standards such as the CRPD.

10. **Consider working with the Ministry of Public Works to remove physical obstacles on roads near polling stations shortly before Election Day.** This would allow all voters, especially those with disabilities, to more easily navigate the terrain.

11. **In extreme cases only, the CEP could provide permission for a voter with a disability to vote at a more accessible polling center nearby.** Though the CEP should make every effort possible to provide an accessible place to vote for Haitian citizens, if a voter with a disability is assigned to a voting place that they have no way of accessing (for example, a voter using a wheelchair is assigned to a polling center that has no ramp and narrow doors) and if there is no reasonable solution that the CEP can offer, perhaps the CEP can devise a system to allow that voter to switch to a nearby voting center that is more accessible. If this method is adopted, however, it will require widespread voter education and a training for CEP poll workers and staff members.

12. **Encourage and recruit more persons with different types of disabilities to serve as poll workers and staff members, to meet the 2% quota.** Having more poll workers with disabilities may help resolve some of the accessibility challenges. For example, if the CEP is able to train Haitians who are deaf to become poll workers, they can easily communicate with voters in sign language, so no interpreters will be required to serve at their polling stations.

### IV.2. Bureau Electoral Communal (BEC) and Bureau Electoral Départemental (BED)

**Short-term recommendations**

13. **Place electoral lists at an accessible height, with larger letters.** Many voters were confused and crowded around the electoral lists to search for their name, making it almost impossible for a person with a physical disability or who is of short stature to easily access the list.

14. **Place ballot boxes at an accessible height.** They could either be placed on the floor or on a low bench to ensure that voters with disabilities are able to easily reach and deposit the ballot.

**Long-term recommendations**

15. **Consider limiting the number of persons allowed in the polling center at any given time.** This will make it less crowded and easier for persons with disabilities to enter, use and exit the polling center safely and independently.

16. **Provide at least one voting booth at an accessible height per polling center.** It could simply be a table at an accessible height that a person with a wheelchair could roll under, or a person of short stature that could stand and complete their ballot.

17. **Promote greater awareness of existing voting resources at the local level.** For example, the
CEP provides a telephone line and online information to assist voters in locating their voting center and polling centers. Ensuring that this information is distributed in voter education messages (and that these options are accessible for voters with visual and hearing disabilities) will help mitigate confusion and anxiety for all voters on Election Day.

IV.3. Bureau du Secrétaire d’État à l’Intégration des Personnes Handicappées (BSEIPH)

Long-term recommendations

18. Collect information and data about where persons with disabilities reside. This could be done in coordination with DPOs and other CSOs. The information will allow the CEP and other institutions (such as the Ministry of Education) to better target limited resources to areas with a clear need for accessible information and services, such as the deaf community residing at Lévêque.
V. Conclusion

In the past few months, there have been positive steps to improve election accessibility in Haiti. For example, after the October election, and prior to an anticipated third election in spring 2016, the CEP hired an additional two persons with disabilities to help run the election telephone hotline and coordinated with IFES to provide a two-hour module on disability rights and elections during a poll worker training in January. Sign language interpretation was provided for televised debates between candidates before the October election. The CEP produced voter education posters and billboards that showed men and women with disabilities, and voter education using image boxes showing persons with disabilities were distributed throughout the country in October.

However, as indicated by the audit findings, there remain areas for improvement throughout the electoral process in Haiti. As opportunities arise to adjust and revise Haitian elections to better meet the needs of its citizenry, it is an ideal time for the CEP, BSEIPH, DPOs and other election stakeholders to facilitate stronger political inclusion for all Haitian peoples, including men and women with disabilities. It is essential to ensure that every Haitian has a voice in the country’s political future.