

The Efforts of PPDI (Indonesian Association of Persons with Disabilities) in Ciamis Region to Raise Awareness and Political Participation in Ciamis

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Abstract

This study aims to examine the strategies and roles of the Indonesian Association of Persons with Disabilities (PPDI) in the Ciamis Region in raising political awareness and participation among persons with disabilities. Using a qualitative approach with a case study design, data were collected through in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and document studies. The results indicate that PPDI implements various strategies, such as accessibility-based electoral education, assistance during the election process, the 'Inclusive Election' campaign, and political leadership training. Participation of persons with disabilities has significantly increased, both as voters and in development planning forums. PPDI also plays a role in promoting inclusive policies through collaboration with the General Elections Commission (KPU), local governments, and other related institutions. This research concludes that community-based approaches and cross-sector partnerships employed by PPDI are effective in building political awareness and expanding meaningful participation spaces for persons with disabilities. These findings may serve as a reference for developing inclusive political participation models in other regions.

Keywords: Political Participation, Persons With Disabilities, Ppdi, Inclusive Elections, Political Awareness

INTRODUCTION

Political participation is a crucial element in democracy, as it reflects the involvement of citizens in determining the direction of public policy and development (Alford & Friedland, 1975; Deneulin, 2009). In this context, persons with disabilities have the same rights to participate in political processes as guaranteed by the 1945 Constitution and Law No. 8 of 2016 concerning Persons with Disabilities. The government has also introduced various programs to support accessible political participation—such as accessible polling stations, voter data collection for persons with disabilities, and election information in accessible formats—especially through the General Elections Commission (KPU) and Ministry of Social Affairs. However, in reality, the involvement of this group remains at a low level, both quantitatively and qualitatively (Pratiwi et al., 2023).

In many regions of Indonesia, including Ciamis Regency, structural, social, and cultural barriers remain the primary obstacles for persons with disabilities to fully engage in political processes. Limited accessibility, minimal availability of election information in accessible formats, and negative societal stigma exacerbate the situation. Yet, the political participation of persons with disabilities is not only essential to ensure social justice but also to strengthen the legitimacy of the democratic system itself.

According to BPS Ciamis data from 2023, there are more than 50,000 persons with disabilities in the regency. However, their participation in the 2019 General Election was recorded at only around 35%, far below the national average. This figure reflects a serious participatory gap and raises questions regarding the effectiveness of inclusive policies at the local level.

To address this challenge, the Indonesian Association of Persons with Disabilities (PPDI) in the Ciamis Region has positioned itself as a key actor in promoting political awareness and participation among persons with disabilities. PPDI not only plays an advocacy role but also actively builds the capacity of individuals and communities with disabilities to become active political subjects, rather than merely policy objects.

Various programs have been implemented by PPDI, ranging from community-based electoral education and the "Inclusive Election" campaign to the provision of accessible facilities at polling stations (TPS). On the other hand, PPDI also engages in strategic collaboration with election organizers and local governments to ensure budgetary allocations and regulations that support inclusive political participation.

Theoretically, this research refers to the concept of political participation as proposed by (Almond & Verba, 1963), which emphasizes the importance of participatory political culture as the foundation of democracy. It also draws on (Arnstein, 1969) Ladder of Citizen Participation theory, which underscores that true participation requires genuine involvement rather than symbolic gestures. Furthermore, Article 29 of the UNCPRD serves as a normative foundation mandating that states guarantee the political rights of persons with disabilities through concrete action.

Previous studies have highlighted the importance of political empowerment for persons with disabilities (Amalia & Gofur, 2024; Anggoro et al., 2021; Yusrnelli et al., 2025). However, many of them only focus on the technical aspects of election implementation or one-way educational approaches, without delving deeply into the role of civil society organizations. This is where the urgency and novelty of this study lie: exploring how PPDI Ciamis leads change through community-based approaches, strategic partnerships, and sustained policy advocacy.

This study aims to identify and analyze PPDI's efforts in building political awareness and participation among persons with disabilities in Ciamis Regency, including the strategies employed, the challenges faced, and the tangible impacts of their interventions. The main focus is how this organization bridges the gap between regulation and reality on the ground.

The novelty of this study lies in its organizational approach to promoting political participation of persons with disabilities, rather than solely examining the individuals themselves. By analyzing both the internal and external dynamics of the organization, this research is expected to contribute theoretically to the study of inclusive political participation and provide practical recommendations for strengthening the institutional capacity of disability organizations.

In general, this research is relevant in the context of strengthening inclusive democracy in Indonesia, particularly in regions still facing significant challenges regarding accessibility and political representation for marginalized groups. The findings from this study are expected to serve not only as academic references but also as strategic guidance for policymakers, election organizers, and civil society organizations in expanding participatory and equitable democratic spaces for all citizens.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employed a qualitative approach with a case study design. A qualitative approach was chosen for its ability to deeply explore social dynamics, subjective experiences, and the meanings constructed by individuals within real-life contexts (Plano Clark, 2017; Yin, 2017). The case study design was deemed appropriate for intensively understanding the phenomenon of political participation among persons with disabilities within a specific context, namely Ciamis Regency, where PPDI acts as the key actor in political advocacy and empowerment (Adrias & Ruswandi, 2025).

The research location was purposively selected in Ciamis Regency, West Java, considering that the PPDI branch in this region actively implements political empowerment programs for persons with disabilities. The research subjects included PPDI administrators at the district and village levels, persons with disabilities involved in inclusive political programs, and relevant stakeholders such as the local General Elections Commission (KPU) and Election Supervisory Board (Bawaslu).

Data collection was carried out using methodological triangulation, including in-depth interviews, participatory observations, and document studies. In-depth interviews were conducted with PPDI administrators, persons with disabilities, and external parties such as the KPU and community leaders to understand the strategies, challenges, and impacts of PPDI's programs on political participation. Observations took place at various events such as election training sessions, development planning forums (*musrenbang*), and polling stations during elections, aiming to capture real-time interactions and implementation. The document study covered analysis of PPDI activity documents, implementation reports of the “Inclusive Election” program, and archives of collaborations with government institutions (Patton, 2014; Tashakkori & Creswell, 2007).

The researcher served as the main instrument (*human instrument*), allowing for contextual understanding and flexibility in exploring dynamic field data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Tisdell et al., 2025). To support the validity of the process, auxiliary tools such as interview guides, observation sheets, documentation formats, and field notes were also utilized.

The validity of the data was tested using four criteria from Lincoln and Guba (1985): credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Credibility was strengthened through source and method triangulation, along with member checking with key informants. Transferability was ensured by providing detailed contextual descriptions. Dependability was maintained by systematically documenting consistent research procedures, while confirmability was upheld through audit trails and transparent documentation during the analysis process (Miles et al., 2014; Shenton, 2004).

Data analysis employed the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014), consisting of three stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. Data reduction was performed through coding and categorizing significant information. The data were then presented in the form of narratives, tables, and direct quotations to clarify the findings. Conclusion drawing was carried out iteratively and continuously throughout the data collection process.

This study was conducted from February to April 2025, encompassing the planning phase, field data collection, and the analysis and reporting stages. Through this approach, the research aims to provide an in-depth understanding of the practices, challenges, and contributions of PPDI in promoting political awareness and participation among persons with disabilities at the local level in a systematic and contextual manner.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

PPDI's Strategy in Raising Political Awareness among Persons with Disabilities

The Indonesian Association of Persons with Disabilities (PPDI) in the Ciamis Region views the low level of political awareness among persons with disabilities as a structural and cultural challenge that must be addressed through a systematic approach. One of the main strategies implemented is inclusive electoral education. This initiative is designed to equip persons with disabilities with basic knowledge about the electoral process, the importance of exercising voting rights, and how to become part of a democratic system. Based on the researcher's observation during the Inclusive Electoral Training held at the PPDI Ciamis hall in March 2025, participants showed a high level of enthusiasm. Individuals from various disability backgrounds engaged in sessions covering election stages, constitutional rights, and how to use ballots.

During the training, facilitators employed alternative communication methods and accessible learning media. For example, for blind participants, materials were provided in audio

and braille formats. For deaf participants, sign language interpreters and visual aids such as infographics were made available. One of the participants, Yani (38), a person with physical disabilities, shared during an interview:

“I had never attended training like this before. I used to think politics was only for normal people. But now I know I have the right to vote, and my vote matters.”

Documentation reveals that PPDI has developed political education modules in three accessible formats: braille print, videos with subtitles and sign language, and illustrated educational posters for persons with mild intellectual disabilities. These modules are used in regular training and distributed through PPDI communities and social media platforms. This indicates a serious organizational effort to ensure that educational materials are accessible not only technically but also substantively.

In addition to formal training, PPDI also organizes community discussions at the village level using informal and participatory methods. In one discussion held in Imbanagara Village observed by the researcher, participants were given the opportunity to share their experiences in participating in elections. Many expressed hesitation to come to polling stations due to fear of not knowing the process or receiving discriminatory treatment. The Chair of PPDI Ciamis, Mrs. Rina, responded in an interview:

“We are not just providing information; we are building confidence. Many of them previously felt ‘unworthy’ of voting. The education we offer aims to break down that sense of inadequacy.”

Another notable strategy is the “Inclusive Election” campaign, which targets not only persons with disabilities but also the general public. The aim is to create a socially supportive environment for disability participation. Documentation shows that PPDI collaborated with the Ciamis General Elections Commission (KPU) and Election Supervisory Board (Bawaslu) to carry out the campaign in public spaces such as markets and town squares. These events included mock elections where both the general public and persons with disabilities could participate. In one video recording, the simulated voting process included wheelchair-accessible ballot boxes and audio aids for blind participants.

An interview with a campaign volunteer, Rudi (26), who is visually impaired, highlighted the importance of involving persons with disabilities as agents of change:

“I used to be shy about speaking in public. But through PPDI, I learned to become a facilitator. Now I can explain to other disabled friends, and even to the public, that elections belong to us too.”

This illustrates that education not only increases knowledge but also builds self-confidence and active societal roles.

Field observations further showed that PPDI’s strategies were not merely technical, but also addressed psychological and social dimensions. During training sessions, many initially passive participants became more engaged in voicing their opinions after experience-sharing segments. One significant moment recorded in the field notes was when a person with mild mental disability expressed the desire to become a polling station officer (TPS) in the future. This demonstrates that raising awareness is not only about voting but also about broader engagement in political processes.

Beyond direct outreach to disability communities, PPDI also developed strategic relationships with local media to educate the public. Documentation includes several print and online media articles highlighting individuals with disabilities who actively engage in political activities, either as voters or as speakers in public forums. This positive representation plays an important role in shifting the narrative of disability from passive to active participation.

In conclusion, PPDI’s strategies to enhance political awareness among persons with disabilities in Ciamis are holistic in nature: integrating substantive education, accessible media, psychosocial empowerment, and strategic partnerships. Through this approach, PPDI addresses

not only knowledge aspects but also strengthens the political identity of persons with disabilities as equal citizens.

The Role of PPDI in Enhancing Political Participation and Democratic Engagement

The political participation of persons with disabilities in Ciamis Regency has shown an upward trend in recent years, in line with the active role of the Ciamis branch of PPDI in supporting the disability community. One of PPDI's primary roles is serving as a direct bridge between persons with disabilities and the formal political system, particularly during election periods. In the 2019 election, PPDI's internal documentation noted that approximately 68% of persons with disabilities within its assisted communities exercised their voting rights. This figure is significantly higher than the national average for persons with disabilities, which stood at only about 35% (KPU RI, 2020).

Observations at several polling stations (TPS) during election simulations and voting day revealed significant improvements in accessibility provisions. Some TPS were equipped with ramps, low voting booths, and assistance from PPDI volunteers. At TPS 05 in Imbanagara Village, for instance, the researcher recorded that PPDI volunteers actively helped blind voters enter the polling area and explained the voting procedures while maintaining ballot secrecy. The local KPPS chairperson noted,

"Without PPDI's involvement, we wouldn't have known where to start in preparing inclusive facilities."

One of PPDI's key strengths lies in its direct assistance program. This program involves trained volunteers who accompany voters with disabilities on election day. In an interview, a volunteer named Nurul (24) stated,

"We were trained by PPDI on how to ethically assist, protect privacy, and offer help without making voters feel uncomfortable."

This assistance is not only physical but also creates a psychological sense of safety, helping voters feel respected and equal.

Beyond acting as voters, PPDI encourages persons with disabilities to participate in public decision-making forums such as *musrenbang* (development planning forums) at both village and regency levels. The researcher noted that several PPDI members actively voiced their concerns regarding accessibility, inclusive education, and employment opportunities in these forums. In the 2024 *musrenbang* of Kawali Village, a proposal from PPDI members for accessible public transportation was included in the 2025 village development priority agenda. This indicates that persons with disabilities are not merely passive recipients of policy but active contributors to its formulation.

Another initiative by PPDI was the formation of the Ciamis Disability Forum for Political Dialogue, a community-based political discussion platform. This forum regularly hosts discussions on local issues, policy proposal drafting workshops, and simulations of advocacy meetings with government officials. In a forum session observed in early 2025, several members actively presented ideas on inclusive village budgeting and involving persons with disabilities in the drafting team for the Regional Medium-Term Development Plan (RPJMD). The forum plays a strategic role in fostering a more participatory and critical political culture within the disability community.

PPDI has also initiated leadership regeneration through training programs for prospective legislative candidates with disabilities. In an interview, Andi (34), a blind person who ran for office in the 2019 election, stated:

"I learned a lot from PPDI, from developing a vision and mission, political communication techniques, to building a support network. Although I was not elected, I feel our voices are beginning to be recognized."

This shows that PPDI not only encourages participation as voters but also builds pathways for participation as decision-makers.

From an institutional perspective, PPDI actively collaborates with the General Elections Commission (KPU), Election Supervisory Board (Bawaslu), and local governments to advocate for inclusive budgets and policies. A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between PPDI and KPU Ciamis in 2024 included a commitment to organizing inclusive elections across all districts, including the provision of accessible election logistics. This step formally acknowledges PPDI's position as a strategic partner in local democratic processes.

In this context, political participation extends beyond voting to include involvement in policy forums, legislative processes, and political representation. Field observations and documentation show that PPDI has succeeded in building an ecosystem that supports comprehensive political engagement. Through advocacy strategies, capacity building, and cross-sector partnerships, PPDI has opened broader and more meaningful spaces for persons with disabilities to participate.

Thus, PPDI's role in enhancing political participation in Ciamis Regency is not merely instrumental but also transformational. PPDI does not only facilitate access to political rights but also shifts the perspectives of communities, institutions, and society at large regarding the place of persons with disabilities in democracy. This positions PPDI as a model of best practice for disability organizations in other regions.

Discussion

The findings of this study indicate that the Ciamis branch of PPDI plays a vital role in increasing political awareness and participation among persons with disabilities through structured, participatory, and contextual strategies. These strategies include accessibility-based electoral education, assistance during elections, policy advocacy, and involvement in development planning processes. The results reinforce the argument that political participation among persons with disabilities cannot be effectively enhanced solely through top-down policies, but rather requires the empowerment of local actors and civil society organizations that understand the on-the-ground context.

From the perspective of (Almond & Verba, 1963) theory of political participation, PPDI's efforts align with the goal of fostering a participatory political culture one in which citizens feel a sense of control and engagement within the political system. PPDI's political education programs and community involvement initiatives among persons with disabilities cultivate an active orientation toward the system, ultimately contributing to the strengthening of civic culture at the local level. This further demonstrates that when given access and opportunity, persons with disabilities possess equal potential for participation as other citizens.

Moreover, PPDI's approach is consistent with Arnstein's (1969) *Ladder of Citizen Participation*, wherein the participation facilitated by PPDI transcends symbolic tokenism and reaches the levels of partnership and even citizen control in certain contexts, such as involvement in *musrenbang* (development planning forums) and in drafting policy proposals. These activities show that persons with disabilities have been meaningfully engaged in decision-making processes that directly affect their lives.

These findings are further supported by (Meyers, 2014) who emphasized the crucial role of disability organizations in bridging persons with disabilities and formal political systems. Their study demonstrated that successful improvements in electoral participation are heavily influenced by the presence or absence of local organizational support. In Ciamis, PPDI not only serves as a bridge but also establishes a community-based system for political education and leadership development, which remains uncommon in many regions.

Furthermore, the study's observation that persons with disabilities supported by PPDI demonstrate greater confidence and activeness in exercising their voting rights aligns with the findings of KPU RI (2020), which identified accessibility and information as the two main factors influencing political participation among persons with disabilities. However, this study

contributes additional insight by revealing a third critical factor community support and internal leadership within disability organizations.

In terms of policy advocacy, PPDI's approach of positioning persons with disabilities as active actors in public forums like *musrenbang* exemplifies the practical implementation of the principle "*Nothing About Us Without Us*", as mandated in Article 29 of the UNCRPD (2006). This approach not only strengthens representation but also ensures that public policies are more responsive to the actual needs of persons with disabilities.

The success of PPDI's participation strategies can also be explained using *empowerment theory*, which emphasizes the importance of transferring power and control to marginalized groups (Zimmerman, 2000). In this context, the training programs for prospective legislative candidates and the political discussion forums facilitated by PPDI reflect a capacity-building process both individual and collective geared toward meaningful engagement in political power structures.

However, it is essential to acknowledge that the success of PPDI's strategies is also supported by cross-sector collaboration, particularly with KPU, Bawaslu, and local government authorities. These findings align with (Rosli et al., 2024), who concluded that collaborative approaches between disability organizations and formal institutions significantly enhance the effectiveness of inclusive programs. In the case of Ciamis, such partnerships have fostered a more supportive and adaptive socio-political environment.

This study also offers a critique of policy approaches that place excessive emphasis on the technical aspects of election administration while neglecting the social and psychological dimensions of disability participation. By highlighting that confidence, social acceptance, and community support are key elements of participation, this research calls for a broader conception of political accessibility one that encompasses not only physical and informational aspects but also relational and emotional ones.

In conclusion, the strategies implemented by PPDI Ciamis represent a best-practice model in promoting political participation among vulnerable groups through a holistic, community-based approach. This research fills a gap in the literature by providing a contextual overview of how disability organizations function not only as program implementers but also as agents of social and democratic transformation.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that the Ciamis branch of the Indonesian Association of Persons with Disabilities (PPDI) holds a strategic role in enhancing political awareness and participation among persons with disabilities through systematic, collaborative, and contextual approaches. The main strategies implemented include accessibility-based electoral education, technical and psychological support during elections, inclusive policy advocacy, and active involvement in regional development planning processes.

PPDI has successfully shifted the paradigm of disability participation from a passive role to that of active political subjects, both as voters and as contributors to decision-making processes. These findings affirm that political participation among persons with disabilities is not merely determined by the availability of physical infrastructure, but also by capacity building, equitable access to information, and community support.

The political participation facilitated by PPDI is not symbolic but substantive, encouraging involvement in public policy forums and political leadership training. This illustrates that the community-based approach implemented by PPDI is effective in creating inclusive, fair, and sustainable democratic spaces.

A key conclusion of this study is that disability organizations like PPDI can serve as catalysts for participatory democracy, provided they are supported by strategic partnerships and

institutional strengthening. The model implemented by PPDI in Ciamis serves as a valuable reference for the development of inclusive policies and the replication of similar programs in other regions across Indonesia.

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