



**Submission by the Africa Albinism Network (AAN) To the UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities For the thematic report on the right of persons with disabilities to stand for elections and to hold public office (HRC 61st session, March 2026)**

**Africa Albinism Network (AAN)**

The Africa Albinism Network promotes the rights, well-being, and inclusion of people with albinism in Africa through advocacy, capacity development, and collaboration.

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## 1. Introduction

The Africa Albinism Network (AAN) welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the Special Rapporteur's report on the barriers and promising practices in ensuring persons with disabilities can stand for elections and effectively hold public office.

AAN works across 16 African countries to promote, protect, and advocate for the rights of persons with albinism. While albinism is recognized by the United Nations (UN) and World Health Organization (WHO) as a form of disability due to associated visual impairment and social barriers, persons with albinism continue to face multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination based on disability, colour, gender, and harmful beliefs.

Despite incremental progress since the adoption of the Convention on Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), persons with albinism remain virtually absent from elected political and public office in most African countries. This invisibility reinforces stigma and deprives decision-making processes of diverse lived experiences.

This submission draws on examples from Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, South Africa, and Nigeria, as well as AAN's continental advocacy experience.

## 2. Existing Data and Monitoring Tools on Representation

Across all five countries, there is a critical data gap regarding the political participation of persons with disabilities, and even more so for persons with albinism.

- **Ghana:** The 2021 Population and Housing Census records 8% of Ghanaians as having disabilities,<sup>1</sup> but does not disaggregate by albinism. No official data tracks the number of Persons With Disabilities or Persons With Albinisms contesting elections or holding office.
- **Kenya:** According to the 2019 population census of Kenya, there are 9,729 persons with albinism in the country.<sup>2</sup> The Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission (IEBC) collects limited disability data on voters but not on candidates. Article 32 of the *Persons with Disability Act* guarantees the full enjoyment of civil and political rights by persons with disabilities, specifically affirming their right to vote and to be voted for. The provision imposes a positive obligation on the body responsible for conducting public elections to take appropriate measures to ensure that persons with disabilities are able to effectively exercise these rights on an

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<sup>1</sup> Ghana Statistical Service, (December 2021): Ghana 2021 Population and Housing Census General report volume 3f, Difficulty in performing activities. Available at [https://statsghana.gov.gh/gssmain/fileUpload/pressrelease/2021%20PHC%20General%20Report%20Vol%203F\\_Difficulty%20in%20Performing%20Activities\\_final\\_161221.pdf](https://statsghana.gov.gh/gssmain/fileUpload/pressrelease/2021%20PHC%20General%20Report%20Vol%203F_Difficulty%20in%20Performing%20Activities_final_161221.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.ngeckkenya.org/news/14472/beyond-the-myths--kenya-s-commitment-to-the-rights-and-protection-of-persons-with-albinism>

equal basis with others. This includes facilitating their participation in all electoral processes such as voter registration, access to polling stations, and the casting of ballots without discrimination or undue barriers.<sup>3</sup>

- **Malawi:** The Malawi Electoral Commission collaborates with the Federation of Disability Organizations in Malawi (FEDOMA) to promote inclusion during voting, however no systematic data exist on candidates with disabilities and persons with albinism.
- **South Africa:** While South Africa's Electoral Commission (IEC) collects broad disability participation data, there is no disaggregated information on elected representatives with disabilities or albinism.
- **Nigeria:** The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) and TAF Africa have cooperated to promote inclusive voting.<sup>4</sup> However, political representation data for people with disabilities and persons with albinism remains anecdotal.

Across these contexts, the absence of disaggregated, intersectional data hides the true extent of underrepresentation and limits accountability for inclusion.

### **Recommendations:**

In view of the above, we encourage the Special Rapporteur to call on state parties to adopt and implement the following recommendations

- Electoral commissions should disaggregate data on candidates and officeholders by disability type, including albinism.
- National statistical offices and human rights institutions should integrate albinism-related indicators in political participation datasets.
- Monitoring mechanisms should ensure organizations of persons with albinism are part of national electoral inclusion frameworks.

### **3. Legal and Policy Barriers**

None of the five countries we reviewed explicitly prohibit persons with disabilities or albinism from standing for election or holding public office. However, de facto legal and policy barriers persist.

- **Ghana and Kenya:** Both countries have disability acts that protect against discrimination (Ghana's Act 715 and Kenya's 2025 Act), but neither contains

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<sup>3</sup> Persons with Disabilities Act, Act No 4 of 2025

<sup>4</sup> <https://tafafrica.co/publication/TAF%20ELECTION%20REPORT.pdf>

specific provisions to facilitate candidacy or reasonable accommodation for persons with disabilities and albinism to stand in an election.

- **Malawi:** The Disability Act (2012) prohibits discrimination, yet there are no enforceable regulations ensuring accessibility in nomination or campaign processes.
- **South Africa:** The Constitution guarantees equality and political rights for all, but there are no legislative quotas or affirmative measures for persons with disabilities or albinism at national or provincial levels.
- **Nigeria:** The Discrimination Against Persons with Disabilities (Prohibition) Act (2018) is progressive but poorly enforced. Political party constitutions rarely align with it, leading to low participation by persons with disabilities or albinism.

For persons with albinism specifically:

- Electoral laws seldom recognise albinism as a disability requiring accommodation.
- Candidates with albinism face barriers such as limited sun protection, visual challenges, and safety risks due to persistent myths and ritual attacks. We noticed a trend in number of attacks during elections.<sup>5</sup>
- Political parties lack guidelines or policies for reasonable accommodation during primaries, nomination, or campaign processes.

### **Recommendations:**

We strongly encourage the Special rapporteur to call on state parties to:

- Review national electoral laws to explicitly mandate reasonable accommodation for candidates with disabilities, including those with albinism.
- Recognise albinism within national disability frameworks to ensure equal access to electoral processes.
- Political parties should adopt internal disability-inclusion policies aligned with CRPD Article 29.

### **4. Stigma and Ableist Attitudes**

Stigma and ableism remain powerful deterrents to political participation across all five countries reviewed.

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<sup>5</sup> <https://www-bbc-co-uk.cdn.ampproject.org/c/s/www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cdx4g2pke12o.amp>

- **Ghana & Malawi:** Persons with albinism are often viewed as cursed or incapable of leadership. Harmful beliefs linking albinism to witchcraft or spiritual impurity persist, leading to ostracism and even violence.
- **Kenya:** While public education has improved, many communities still perceive disability as inability. Persons with albinism report ridicule and doubts about their fitness to serve.
- **Nigeria:** Persistent stereotypes and jokes about albinism undermine self-confidence and discourage political ambitions.
- **South Africa:** Although relatively progressive, political party gatekeepers rarely nominate persons with disabilities or persons with albinism due to assumptions about “electability” or “public image.”

These attitudes not only affect voter behaviour but also shape how political parties recruit candidates, reinforcing exclusionary systems.

### **Recommendations:**

- National electoral commissions and parties should launch public-awareness campaigns countering stereotypes about disability and albinism.
- Highlight success stories of leaders with albinism. For instance, a parliamentarian with albinism in Kenya and Malawi, A government spokesperson in Kenya, Commissioner of Human Rights in Malawi. Others include government appointees to Disability Council and activists with albinism across various professions. Highlighting their leadership and success story will help to normalize representation.
- Integrate disability and albinism inclusion modules in leadership and civic education programmes.

## **5. Structural, Financial, and Intersectional Barriers**

Persons with disabilities, including those with albinism, face multiple systemic barriers:

### **a. Structural Barriers**

- Inaccessible political environments including steps, poor lighting, and lack of shade limit participation, particularly for persons with albinism sensitive to sunlight.
- Electoral materials and nomination forms are rarely available in accessible formats (large print, electronic copies).
- Public debates and campaign venues often lack provisions for persons with visual or hearing impairments.

## **b. Financial Barriers**

- Campaigns are resource-intensive. Across Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, and Malawi, financial inequality prevents most persons with disability and albinism from contesting in election.
- In South Africa, despite some funding provisions for women and youth, no equivalent exists for persons with disabilities and albinism.

## **c. Intersectional Barriers**

- Women with albinism face compounded discrimination, on grounds of gender, disability, and appearance.
- Threats of violence or ritual attacks discourage public visibility.
- Lack of mentorship or political networks further marginalises aspiring persons with albinism candidates.

## **Recommendations:**

We strongly recommend the Special rapporteur to call on member states to

- Establish dedicated campaign funds or subsidies for candidates with disabilities, including those with albinism.
- Adopt affirmative-action measures (party quotas, reserved seats) for persons with disabilities and albinism in national and local elections.
- Ensure safety protocols for candidates with albinism, particularly in countries with histories of attacks.
- Make nomination and campaign venues accessible and sun-safe for persons with albinism.

## **6. Promising Practices and Success Stories**

Despite challenges, several promising initiatives offer models of inclusion:

- **Nigeria:** The *Disability Inclusion in Election Project* (TAF Africa & INEC) has improved voting access for persons with albinism through voter-education materials and advocacy for accessible polling units.
- **Kenya:** The National Council for Persons with Disabilities (NCPWD) and IEBC have partnered to train election officials on accessibility, and some counties have included Persons with disabilities in ward committees.

- **South Africa:** The Independent Electoral Commission works with disability groups to ensure accessible voting procedures, while some political parties (e.g., ANC, DA) have appointed disability representatives at national level.
- **Malawi:** FEDOMA has collaborated with the electoral commission on accessible voter education materials.
- **Ghana:** The Ghana Federation of Disability Organisations (GFD) have piloted inclusion in election observation and advocacy for accessible polling. Persons with disabilities including those with albinism were deployed as domestic election observers

However, these efforts largely address voting, not candidacy or office-holding. Few countries have mechanisms for training or supporting candidates with disabilities.

### **Recommendations:**

We call on the special rapporteur to urge member states to

- Replicate Nigeria's inclusive election model for candidate-level participation.
- Establish leadership academies for persons with disabilities and albinism to strengthen political readiness.
- Encourage cross-country exchanges of advocates with albinism to share good practices in political inclusion.
- Require political parties to submit annual disability-inclusion reports to electoral commissions.

### **7. Key Recommendations Summary**

- **Data and Monitoring:** Collect and publish disaggregated data (including albinism) on candidates and office-holders with disability including albinism.
- **Legal Reform:** Embed explicit reasonable-accommodation obligations in election laws and recognize albinism in national disability frameworks.
- **Awareness and Attitudes:** Conduct nationwide campaigns to challenge stereotypes about persons with albinism in leadership.
- **Financial and Structural Inclusion:** Introduce campaign-cost support and quotas for candidates with disabilities and albinism and ensure accessible and safe campaign environments for persons with albinism.
- **Capacity Building and Mentorship:** Support training, mentoring, and cross-regional exchanges for emerging and promising political leaders with albinism.

## **8. Conclusion**

Across Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, South Africa, and Nigeria, the participation of persons with disabilities and especially those with albinism in political and public life remains minimal. The barriers are not only structural and financial but deeply social and attitudinal. Ensuring that persons with albinism can stand for elections and hold public office requires a combination of data-driven inclusion, legislative reform, affirmative action, and cultural transformation.

The Africa Albinism Network stands ready to collaborate with governments, electoral bodies, and the UN system to develop and implement inclusive frameworks that make the right to political participation a lived reality for persons with albinism across Africa.