

Maintaining Political Rights Equality: The Rasa Mesra Innovation as Penganthi Social Service Institution Strategy for Blinds

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Abstract

Most of the blind in Indonesia live in vulnerable, underdeveloped and poor conditions due to restrictions, barriers, difficulties, and reduction or elimination of the rights of disabilities. In Indonesia there are 3.5 million blind people. Of the existing number, 80% already have the right to vote in the 2019 elections. However, blind people have not been able to carry out elections in accordance with the principles of LUBER, Honest and Fair. They must get assistance from other parties or people in casting their votes at the TPS. This is prone to fraud, manipulation and leakage of options. RASA MESRA innovation is a ballot template that helps the blind in punching ballots without the need for assistance from other people. RASA MESRA is designed to be easily oriented by blind people. The button provided on RASA MESRA will provide an audio explanation according to the writing on the ballot papers. With the existence of RASA MESRA, people with blind sensory disabilities can be independent in determining their voting rights, reduce fraud and manipulation of votes, and guarantee equal rights of persons with disabilities in accordance with the principles of LUBER, Honest and Fair. RASA MESRA was initiated by PPSDSN Penganthi Temanggung.

Keywords: blind people, disability, political rights, innovation, Rasa Mesra



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HOW TO CITE:

Widaningtyas, A. M. & Darajat, W. (2023). Maintaining Political Rights Equality: The Rasa Mesra Innovation as Penganthi Social Service Institution Strategy for Blinds. *Journal Of Contemporary Sociological Issues*, 3(2), 108-132. doi:10.19184/csi.v3i2.28960

Submitted : December 30, 2021
Revised : March 8, 2022

Accepted : August 11, 2022
Publish : August 31, 2023

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I. INTRODUCTION

The term disability comes from English, namely different abilities, which means humans have different abilities. Persons with disabilities, referring to various sources, have several meanings; the Ministry of Social Affairs refers to people with disabilities, the Ministry of Education refers to the terms with special needs, and the Ministry of Health refers to people with disabilities. UN Resolution Number 61/106, dated December 13, 2006, states that persons with disabilities cannot guarantee by themselves, in whole or in part, average individual needs and social life due to their disability, whether congenital or not, in terms of their physical or mental abilities. In Indonesia, the notion of persons with disabilities has undergone several changes in meaning, starting with Law Number 4 of 1997 concerning Persons with Disabilities as anyone with physical and/or mental disorders, which can interfere with or become obstacles and obstacles for him to carry out activities—properly consisting of people with physical disabilities, people with mental disabilities, and people with physical and mental disabilities. The latest development, through Law Number 19 of 2011 concerning the Ratification of the Convention on The Rights of Persons with Disabilities and Law Number 8 of 2016 concerning Persons with Disabilities, has emphasized the use of the term disability as a terminology to refer to people who were initially called people with disabilities, people with disabilities or those with special needs.²

Until now, the perspective of society in general, not only in Indonesia but also in the world, regarding persons with disabilities still tends to be negative such as being abnormal, strange, a burden to others, and even a disgrace to their families. Society generally defines and treats persons with disabilities based on a mindset that is dominated by the concept of normality, that normal and healthy humans are humans who are physically intact or perfect, have two legs, two hands, two eyes, two ears, a mouth that is intact and functioning correctly, humans who are mentally and intellectually perfect since birth, and various concepts of normality are built on perfection. The concept finally puts on the definition of physically and mentally healthy as a requirement in various aspects of life. Furthermore, it impacts stigmatization and discrimination against persons with disabilities in their daily lives, even in accessing the fulfillment of their human rights.

Current data from the Central Bureau of Statistics (BPS) in 2020 shows that the number of people with disabilities in Indonesia reached 22.5 million, or about 5% of the total population of Indonesia. Data from the information system for persons with disabilities stated that in March 2020 alone, there were 197,582 persons with disabilities. They live in various socio-economic situations and conditions that are limited or in the category of vulnerability. In this case, vulnerability is not only limited to socio-economic

² Keiara Fort, 'Voting Able: Accessible In-Person Voting for Persons with Disabilities', *LSU Journal for Social Justice & Policy* 1, no. 1 (11 May 2022), <https://digitalcommons.law.lsu.edu/jsjp/vol1/iss1/10>.

aspects but also in various aspects of life, emphasizing limited access to protection and fulfillment of the rights of persons with disabilities.

The various problems faced by people with disabilities originate from their limited physical, sensory, intellectual, and even mental conditions. These conditions place them with different needs, problems, and handling approaches.³ Article 4 paragraph (1) of Law number 8 of 2016 categorizes persons with disabilities into four categories, namely physical disabilities, intellectual disabilities, mental disabilities, and sensory disabilities. Sensory disabilities themselves are still divided into blind sensory disabilities, deaf sensory disabilities, and speech sensory disabilities. In this paper, the author focuses on the discussion of the blind's people-sensory as well as the theme and focus of the research raised.

People with blind sensory disabilities have visual impairments, both blind and low vision categories. Indonesia is the second country with the most blind people in the world. According to data from the Ministry of Health and BPS, in 2019, there were 3,750,000 visually impaired or around 1.5% of the total population of Indonesia, while data in 2020 shows data for approximately 2.4 million blind people sensory and in Central Java alone, there are 15,663 people. For blind's people, much information cannot be obtained through sight, including understanding self-orientation towards the environment, perception of distance, and mobility. The limited orientation they experience due to limited or dysfunctional sense of sight results in difficulties adapting to the environment, difficulties in self-orientation, and obstacles in cognitive, motor, skills, language, and mobility aspects; this condition also has an impact on blind people in self-actualization, conveying their ideas, opinions, and participation.

Indonesian Law Number 39 of 1999 about Human Rights categorizes persons with disabilities as vulnerable groups entitled to more treatment and protection regarding their specificity. This fact is emphasized in Indonesian Law Number 8 of 2016 about Persons with Disabilities, which states that persons with disabilities are anyone who experiences physical, intellectual, mental, and or sensory limitations for an extended period in interacting with the environment and can experience obstacles and difficulties to participate fully and effectively with other citizens based on equal rights. According to the two laws, persons with disabilities, including those with visual and sensory disabilities, are part of citizens with human rights that must be guaranteed protection and fulfillment by the State. One of the Human Rights clusters referred to is political rights.

Political rights for people with disabilities are a severe problem to date. Of the number of people with sensory-blind disabilities in Indonesia, approximately 80% already have the right to vote in the 2019 and 2020 regional head elections. However, the use of the right to vote cannot be said to have been entirely following the principles of Direct, General, Free, Confidential, Honest, and Fair, as regulated in Article 43 paragraph

³ Christine Bigby et al., 'Final Report: Strategies to Support People with Intellectual Disabilities to Participate in Voting' (Bundoora, VIC: Living with Disability Research Centre, La Trobe University, 2019), <http://hdl.handle.net/1959.9/563636>.

(1) of Law Number 39 of 1999 which states that "Every citizen has the right to be elected and in general elections based on equal rights through direct, general, free, secret, honest and fair voting under the provisions of the legislation."

Although Article 13 of Law Number 8 of 2016 concerning Persons with Disabilities has stated political rights for persons with disabilities, in practice, it is still far from being burnt—discrimination regarding facilities and support provided by election organizers. Implementing political rights for persons with disabilities still becomes an issue in Indonesia. Indonesian Law Number 17 of 2017 about General Elections, apart from guaranteeing the participation of persons with disabilities, including the visually impaired, in the General Election, also regulates the guarantee of the availability of access to channel their choices, as in the Elucidation of Article 5 which explains that: "Equal opportunity ' is a situation that provides opportunities and/or provides access for persons with disabilities to channel their potential in all aspects of State and community administration." Although it is equipped with regulations that provide space for persons with disabilities to actively use their political rights in the implementation of the General Election (Pilkada = Pemilihan Kepala Daerah), there are still many problems and obstacles encountered in its implementation, both in the aspect of collecting data on persons with disabilities in the voter list to access to voting places and the use of ballot electoral templates.⁴

The data for blind people in the 2019 General Election Permanent Voters List was recorded at 166,364 or only around 4.4% of the persons with blind sensory disabilities who could exercise their right to vote. The problem is the aspect of those who are registered to be able to exercise their right to vote, not yet on implementation issues on the day of the election, such as access to voting places, the unavailability of ballot electoral templates with braille access, to the possibility of misuse of votes by assistants. Then, to get assistance in using their voting rights in the General Election and Regional Head Election due to the absence of accessible ballots election for persons with visually impaired persons with visual impairments. This reality is prone to misuse of ballots, such as voting different from the will of persons with visual impairments, vote fraud, or other forms of vote manipulation.

Based on this problem, Panti Pelayanan Sosial Disabilitas Sensorik Netra (PPSDSN) Penganthi Temanggung, as one of the institutions within the Central Java Province Social Service that has a social service function for blind's people persons with visual impairments, tries to initiate and develop an innovation related to the fulfillment of political rights for persons with blind sensory disabilities.

This research aims to discover the extent of RASA MESRA innovation development and its function for persons with blind sensory disabilities in exercising their right to vote. The discussion will emphasize political rights and the problems for people with blind sensory disabilities that underlie the emergence of innovation. RASA

⁴ Elisabeth Kramer, Thushara Dibley, and Antoni Tsaputra, 'Choosing from the Citizens' Toolbox: Disability Activists as Political Candidates in Indonesia's 2019 General Elections', *Disability & Society*, 4 May 2022, 1–20, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09687599.2022.2060800>.

MESRA innovation and its functioning, benefits, and impacts, as well as opportunities for development and replicating RASA MESRA.

The research used a qualitative method with a Participatory Action Research (PAR) approach, which is a research and analysis approach that has principles and a vision of the life of the group being studied to give birth to a specific goal, short-term goals (innovation) and long-term goals (social service development program in the social service institution), in which there is also a process of changing the mindset, behavior (action) and culture at the Panti Pelayanan Sosial Disabilitas Sensorik Netra (PPSDSN) Penganthi Temanggung.

In this case, the author positions not only as a researcher or observer but as a companion who is directly involved in the innovation development process. Primary data is obtained through activities in the field using participatory research that emphasizes activities such as In-depth interviews, Focus Groups Discussions (FGD), Action Research, and tool testing as a form of testing the functionality, benefits, and feasibility of RASA MESRA innovation. This is both for blind's people as direct users and the General Election Commission of Temanggung Regency (KPUD) as stakeholders who use the tool.

II. THE STORY THAT STILL HAPPENS: A DISCOURSE OF THE POLITICAL EQUALITY

Researchers agree that there is a violation of the voting rights of people with disabilities in general elections (elections). Not only has it happened in a particular region of the country, but it has also occurred in various political economy settings. In other words, marginalization and even manipulation of political choices by disabled groups is still a chore that requires serious stakeholder commitment. This phenomenon occurs when persons with disabilities face obstacles and challenges that hinder their participation in the democratic process equitably and fairly. Several factors that may contribute to this abuse of voting rights involve lack of awareness and understanding, limited facilities, lack of an inclusive approach, limited political education, economic constraints, stigma and discrimination, and lack of adequate regulation and law enforcement.

A crucial aspect that constructs the occurrence of this abuse is the lack of awareness and broad understanding of the rights and needs of persons with disabilities.⁵ Even the state apparatus often ignores the needs of groups with disabilities. Communities and related institutions do not always fully understand how important it is to provide them with appropriate accessibility and support. Lack of political education also reduces the active participation of persons with disabilities due to limited knowledge about the electoral process and their rights.

⁵ John H. Aldrich, John L. Sullivan, and Eugene Borgida, 'Foreign Affairs and Issue Voting: Do Presidential Candidates "Waltz Before A Blind Audience?"', *The American Political Science Review* 83, no. 1 (1989): 123–41.

Another significant aspect is the limited facilities that are not fully disability-friendly. Polling stations and associated facilities are often not designed, considering the needs of persons with disabilities, such as the lack of access to wheelchairs or adequate facilities for those with reduced mobility. The lack of regulations ensuring accessibility and support for persons with disabilities can also exacerbate this situation. No less important is the stigma and discrimination that still exists against persons with disabilities. In some cases, persons with disabilities can face difficulties obtaining the necessary support or even become targets for manipulating and abusing voting rights.

A holistic and coordinated effort is needed to overcome this voting rights abuse. This practical recommendation includes providing better education to civil society about the rights and needs of persons with disabilities, providing disability-friendly facilities, an inclusive approach to election planning, strong regulations that ensure accessibility, and strict law enforcement to protect their voting rights. Through these strategies, the voices of persons with disabilities will be respected, and they can participate equally in the democratic process, creating a more inclusive and just society.

In the United States, despite laws mandating accessibility in elections for persons with disabilities, research has shown that there are still challenges in implementing this effectively. Violations of the voting rights of persons with disabilities occur when they face difficulties accessing disability-friendly voting stations and obtaining the information necessary to make an informed decision. Not all polling stations in the United States are not yet entirely disabled-friendly.⁶ For example, adequate access to wheelchairs or other adequate facilities for persons with disabilities with reduced mobility still becomes an issue. This data can limit their ability to visit polls and express their political choices independently.

In addition, the issue of access to information and political education can also be a challenge. Political campaign materials, information about candidates, and election procedures may not always be provided in accessible formats for persons with disabilities. Information in the form of braille, alternative text, or audio media is often in short supply. This case means that persons with disabilities may struggle to understand political issues and make informed decisions.

Attempts have been made in the United States to address this issue. However, implementation challenges still exist. There needs to be better coordination between the government, electoral bodies, and disability advocacy groups to ensure adequate accessibility and the provision of accessible information.⁷ With these steps, the hope is that the voting rights of persons with disabilities can be fully respected in general elections and inclusive participation can be realized.

Not much different from America, the problems that occur in England represent the issue of the abuse of the voting rights of persons with disabilities in general elections,

⁶ Lars Hall et al., 'How the Polls Can Be Both Spot On and Dead Wrong: Using Choice Blindness to Shift Political Attitudes and Voter Intentions', *PLOS ONE* 8, no. 4 (10 April 2013): e60554.

⁷ Andrés Rieznik et al., 'A Massive Experiment on Choice Blindness in Political Decisions: Confidence, Confabulation, and Unconscious Detection of Self-Deception', *PLOS ONE* 12, no. 2 (14 February 2017): e0171108, <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0171108>.

which is also a significant concern. Although regulations require accessibility in elections for persons with disabilities, there are still challenges in implementing these regulations effectively. Several aspects affecting the political participation of persons with disabilities in this country must be explained in detail.

One of the main issues is physical accessibility. Despite efforts to make polling stations more disability-friendly, many polling stations in the UK still do not fully comply with accessibility standards. Facilities such as wheelchair access, easy access points, and clear signs for persons with disabilities may be lacking. As a result, persons with disabilities face difficulties in accessing polling stations. In addition, access to election information can also be a problem.⁸ Political campaign materials, information about candidates, and election procedures may not always be provided in accessible formats for persons with disabilities. Information in the form of braille, alternative text, or audio media is often not sufficiently available. This limitation makes it difficult for them to understand political issues and make informed decisions.

Another obstacle is the lack of an inclusive approach to planning and implementing elections. While steps have been taken to improve accessibility, there is still room for improvement in ensuring that the needs and perspectives of persons with disabilities are better considered in the electoral process. In this challenge, collaboration between the government, electoral bodies, and advocacy groups for persons with disabilities is required. Polling stations need to comply with accessibility standards fully, and election information must be available in a format accessible to everyone. Inclusive political education is also essential to provide the necessary understanding to persons with disabilities so they can participate in general elections equitably and fairly. With these steps, the hope is that the voting rights of persons with disabilities can be fully respected and their participation in the democratic process can be increased.⁹

The story from India presents different data with a situation that is not much better than in America or England. The issue of abusing the voting rights of persons with disabilities in general elections is also a serious concern. Although some laws require accessibility in elections for persons with disabilities, there are still challenges in implementing these laws effectively. Several aspects have caused this issue to emerge and have affected the political participation of persons with disabilities in this country.¹⁰

One of the main challenges is limited physical access. Many polling stations in India are not yet fully disability-friendly. Polling stations often lack adequate facilities for persons with disabilities, such as wheelchair access or easy access points.¹¹ As a result,

⁸ Iain S. Weaver et al., 'Dynamic Social Media Affiliations among UK Politicians', *Social Networks* 54 (1 July 2018): 132–44.

⁹ Nicholas A. Valentino et al., 'Election Night's Alright for Fighting: The Role of Emotions in Political Participation', *The Journal of Politics* 73, no. 1 (2011): 156–70.

¹⁰ Jagdish Chander, 'Movement of the Organized Blind in India: From Passive Recipients of Services to Active Advocates of Their Rights', *Cultural Foundations of Education - Dissertations & Theses* 50 (1 December 2011), https://surface.syr.edu/cfe_etd/50.

¹¹ Elizabeth Evans and Stefanie Reher, 'Disability and Political Representation: Analysing the Obstacles to Elected Office in the UK', *International Political Science Review* 43 (6 October 2020): 019251212094745, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0192512120947458>.

persons with disabilities face difficulty visiting polling stations and exercising their voting rights independently.

In addition, the lack of political education and accessible information is also a severe problem. Information about candidates, political platforms, and electoral processes may not always be available in formats accessible to persons with disabilities, such as information in braille or audio. This need makes it difficult for them to understand political issues and make informed decisions. Stigma and discrimination can also affect the participation of persons with disabilities in elections.¹² At times, they may feel that they are not being taken seriously by society and political institutions, which can hinder their motivation to participate actively in the political process.

The collaborative effort from the government, electoral bodies, and disability advocacy groups is the scenario that can promote the political rights of marginalized people. Polling stations must be adapted to their physical needs, and information must be provided in a format accessible to everyone, including persons with disabilities. Inclusive political education must also be improved to ensure that people with disabilities have sufficient knowledge to participate effectively in general elections. In this way, the voting rights of persons with disabilities can be guaranteed, and their participation in the democratic process can be increased.

Another adequate strategy from Africa becomes positive progress in creating equal political rights.¹³ The strategies taken by the South African government have made substantial efforts to fulfill political rights for persons with disabilities, especially after the end of the apartheid regime. The steps taken are a strategy to develop open space for civil society, especially for marginalized and disabled groups. Moreover, the inclusive Constitution adopted in 1996, and the Law on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities are critical legal foundations for protecting their rights to political participation. Several political parties in the country have also adopted a particular focus on issues of persons with disabilities, helping to ensure their representation in politics. Although positive steps have been taken, challenges still need to be overcome. Physical access to polling stations is still hampered in some areas, information about the electoral process and candidates is not always available in a format accessible to all, and stigma and discrimination against persons with disabilities are still an obstacle.

Improving physical accessibility, providing inclusive information, increasing political education, and tackling stigma and discrimination will be essential steps towards creating a more inclusive and equitable political environment for people with disabilities in South Africa. The South African government and disability advocacy groups have worked together to address this challenge.¹⁴ Efforts to improve physical

¹² Aditya Vashistha et al., 'Social Media Platforms for Low-Income Blind People in India', 2015, 259–72, <https://doi.org/10.1145/2700648.2809858>.

¹³ Rodrick Henry, 'Guardians of Peaceful Elections? Revisiting the Role of International Election Observers in East Africa', *The African Review: A Journal of African Politics, Development and International Affairs* 44, no. 2 (2017): 83–111.

¹⁴ Bhavisha Virendrakumar et al., 'Disability Inclusive Elections in Africa: A Systematic Review of Published and Unpublished Literature', *Disability & Society* 33, no. 4 (21 April 2018): 509–38, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09687599.2018.1431108>.

accessibility, provide accessible information, and increase political awareness and education will help ensure inclusive political participation for persons with disabilities in the country. Awareness of their rights and encouragement to overcome stigma and discrimination will be essential steps in creating a more inclusive political environment.

The fulfillment of political rights for blind people in Southeast Asia is a challenge that needs to be overcome to achieve inclusive and fair political participation. In many countries in the region, physical accessibility to polling stations is lacking, hindering their active participation. In addition, information about candidates, electoral processes, and political issues is often unavailable in accessible formats for the visually impaired, such as braille or alternative text.

The lack of inclusive political education is also an obstacle that limits their understanding of political issues. Stigma and discrimination against blind people still exist; hence, society has not fully recognized their political rights. Solutions to address this challenge include ensuring adequate physical accessibility, providing accessible information, promoting inclusive political education, and conducting awareness campaigns to address stigma and discrimination. With these steps, it is hoped that the political participation of people who are blind can increase and their rights in the democratic process in Southeast Asia can be realized more effectively.

In the Philippines, fulfilling political rights for people who are blind still faces challenges that hinder their inclusive political participation. Although the country adopted the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act in 2013, which recognizes and protects their rights, several issues still affect the political participation of persons with disabilities. Physical accessibility is one of the main obstacles, especially in polling stations, which are not yet fully disability-friendly.¹⁵ Some polling stations are challenging for people who are blind to access, hindering their participation in the election process. In addition, information about candidates, electoral processes, and political issues is often unavailable in accessible formats for the visually impaired, such as braille or audio.

The lack of inclusive political education is also an obstacle to their political participation—inadequate political education results in a limited understanding of the political process and ongoing issues. In addition, stigma and discrimination against blind people still occur in Filipino society, causing them to be often neglected in political participation.¹⁶ Nonetheless, some positive steps have been taken. The Philippines has launched an awareness campaign to increase public understanding of the rights of the visually impaired and the importance of their political participation.

The government is also trying to improve physical accessibility at polling stations, although there is still room for improvement. Overall, efforts to fulfill the political rights of blind people in the Philippines are ongoing. Collaboration is needed

¹⁵ J E Keefe, K Konyama, and H R Taylor, 'Vision Impairment in the Pacific Region', *The British Journal of Ophthalmology* 86, no. 6 (June 2002): 605–10.

¹⁶ Arvin Karl Demillo Capiral, 'The Dynamics of Congressional Committees in Budget Legislation and Its Impact to Philippine Economic Development', *Journal of Contemporary Sociological Issues* 3, no. 1 (27 February 2023): 45–67, <https://doi.org/10.19184/csi.v3i1.31362>.

between the government, disability advocacy groups, and the general public to address these challenges and create a more inclusive and equitable political environment for people who are blind in the country.

By comparison in several political settings that not only emphasize developed countries but also discuss the issue of fulfilling political rights for groups with disabilities, as a whole, the issue of fulfilling the rights of people who are blind in political participation is a global challenge involving aspects of physical accessibility, information, political education, as well as public awareness and attitudes. Comprehensive efforts from the government, disability advocacy groups, and the general public are needed to ensure inclusive and fair political participation for blind people worldwide, including in Indonesia. Thus, what is of concern in Indonesia represents the issue of fulfilling human rights and the political context and requires a sociologically capable strategy to create equality for the plurality of civil society.

III. LIMITATIONS OF THE OBSTACLES: HOW INDONESIA DEALS WITH POLITICAL EQUALITY

Blind people who have no vision at all (totally blind) and who still have residual vision but are not good enough to be able to read 12-point ordinary writing in normal light conditions even though they have been assisted with glasses (low vision). For blind people, these limitations have an impact not only on their sense of sight but also on their entire life. One of the problems is the motor aspect, including:

- a. Spasticity exhibited by slow movement, difficulty, and poor coordination of movements;
- b. Dyskinesia, namely the presence of involuntary movement activities, athetoid movements, uncontrolled movements, irregular, broken, and tortuous movements;
- c. Ataxia is poor coordination of posture balance, limited orientation due to stiffness or inability to maintain balance;
- d. The mixed Type combines dyskinetic, spastic, and ataxic movement patterns, then Hypotonia which is indicated by the weakness of the muscles in responding to stimuli and loss of reflex motion.

Problems due to visual impairments impact many problems experienced by blind people, as shown in the following table.

Table 1
Constraints, Consequences, and Impacts for Persons with Blind Sensory Disabilities Compared to Orientation and Mobility Abilities

NO	OBSTACLES	CONSEQUENCES AND IMPACT
1.	Level and diversity of experience	The constrained capacity for orientation and movement leads to reduced levels and variety of encounters, contributing to a deficiency in understanding and perspective.

2.	Ability to move places	Unlike other sighted persons, visually impaired persons do not understand how to walk safely and efficiently in an environment using various orientation and mobility skills and techniques.
3.	Interaction with environment	The restricted visual perception leads to engagement with others, consequently influencing verbal and nonverbal communication proficiencies.
4.	Academic development	Orientation skills based on Lowenfeld's research directly impact academic development. Limited orientation ability results in not all stimuli receiving a balanced response.
5.	Development of social characteristics	Because blind people have limitations in learning through observation and imitation, blind students often have difficulty performing appropriate social behavior.
6.	Emotional development	The emotional development of the visually impaired will be further hampered by experiencing emotional deprivation, which is a situation where blind people cannot experience various emotions.
7.	Development of behavioral characteristics	Some blind sensory disabilities exhibit stereotyped repetitive behaviors that are not helpful. For example, they often press their eyes, make noises with their fingers, shake their heads and bodies, or spin around. According to some theories, this stereotypic behavior occurs perhaps due to the absence of sensory stimulation, limited activity and movement in the environment, and social limitations.
8.	Health and motor development	Orientation and mobility limitations affect the development of health and motor skills: obesity, muscle weakness, reduced muscle mass, and other diseases related to the ability to move.
9.	Development of economic characteristics	So far, people with disabilities still find it challenging to get a job because, with their physical barriers, this group is often seen as helpless and should be pitied by the community. This assumption is firmly entrenched in society because the lack of Orientation and Mobility skills exacerbates it.

Those obstacles and impacts have resulted in internal attitudes such as a lack of self-confidence, not having good communication skills, lack of mastery of alternative techniques to overcome limitations due to disability, not being able to present

themselves properly (poor grooming and dressing), and inadequate mastery of general knowledge.¹⁷

Limited vision makes blind people emphasize other senses, such as the sense of touch and hearing. The media used can be tactile (synthetic touch and analytical touch), for example, by using braille writing or sound media such as tape recorders and particular applications.¹⁸ Alternative media or techniques for blind sensory disabilities are unique methods (either with or without special aids) that utilize nonvisual senses or the remaining sense of sight to carry out an activity generally done with the sense of sight. This alternative technique allows blind people to obtain information in an accessible format, such as written information in braille, audio recordings, extensive writing (for low vision), electronic format, or reader assistance.

The limitations and impacts experienced by visually impaired blind people associated with fulfilling political rights for persons with disabilities are a separate issue in efforts to fulfill the rights of persons with disabilities.¹⁹ As described previously, fulfilling political rights is still a problem in Indonesia. Regarding data gathering, social engagement, and civic education, the establishment of accessible specialized amenities has become an issue faced by Indonesian society. Moreover, the challenge of creating infrastructure that caters to distinct disability categories at voting sites and incorporating people with disabilities into political parties, legislative entities, and government roles tends to marginalize people with disabilities.²⁰

Indonesia is a democratic country, and one of its characteristics is the guarantee of the political rights of its citizens. The political rights of citizens are universal, as affirmed in the 1966 UN Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which Indonesia has ratified through Law Number 12 of 2005. Article 25 of the Covenant on Civil and Political Rights states that: "Every citizen must have the right and the opportunity, without any distinction as referred to in Article 2 and without unreasonable restrictions, to:

- a) Participate in the implementation of government affairs, either directly or through freely chosen representatives;

¹⁷ Elaine James et al., 'Social Work Practitioner Research into Participation of People with Learning Disabilities in Elections in the UK—A Local Case Study', *The British Journal of Social Work*, 9 August 2023, bcad188, <https://doi.org/10.1093/bjsw/bcad188>; Nicholas Manktelow et al., 'The Perspectives of People with Intellectual Disabilities on Their Experience of Voting in UK General Elections', *Journal of Applied Research in Intellectual Disabilities* 36, no. 3 (2023): 629–40, <https://doi.org/10.1111/jar.13087>; April A. Johnson and Sierra Powell, 'Disability and Election Administration in the United States: Barriers and Improvements', *Policy Studies* 41, no. 2–3 (2020): 249–70, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01442872.2019.1694654>; John Paul P. Cruz, 'Disability-Inclusive Electoral Systems: Analyzing the Philippine Electoral Policy Using the Disability Convention (DisCo) Policy Framework', *Bandung: Journal of the Global South* 2, no. 1 (16 September 2015): 23, <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40728-015-0020-z>.

¹⁸ Lisa Schur and Douglas Kruse, 'Disability and Election Policies and Practices', in *The Measure of American Elections*, ed. Barry C. Burden and III Stewart Charles, Cambridge Studies in Election Law and Democracy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 188–222, <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781107589117.008>.

¹⁹ Mikko Mattila and Achillefs Papageorgiou, 'Disability, Perceived Discrimination and Political Participation', *International Political Science Review* 38, no. 5 (1 November 2017): 505–19.

²⁰ Mark Priestley et al., 'The Political Participation of Disabled People in Europe: Rights, Accessibility and Activism', *Electoral Studies* 42 (June 2016): 1–9.

- b) Voting and being elected in genuine periodic elections, with universal and equal suffrage, and conducted by secret ballot to ensure the freedom of expression of the will of the voters;
- c) Access to public services in their country is based on general equality.

In order to uphold universal political rights for persons with disabilities, the International Foundation for Election System (IFES) and the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA) held a workshop on 14–17 September 2002 in Sigtuna Stockholm Disabilities, Sweden. Present at the workshop included UN reporting officers on disability, parliamentary representatives, representatives of the Election Implementing Commission, and representatives of organizations of persons with disabilities from 45 countries, including Indonesia. The workshop has produced an essential international document: The Bill of Electoral Rights for Citizens with Disabilities.

In Indonesia itself, in its development, the guarantee of political rights has been regulated in article 28D paragraph (3) of the Indonesian Constitution 1945, which states, "Every citizen has the right to have equal opportunities in government." The guarantee is also regulated in Article 23 paragraph (1) and Article 43 of Law Number 39 of 1999 concerning Human Rights. Meanwhile, Article 41 paragraph (2) of Law Number 39 of 1999 concerning Human Rights stipulates that: "Every person with disabilities, elderly people, pregnant women, and children, has the right to get special facilities and treatment." Based on this, persons with disabilities have the right to provide accessibility facilities that support their independence, equal opportunities in education, employment, rehabilitation, social assistance, maintenance of social welfare levels, the right to express opinions and exercise political rights, and participation in government.²¹

Political rights for persons with disabilities, including visual and sensory disabilities, have also been very clearly regulated in Law Number. 8 of 2016 about Persons with Disabilities and Law Number 7 of 2017 about General Elections, as follows:

1. Article 5 of Law Number 7 of 2017 about General Elections states that persons with disabilities who meet the requirements have the same opportunities as voters, as candidates for members of the House of Representatives (DPR), as candidates for members of the Regional Representative Council (DPD), as candidates for President/Vice President, as candidates for Regional House of Representative (DPRD) members, and as candidates for members of the election organizers.
2. Law Number 8 of 2016, concerning Persons with Disabilities, consists of three articles, namely:
 - a. Article 13, where political rights for Persons with Disabilities include the right to:
 - 1) elect and be elected in public office;
 - 2) channeling political aspirations both in writing and verbally;
 - 3) elect political parties and/or individuals who become participants in the general election;

²¹ Lisa Schur, Meera Adya, and Mason Ameri, 'Accessible Democracy: Reducing Voting Obstacles for People with Disabilities', *Election Law Journal: Rules, Politics, and Policy* 14, no. 1 (March 2015): 60–65.

- 4) form, become members, and/or administrators of community organizations and/or political parties;
 - 5) form and join organizations of Persons with Disabilities and represent Persons with Disabilities at local, national, and international levels;
 - 6) participate actively in the general election system at all stages f and/or parts of its implementation; obtain accessibility to facilities and infrastructure for holding general elections, elections for governors, regents/mayors, and elections for village heads or other names; and
 - 7) obtain political education.
- b. Article 75, which stipulates that:
- 1) The Government and Regional Governments must ensure that Persons with Disabilities can participate effectively and fully in political and public life directly or through representatives.
 - 2) The Government and Regional Governments are obliged to guarantee the rights and opportunities for Persons with Disabilities to vote and be elected.
- Article 76: Persons with Disabilities are entitled to hold public positions.
- c. Article 77 stipulates that the Government and Regional Governments are obliged to guarantee the political rights of Persons with Disabilities by taking into account the diversity of disabilities in general elections, elections for governors, regents/mayors, and elections for village heads or other names, including:
- 1) Participate directly in activities in general elections, elections for governors, regents/mayors, and elections for village heads or other names;
 - 2) Obtain the right to be registered as voters in the general election, the election of governor, regent/mayor, and election of village head or other names;
 - 3) ensure that election procedures, facilities, and aids are appropriate, accessible, and easy to understand and use;
 - 4) protect the right of Persons with Disabilities to vote in secret without intimidation;
 - 5) protect the rights of Persons with Disabilities to run for election, hold office, and carry out all public functions at all levels of government;
 - 6) ensure that Persons with Disabilities can take advantage of the use of new technology to assist in carrying out their duties;
 - 7) guarantee the freedom of Persons with Disabilities to choose their companion according to their own choice;
 - 8) obtain information, socialization, and simulations in every stage of the general election, the election of governor, regent/mayor, and election of village head or other names; and
 - 9) guarantee the fulfillment of the right to be involved as an organizer in general elections, elections for governors, regents/mayors, and elections for village heads or other names.

Based on these laws and regulations, Ade Rio Saputra, in his research results entitled *Tata Kelola Pemilu dalam Pemenuhan Hak-Hak Pemilih Penyandang Disabilitas* (Jurnal Aristo, 2019), explains the rights of persons with disabilities in elections more specifically consisting of:

1. Disabilities are entitled to particular data
In order to fulfill the right to vote for persons with disabilities, the General Election Commission (KPU) and the Regional General Election Commission (KPUD) need to collect data for persons with disabilities. In addition to recording identities, this data collection also needs to highlight their particular needs so that election administrators can prepare appropriate services and facilities.
2. People with Disabilities are entitled to General Election socialization
KPU and KPUD need to provide socialization for disabilities according to their respective needs, such as using hand sign language, writing in braille, or other necessary methods.
3. Persons with Disabilities are entitled to a suitable voting place (Tempat Pemungutan Suara/TPS)
KPU and KPUD need to make voting places (Tempat Pemungutan Suara/TPS) that make it easier for people with disabilities. The criteria for these accessible voting places have been explained in the 2015 Voting Organizing Commission (KPPS) guidebook, namely:
 - a. TPS is not set up on rocky, hilly land, surrounded by ditches or ditches, or where there are stairs.
 - b. The height of the booth table is at least 75 – 100 cm from the floor and at least a one-meter distance between the table and the wall / TPS barrier.
 - c. The height of the ballot box table is at least 35 cm from the floor.
 - d. Ensure no objects hanging from the ceiling could knock the visually impaired person.
 - e. TPS equipment must be arranged so that there is sufficient distance for wheelchair users to move freely in the TPS.
4. Disabilities are entitled to assistance.
Election organizers also need to assist in helping people with disabilities, where assistants must fill out a C3 statement form that must be provided at every voting place.
5. Disabilities are entitled to a special ballot. KPU and KPUD are also required to hold unique ballot templates in braille for blind people.

The results of the monitoring conducted by the Disability Integration and Advocacy Center (Sasana Integrasi dan Advokasi Difabel/SIGAB) together with organizations concerned with other disability rights in the 2014 General Election, found several problems faced by persons with disabilities, including visually impaired. Implementing an accessible election requires supporting logistical needs such as voting aids, location design, and other access, such as information during the voting process that

is not yet friendly to persons with disabilities. For example, there is no written information in sign language for election participants with hearing/speech disabilities, and TPS locations are still challenging to reach by persons with disabilities, such as stairs, rocky, narrow, and uneven availability of braille ballots. This empirical situation causes people with disabilities in Indonesia unable to fulfill their right to vote in elections.

IV. RASA MESRA AND THE PROGRESS TO ENRICH POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

The Election Law has mentioned that persons with visual and sensory disabilities are entitled to unique ballot templates in braille; for that, the KPU and/or KPUD, as state representatives in organizing general elections, should provide these special ballots. The limitations of blind people's sensory abilities cause their limitations in language and writing, so special tools are needed to read like other people considered normal.²² These limitations also impact the use of their political rights, voicing their aspirations and choices. However, in its development, until the 2019 general elections and the 2020 simultaneous regional head elections, accessibility for persons with disabilities has not been fully available.

One of them who became an informant of this research, from 304,927 voting places in Indonesia, there are still 20,834 voting places that have not provided a unique ballot template in accommodative and inclusive braille as needed by blind people to be able to exercise their voting rights properly. Answering the issue of the need for unique ballot templates for people with visually sensory disabilities, Panti Pelayanan Sosial Disabilitas Sensorik Netra (referred to as PPSDSN) Penganthi Temanggung as a social service institution within the Social Service of Central Java Province, which has a service base for people with visually sensory disabilities, since 2020 has initiated an innovation called RASA MESRA.

RASA MESRA is an acronym from SuRAT SuARA PeMilu Elektronik bagi diSabilitas netRA, and is a ballot template specifically intended for blind's people sensory vision. PPSDSN Penganthi Temanggung was established in 1950 and was initially named Balai Sosial Negara (BSN) for homeless teenagers; in the process of its development, until now has changed both its name and function to become a social service home for people with visual and sensory disabilities, strengthened through Regulation of Central Java Governor Number 31 of 2018. Currently, PPSDSN Penganthi Temanggung provides services to eighty people with visual and sensory disabilities as beneficiaries.

As a social service center for the visually impaired, PPSDSN Penganthi Temanggung has functional targets for social guidance and rehabilitation services, which consist of (1) Increasing the self-esteem and confidence of blind people; (2) Increasing

²² Ihaab Syed et al., 'Designing Accessible Elections: Recommendations from Disability Voting Rights Advocates', *Election Law Journal: Rules, Politics, and Policy* 21, no. 1 (March 2022): 60–83.

the ability, skills, and mobility of blind's people so that they can live independently in the community; (3) Increasing the level of welfare for the visually impaired and their families; and (4) Increased awareness of the community/parents in the Social Welfare Unit (UKS) for blind's people.

The functional targets are various efforts that have been taken by the institution, including continuing to develop media, assistive devices, and methods aimed at self-confidence, independence, and fulfillment of the rights of persons with visually impaired persons.²³ One of them is the RASA MESRA ballot template. RASA MESRA was created as an inclusive innovation that provides accessibility for people with sensory-blind disabilities to vote on the ballot paper without needing assistance from others.

People with sensory-blind disabilities in voting have so far needed the help of others. With the RASA MESRA, they can independently make their choice without fear of being misled and cheated. With the existence of RASA MESRA, it is hoped that it will have an impact on increasing voter participation from people with sensory-blind disabilities and helping to reduce electoral fraud, increasing accessibility and participation of people with disabilities.

According to Rahayu et al. (2013: 111), four principles can guarantee the ease or accessibility of persons with disabilities that absolutely must be met, namely:

1. The principle of convenience, that is, everyone can reach all places or buildings of a general nature in an environment.
2. The principle of usability, that is, everyone can use all places or buildings that are general in an environment.
3. The principle of safety, that is, every building in a built environment, must pay attention to the safety of all people, including those with disabilities.
4. The principle of independence, that is, everyone must be able to reach and enter to use all places or buildings in an environment without the need for help from others.

Based on these four principles, RASA MESRA is made very simple but has essential functions for its users to exercise their political rights. RASA MESRA is made of acrylic and is designed to be quickly oriented by blind people. The device also has an audio player, a mini mixer, and headphones. The technical specifications of this tool are as follows:

1. Dimension

- Length: 30 cm (tentatively according to the number of candidates)
- Width: 35 cm (tentatively according to the number of candidates)
- Height: 5 cm (tentatively according to the number of candidates)
- Weight: 1,200 grams (tentatively according to the number of candidates)

²³ David C. Baldridge et al., 'Persons with (Dis)Abilities', in *The Oxford Handbook of Workplace Discrimination*, ed. Adrienne J. Colella and Eden B. King, Oxford Library of Psychology (New York, NY, US: Oxford University Press, 2018), 111–27.

2. Specification

- Clear Acrylic frame with a thickness of 0.5 cm
- Electronic audio player Built-in Li-ion battery, Support MP3, etc. Plug: USB standard plug with high speed. Support Micro SD card up to 4GB.
- Mini audio mixer Interface / Interface Input line: 4 x 1/4" TRS Output: 1 x 1/4" TRS Dimensions Approx. 10.5 x 5.5 x 4.5 cm Miscellaneous Connector: 12V
- Headphone: Maximum Power Input: 1000 mW Sensitivity: 102 dB/mW (Power On) Headphone Driver Units: 30 mm Frequency Response: 5 - 22000 Hz Magnet Type: Neodymium Weight: 165 g (without cord) Headphone Type: On the Ear (Supra-aural), Closed Back Connector Plating: Gold Plated

3. Other Components

- Charge adaptor 12 Volt/2 A
- Charger Adaptor 5 Volt/1 A

4. Cost to making RASA MESRA

- Rp 350.000,- with aluminum plate material
- Rp 600.000,- with acrylic material

The ballot template works as an alternative technique for blind people through the tactual and audio functions²⁴. The buttons on RASA MESRA, colored green, black, and purple, as shown in picture 1, will provide an audio explanation according to the writing on the ballot from the KPU. The voice can be heard through a headset so as not to be heard by people around it as a guide and to ensure confidentiality. In principle, how the RASA MESRA template works can be carried out by blind people independently. The first step, the ballot paper, is entered in the RASA MESRA template and uses the available headset. The second step is for blind people sensors to orient their ballots through the holes in the template. The third step is to press the button according to the blind people's choice, and finally, the blind people will vote on the ballot according to their choice.

Picture 1
Ballot Election Template RASA MESRA



²⁴ To get a more detailed picture, readers can see the following link <https://www.youtube.com/watch?app=desktop&v=aXbip6v5vLk>

RASA MESRA is made according to the needs of blind people based on limited orientation. The buttons and designs on the ballot template should refer to ease of touch and reduce confusion in orientation as much as possible. The buttons provided must be conspicuous and easily palpable, and the distance should not be too tight. This innovation follows the principles of orientation and essential mobility for persons with sensory disabilities, commonly taught in social institutions and institutions that handle blind people.

Another thing that needs to be considered in the RASA MESRA design is a sense of security and comfort in its application. First, blind people need to get further explanation that the tools for voting in elections have been designed with security in mind. Some concerns in using these tools include being exposed to electric shock and the risk of explosion or sound that can cause ear pain. Second, RASA MESRA is a comfortable tool that does not cause pressure or a sense of compulsion. Then, it relates to the nature of visually impaired persons who tend to be sensitive, sensitive, suspicious, and not readily believe in new things.

In addition to security and comfort, the RASA MESRA design must follow the standard cubicle sizes provided by the KPU/KPUD. The standard booth sizes used in voting are 40 (forty) centimeters long, 40 (forty) centimeters wide, and 60 (sixty) centimeters high, and are white. The design of RASA MESRA is adjusted to the size of the voting booth so that voting using RASA MESRA can be carried out normatively, does not cause difficulties for voters, and does not result in adjustments to facilities and infrastructure. With these aspects, RASA MESRA is expected to become a standard inclusive voting tool for blind people.

The design of the RASA MESRA template has been adapted to the orientation of persons with limited visual and sensory disabilities so that anyone can operate the tool without going through technical training. RASA MESRA has been tested in the 2018 Beneficiary Welfare Organization (OKPM) election of Penganthi Temanggung, in collaboration with the KPUD Temanggung Simulation for the 2019 Governor Election and Regional Elections also the 2019 Presidential Election Simulation.

The results of the trial of the use of innovation in the simulation of the General Election/Pilkada by the KPUD Temanggung, as well as the application in the formation of the organizational structure of the PPSDSN Penganthi Temanggung Beneficiary Welfare Organization, show that the tool maximally helps blind's people to exercise their voting rights independently, without worrying about being misused. RASA MESRA innovation has superiority compared to the manual templates that have been used so far, including the following:

Table 2

Comparison of RASA MESRA and Manual Ballot Election

No	Aspect	Manual Ballot Election	RASA MESRA
1	Accessibility for Persons with Visually Impaired Persons	The template is still manual and only comes with braille	The template is equipped with audio, making it easier for people with disabilities to vote for ballots
2	Independence in giving voting rights	There needs to be assistance from the family or the appointed KPPS officer	Independent without any assistance
3	Orientation	Braille letters do not appear clearly, which makes confusing reading	Easy to touch by hand and supported by clear instructions, braille is replaced with audio
4	Components	Paper	Acrylic, electronic audio players, mixers, and headsets are more modern and readily available.
5	Reduction of Fraud, fraud, and voter leakage	The companion can still cheat, especially in the voting booth.	Cheating can be reduced, even leading to zero.
6	Intellectual property rights	The template design belongs to the RI KPU	Government agencies, the private sector, MSMEs, individuals, and the other industrial world can be replicated freely.
7	Time efficiency	15 minutes because blind people have to read the Braille template carefully (source: KPUD Temanggung)	3 – 4 minutes, because blind people only to hear the sound of RASA MESRA voice (source: tool test results)

The RASA MESRA innovation is unique, and its functionality can not only be used in voting in the General Election or Regional Election (Pilkada). However, it can also be developed in various efforts to fulfill political rights for persons with disabilities, not limited to blind people. The RASA MESRA ballot template can be replicated with the same function for people with special needs; for example, people with senior age begin to experience low blindness in the eyes or visual impairment. This template can also be developed in an illiterate community using audio output.

RASA MESRA innovation in the initiation process until its application is supported by various resource participation. The resources used in innovation development are methods, materials or equipment, human, financial, and policy.²⁵ Managing resources owned internally and externally is carried out in a synergistic collaborative, where each party provides support according to the available resources while building cross-border coordination using various coordination methods, including meetings, WhatsApp, and fieldwork. A study team, feasibility test team, and technical team were also formed in the form of the Cross-Agency Innovation Coordination Forum (Forum Koordinasi Inovasi Lintas Instansi/KOIN INTI).

In the aspect of formulation, research, and testing, the PPSDSN Penganthi team collaborated with the Central Java Research and Engineers Association (Himpunan Peneliti dan Perekayasa Jawa Tengah) and the Indonesian Blind Association (Persatuan Tuna Netra Indonesia/Pertuni) Temanggung Regency. The development aspect is strengthened through the social rehabilitation program policy of the Social Service of Central Java Province for all Persons with Visual Sensory Disabilities in Central Java. The internal team of innovators carries out RASA MESRA production. The evaluation and feasibility test were carried out with Pertuni, families of blind people, and the KPUD of Temanggung Regency. Meanwhile, socialization and transfer of innovation in collaboration with professional organizations of social workers, social extension workers, and the media.

The advantage of the cross-actor collaboration aspect that has been successfully built and developed in this innovation is cross-cutting functions, where each party involved plays a role according to its specifications and cross-functionally.²⁶ As direct users, Pertuni and PPDI, for example, play a role in due diligence and are involved in formulation and production. Apart from socializing and transferring innovation, professional organizations of social and extension workers are also involved in developing ideas.

V. CONCLUSION

People with visually sensory disabilities or blind people with all their limitations and difficulties need not only walking guidance in all situations, the use of a white cane as a hallmark, job opportunities in providing massage services and daily living activities, but many of their needs will only emerge when they return to their home, community or public. Accessibility to fulfilling the rights of persons with disabilities has been limited due to ignorance, inability, and the absence of supporting tools, which is the State's

²⁵ Samantha Wehbi, 'Obstacles and Facilitative Factors Affecting Community Organizing on Disability Issues Case Study of Lebanon', *International Social Work* 50, no. 1 (1 January 2007): 67–78.

²⁶ Evans and Reher, 'Disability and Political Representation: Analysing the Obstacles to Elected Office in the UK'; Rabia Belt, 'Contemporary Voting Rights Controversies Through the Lens of Disability', *Disability Law Journal* 3, no. 1 (2022), <https://escholarship.org/uc/item/4wg4b8ph>; Sierra Powell and April Johnson, 'Patterns and Mechanisms of Political Participation among People with Disabilities', *Journal of Health Politics, Policy and Law* 44, no. 3 (2019): 381–422, <https://doi.org/10.1215/03616878-7367000>.

obligation to facilitate it. One of them is through innovation development based on fulfilling human rights.

PPSDSN Penganthi Temanggung, through #SOLUSI Innovator Team, tries to bring innovation in its efforts to fulfill the human rights of people with visually sensory disabilities or blind people, especially in this research political rights, more specifically on the use of their right to vote in the General Election and Pilkada. The RASA MESRA innovation is an answer to the limitations of voting aids for persons with disabilities, which are the obligation of the State to guarantee the protection and fulfillment of the rights of every citizen.

Given its benefits and functions in this research, it is crucial for the KPU and KPUD as the election organizers to utilize and develop this innovation and use it in implementing the General Election and Regional Election throughout Indonesia. On the other hand, socialization of utilization of innovation needs to be carried out massively in social institutions and organizations to assist persons with disabilities. That way, accessibility and participation of persons with disabilities in exercising their right to vote can be helped and guaranteed.

The functioning of RASA MESRA itself, in its development, is not only able to answer the needs of people with visually sensory disabilities or blind people but more broadly, it can reach other vulnerable groups, namely the elderly and illiterate. Hence, it is very appropriate to continuously develop RASA MESRA innovation and its use to protect and fulfill the political rights of vulnerable groups.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The RASA MESRA development never be separated from the support of various parties, both internal and external, from ideas to production, use and feasibility testing of the functionality and benefits of innovation. I would specially to thank to all members of the #SOLUSI Innovator Team who for more than 2 years have shared ideas, thoughts, joys and sorrows to developing various innovations for people with visually sensory disabilities, including RASA MESRA. We are always proud of our teams. Very special thank to PPSDSN Penganthi beneficiaries, all of persons with visual sensory disabilities, who have inspired us to develop RASA MESRA. We are dedicated it for you.

As well, the authors would like to thank to the Head of Social Service Institution of Central Java Provincial and PPSDSN Penganthi Temanggung who have provided support for the development of RASA MESRA innovation until the completion of the RASA MESRA prototype which has been tested. Many thank too to the Chairperson of the KPUD Temanggung and staff as our partners to developing ideas and trials of RASA MESRA. Finally, the authors also to appreciate for the support of this research, preparation of the paper until the RASA MESRA innovation paper was also presented at the 5th International Human Rights Conference in November 2021.

FUNDING

None

CONFLICTING INTEREST

None

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