

TERMS OF REFERENCE

DISABILITY INCLUSIVE ELECTIONS IN SRI LANKA-TECHNICAL WORKING GROUP (DIESL-TWG)

Introduction

The Technical Working Group on Disability Inclusive Elections in Sri Lanka (hereinafter referred to as DIESL-TWG and/or the 'Working Group') was established upon the agreement reached at the Roundtable Discussion on Disability Inclusive Elections in Sri Lanka held on December 5, 2017 at Colombo.

The Working Group brings together representatives of disabled persons' organizations (DPOs), Election Monitoring Bodies, the Election Commission of Sri Lanka, and other stakeholders as and when the existing members of the Working Group may collectively decide to invite as members either upon expressions of interest being made or upon recommendations/requests made by members of the working group.

On February 27, 2020, DIESL-TWG had its first General Meeting to appoint a new committee and determine its activity plan for the 2020-2021 period. The meeting was attended by existing members of DIESL-TWG and representatives of DPOs from 17 districts in Sri Lanka who had expressed interest in joining as new members. The meeting resulted in the establishment of two (02) structures within DIESL-TWG with the general consensus of all present: a National Committee; and a District Committee per each District.

The following Terms of Reference shall apply to the structure and function of the National Committee of DIESL-TWG

Registered Address

The registered address of the working group shall be that of the convener's address. The registered address shall change upon the period change of convener after each general meeting.

Vision

"A country where each and every person with a disability is guaranteed the right and opportunity to participate in the political and public life on an equal basis with others".

Mission

The mission of the working group shall be to work in collaboration with the Election Commission of Sri Lanka (ECSL) and all other electoral stakeholders in a non-partisan manner to ensure that all persons with disabilities can effectively and fully participate in political and public life on an equal basis with others as per the principles laid out in Article 29 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN CRPD). Provide technical support to ECSL and other electoral stakeholders on inclusive electoral processes which may include and not be limited to; legal and policy measures, procedural measures, reasonable accommodation, accessible information including civic and voter education information, education and training.

Objectives

1. **Liaise with** the Election Commission of Sri Lanka and **provide technical support** to the Commission in making all electoral processes throughout the electoral cycle inclusive for persons with disabilities, make reasonable accommodations, and generally ensure that the foundational principles of the CRPD are adhered to by the ECSL.
2. Ensuring that the Participatory Strategic Plan (PSP) of ECSL or any such other document that the ECSL may introduce for the purpose of establishing a strategy for electoral administration in Sri Lanka shall incorporate disability inclusion as a key thematic pillar, and **Advocate for the implementation** of guidelines, recommendations and proposals, and monitor their implementation in line with the Strategic Plan.
3. **Provide technical support** to the Election Commission towards incorporating the recommendations adopted at the first “South Asia Regional Disability Rights Dialogue on Political Participation” (South Asia Dialogue) on establishing minimum standards on disability-inclusive elections in Sri Lanka.
4. **Provide technical support** to ECSL towards ensuring that their Voter Education Strategy is inclusive.
5. Developing and implementing an action plan to ensure an inclusive election and political processes for persons with disabilities.
6. **Conduct accessibility audits and develop guidelines** for the Election Commission of Sri Lanka and its district level officials regarding the accessibility of polling centers.
7. **Support** the Election Commission of Sri Lanka in training its district level officials and poll workers on disability inclusion.
8. The Working Group shall, with the technical guidance of the Election Commission of Sri Lanka, carry out voter education and awareness programs for the general public and specifically targeting persons living with disabilities in Sri Lanka.
9. **Make recommendations to** update and enforce existing **procedures and rules** that facilitate full and equal participation of persons with disabilities as candidates, observers, election commission members and voters.
10. The Working Group shall network with other Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) local and international as and when necessary, for the promotion of matters directly relating to disability inclusive elections in Sri Lanka, share experiences, conduct lessons-learning exercises, and organize seminars, workshops and conferences on inclusive electoral processes.
11. The National Committee and other stakeholders shall empower the District Committees to mobilize impactful interventions in ensuring full and equal participation of persons with disabilities in the electoral processes starting at sub-national levels.

Working Group composition

The Working Group shall comprise of a National Committee and a Sub-National District Committee

Members of the National Committee as selected upon general consensus at the meeting held on February 27, 2020 are:

- Ashinsha
- Association for Intellectually Disabled Sri Lanka (AIDSL)
- CAN MH Lanka
- Disability Organizations Joint Front (DOJF)
- Disabled Women’s Association (DWA)
- Enable Lanka Foundation
- Sri Lanka Central Federation of the Deaf (SLCFD)
- Sri Lanka Foundation for the Rehabilitation of the Disabled (SLFRD)

Members of the Sub-National District Committee as selected upon general consensus at the meeting held on February 27, 2020, are:

	District	Organization
1.	Batticaloa	Association for Social Inclusion
2.	Colombo	SLFRD
3.	Galle	Sahanodha Foundation
4.	Gampaha	SLCFD
5.	Hambantota	Swashakthi
6.	Kalutara	DSAT
7.	Kandy	We for Rights
8.	Kilinochchi	Disabled Organisation Kandawala
9.	Kurunegala	SLCFD
10.	Matale	Organisation of Our Right
11.	Matara	Swashakthi collective
12.	Moneragala	WOPD
13.	Nuwara-Eliya	SLFVH
14.	Polonnaruwa	Swashakthi
15.	Puttlam	Swashakthi
16.	Rathnapura	Swashakthi

The Working Group will be convened by a representative (the Convener of the working group) nominated and agreed upon by the group. The Working Group shall invite outside experts and interested parties, such as government ministries, civil society groups, or individuals and experts as and when required and upon the general consensus of all members.

New Members

New members shall be invited to join the TWG upon the general consensus of all members of the TWG. Organizations and individuals with expertise sharing the common objectives of the TWG who request to join as members shall be considered by the TWG and confirmed upon general consensus.

Grounds for Cancellation of Membership

The membership of any member of the TWG that would fail to meet the below expectations and would in any way breach the integrity of the TWG, will be subject to temporary or permanent cancellation upon general consensus.

TWG has zero tolerance towards harassment, discrimination and unethical behavior that contradicts with the integrity of the TWG. The TWG expects all its members to treat each other respectfully at all times regardless of gender, sex, sexual orientation, disability, race, ethnicity, religion and all other grounds for discrimination.

TWG is an independent and impartial entity that does not encourage any political affiliations or partisanship among its membership.

TWG membership is voluntary; no fees or payment shall be made to members for membership and nor shall payment or fees be demanded by members. All members are expected to make continuous commitment towards implementing all activities set by the TWG.

Roles and Responsibilities

The Working Group shall be facilitated by IFES up until such time IFES' program is operational in Sri Lanka and co-facilitated by MyRight Sri Lanka, CBM Sri Lanka, the Center for Monitoring Election Violence (CMEV) and Peoples' Action for Free and Fair Elections (PAFFREL), Any agency that wishes to join as co-facilitator may express such interest via official communication to the convener.

Facilitating entities will be re-considered at each general meeting of the working group.

National Committee

The Convener

The Convener of the TWG shall be responsible for:

- Representing the TWG at any forums, meetings and/or convenings within the scope of DIESL-TWG work,
- Convening of and presiding over all meetings of the TWG,
- Maintain communications with the Election Commission of Sri Lanka, members, facilitators and co-facilitators,
- Dissemination of the meeting minutes and sharing of information with TWG members,
- Conveying decisions taken by the TWG to the membership and other stakeholders,

Any other roles and responsibilities that may be collectively agreed upon by the members of the TWG

All Members including the Convener

The members of the Working Group including the Convener shall be responsible for:

- Ensuring that the DIESL-TWG remains a non-partisan, cross-disability representative collective which respects democratic values,
- If a member wishes to affiliate with a politically partisan entity or a political party it should be communicated in writing to the TWG at the earliest possible instant which shall be communicated immediately by the convener to the members,
- Conduct itself in a transparent and accountable manner at all times and keep the TWG informed of any communications, representations and other such engagement in their capacity as a member of the TWG,
- Maintaining good and cordial relationships with the EC, respecting the integrity and reputation of the Election Commission of Sri Lanka,
- Representing DIESL-TWG at events/meetings/forums focusing on inclusion of persons with disabilities in electoral processes,
- Timely response to e-mail correspondence and any other communications of the TWG,
- Attend meetings at a regular basis and provide advance notice of inability to attend meetings,

- Provide technical input to the Working Group on matters that will be taken up for consideration by the Working Group,
- Convey the updates and progress of the Working Group among nationwide disability networks,
- Provide timely updates to the Working Group on issues faced by persons with disabilities in accessing the electoral process, and
- Provide input and support in drafting a 5-year action plan for the Working Group,
- Not take individual (self or organizational) credit for any of the activities carried out by the TWG as a collective and ensure that the TWG as a collective is recognized for all collective actions/activities.

Roles and responsibilities of any new member who joins the Working Group shall be as same as the above.

Facilitators and Co-facilitators

The facilitators and co-facilitators shall primarily be responsible for the following actions:

- Facilitating the meetings convened by the Working Group including the provision of logistical support,
- Maintain good relationships with each other and ensure transparency and accountability,
- Facilitate meetings between the Election Commission of Sri Lanka and other stakeholders, and the Working Group,
- Provide technical input and international expertise, share knowledge and experiences with the Working Group,
- Provide support in drafting and translation of documents,

If any one of the facilitators cease their operations in Sri Lanka, their responsibilities will de facto cease to be effective.

Communication

- Communication shall take place through email, followed up by telephone calls where necessary
- Any official communication shall be in all 3 languages (Sinhala, Tamil, English) and sign language as applicable
- The Convener of the TWG, with the support of facilitators, shall be responsible for all communications,

Meetings

The TWG shall hold a meeting every month with its members and a review meeting every quarter with the Election Commission of Sri Lanka. The TWG may convene additional meetings as and when required. The general meetings of the TWG shall be facilitated by any one of the facilitators upon discussion and agreement amongst themselves and held at a venue to be determined by the TWG.

The District Committee members shall hold district-level meetings with DPOs on TWG activities once a month and shall share the minutes with the National Committee.

Considering pandemic and/or any other possible crisis situations the TWG shall use accessible virtual platforms such as Zoom to conduct its meetings consistently.

The ToR

This ToR shall be considered a working document by the Working Group and shall be edited and/or updated as and when required upon the general consensus of all members.