





Accessibility Audit of Polling Stations in NA 243 Karachi East - II

By Pakistan Alliance for Inclusive Elections (PAIE)

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Senior Program Officer Ms. Fatima Shah supervised and coordinated the survey of polling stations. Senior Program Manager Raja Shoaib led the entire exercise and Graphic Designer Naveed Ashraf, designed the entire report.

Executive Summary

The purpose of this report is to study the inaccessibility of public buildings-polling stations in relation to participation of persons with disabilities in electoral processes. It is imperative that persons with disabilities (PWDs) must be included in the democratic and electoral process. However, unfriendly building structures deny them access to the polling stations. Cognizant of the fact, the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) decided to include accessibility of the polling stations in its Strategic Plan 2014-18 targets under the goal # 9.

The objective of the audit was to provide an authentic data on the accessibility of polling stations. The findings of this report will help the government to improve its infrastructure for more inclusive elections in the future. For the purpose of this study a sample of 30 polling stations from the polling scheme of 2018 general elections is drawn through systematic random sampling technique.

Centre for Peace and Development Initiatives (CPDI) and Pakistan Alliance for Inclusive Elections (PAIE) are the frontrunners in conducting accessibility audit of polling stations in Pakistan. The audit criteria are purely based upon internationally acclaimed mandatory accessibility criteria.

Based on the findings, 93% of the sampled polling stations have at least 3 feet wide pathways which leads to the main gate whereas 30% of these approach pathways are not firm and obstacle free. Similarly, 33% of the inner pathways from main gate to the polling area don't meet the criteria. Another important factor for determining accessibility is to ascertain whether, these polling stations have level access to the building. From the sampled data, at 33% polling stations the pedestrian gates do not provide level access to the building, and of those without level access 80% do not even have low slope ramps.

The 57% of the sampled polling stations do not provide functional lighting at the gate. This may pose difficulties for people with visual impairment. In addition to that, with the election results often issued in the evening it is important that presence of light at the gate must be ensured.

In 73% of the polling stations, one or more mandatory criteria are missing but as per the auditors reports, 67% of such buildings could be easily made accessible.

In the conclusion of this audit report, it aims to provide steps and ways to improve the accessibility of the polling stations both in short term whereby, modifying the existing infrastructure to meet minimum criteria before elections and some long-term goals for the government to incorporate accessibility standards as a core of its building infrastructures.

Background

Accessibility is denoted as providing persons with disabilities (PWDs) the products, services, devices and environment. It is designed in such a way that it is fully usable and functional for them. Accessibility enables persons with disabilities to be completely independent and makes them equal part of the society, and enabling them to discharge the same duties and responsibilities as every other citizen. The concept has emerged strongly under the social model of disability, advocating for full integration of persons with disabilities (PWDs) at all levels of society without compromising their dignity and respect.

According to latest data available at Pakistan Bureau of Statistics population of PWDs in Pakistan is 3.3 million¹; however, these official numbers on disability have always been contested by the disability rights activists. The accessibility of buildings is one of the major challenges that PWDs face during their mobility. Inclusion of PWDs in electoral process and accessibility of polling stations is vital among other procedural and administrative measures. Keeping in view this problem the election commission of Pakistan (ECP) made accessibility of polling stations part of its Second Five-Year Strategic Plan 2014-18². The Strategic goal # 9 (5) of the strategic plan sets a target for ECP to "undertake an assessment of polling stations used in the past to evaluate their suitability with a focus on accessibility for persons with disabilities and devise a policy to facilitate them for their better participation in elections" by June 2017.

Now when the 2018 general elections have also passed, it is a responsibility that all stakeholders on both, demand and supply side use their energies and resources in making future election inclusive for PWDs. For this, accessibility of polling stations is one imperative factor.

Centre for Peace and Development Initiatives (CPDI) and Pakistan Alliance for Inclusive Elections (PAIE) have pioneered accessibility audit of polling stations in Pakistan based on Mandatory Accessibility criteria practiced internationally. This report translates an account of accessibility audit of polling stations set up in Karachi for general elections of 2018.

The report presents an opportunity to the democracy and disability stakeholders in Pakistan to discuss the issue of accessibility and find ways to not only resolve it but also help ECP achieve the goals set in its strategic plan.

¹ https://goo.gl/PHAbk8

² https://goo.gl/Eb8huS (page#40)

Objectives

The objectives of this Accessibility Audit are:

- To determine whether a particular building is built in terms of access and ease for people with disabilities to use.
- To provide election commission with a reliable data on polling stations with respect to accessibility standards.
- To provide recommendations for improving the infrastructure.
- To instigate a discussion around PWDs' issues and help stakeholders come up with solutions.

Methodology

The 'Essential accessibility criteria' includes:

- 1. Obstacle / protruding object free, firm and 36" wide pathway leading to the entrance gate and from there to the voting area inside the building.
- 2. Level access to entrance or low slope ramps to avoid stairs.
- 3. Exterior building lighting
- 4. Exterior and interior doors opening width of at least 34" and maximum door threshold of 6mm.
- 5. Voting area / inner building on same level as the entrance or low slope ramps to avoid stairs.

A trained and professionally skilled team of PAIE observers visited sampled polling stations and reported on a carefully designed survey questionnaire.

Audit Sample

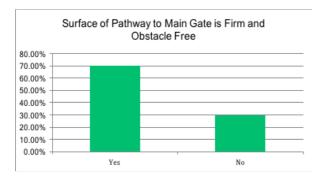
The sample was drawn from the list of 216 polling stations set up in 2018 general elections in the national assembly constituency 243 of Karachi. Systematic Random Sampling technique was adopted to select 30 polling stations spread across the entire constituency. A sample of 14% was considered as appropriate for the research. From the 216 polling stations list, a random starting number was selected through online balloting, which came out to be 200. From there onwards every 7th polling station was selected until the required sample of 30 polling stations was achieved.

Accessibility Audit Findings

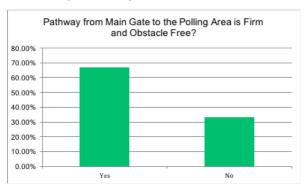
The audit team inspected the 30 sampled polling stations of NA 243 on 6th and 7th of October 2018 and reported their findings on a prescribed online questionnaire. According to the accessibility audit of polling stations, 73% of the sampled polling stations do not meet the mandatory accessibility criteria. The details of these findings are shared below with the help of graphs and charts. Graphs below represent results in the percentages of the total number of the polling stations.

1. Outer and Inner Pathways

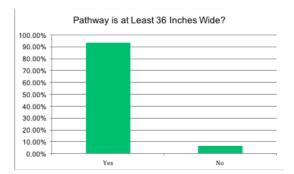
The observation teams assessed the pathways leading to the main gate and inner building to be suitable for PWDs. The criteria set for this assessment is that the outer and inner pathways should be firm, 36" wide and free of obstacles and protruding objects.



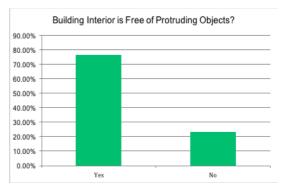
Graph 1: This graph shows results of surface pathway leading to the building of the polling stations.



Graph 3: This graph shows results of polling stations having smooth surface of the pathway from main gate to polling area



Graph 2: Graph representing the responses about the wideness of pathway to the polling stations.



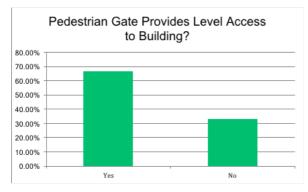
Graph 4: 73% of the responses are representing that the polling stations have smooth pathway.

According to the data surface of pathway leading to the main gate is not firm and obstacles free in 30% polling stations, though these are at least 36 inches wide in 92% cases.

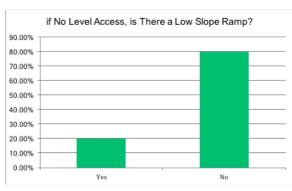
The inner pathways of the 33% polling stations are not firm and obstacles free. Moreover, interior of the 22% buildings is not free of protruding objects.

2. Level Access to Entrance

Level access to building is an essential criterion for accessibility. This criterion means that entrance gate should be on level access to the building, thus outer pathway of the entrance gate and the inner pathway should be on same level without any stairs or hindrance. In case the level access is not given then there should be low slope ramps that can support wheel chairs, crutches, white cane users and other PWDs. Around 33% of the pedestrian gates do not have level access. And of those without level access 80% also don't have ramps. The graphs provided below elaborate this scenario.



Graph 5: Graph showing the results of the polling stations having accessible pedestrian gate.



Graph 6: This graph depicts the results of the polling stations having set criteria for accessible pedestrian gate.

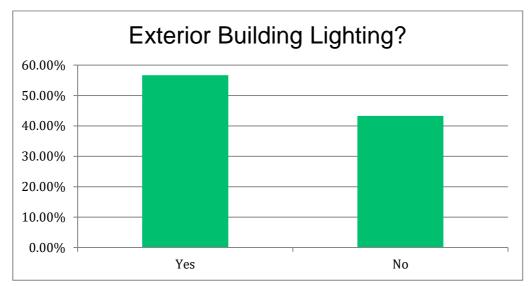


Picture 1: Despite ramp the building is inaccessible for PWDs

To give further details, the team also inspected the vehicle gates 1 on this parameter S0 that it could determined that could the vehicle gates be used to facilitate PWDs where pedestrian gates did not fulfill the criteria. The situation was not as worse as others in this case as: 91% vehicle gates provide level access to the entrance. Of those 9% vehicle gates that do not provide level access 50% do not have low slope ramps that can facilitate the PWDs in case the pedestrian crossing is not accessible.

3. Exterior Building Lighting

Lighting at the entrance of the building is also one of the mandatory citation. In case of low visibility due to bad weather or nearing the sunset as it sets earlier, the people with different disabilities of eye sight face huge problems. Secondly, according to election rules the polling station results should also be posted at the gate of the polling station after the completion of counting process in the evening, most of the times after the sunset. This necessitates exterior lighting further. The chart given below shows that 43% of the polling stations do not have exterior lighting facility or it is nonfunctional.



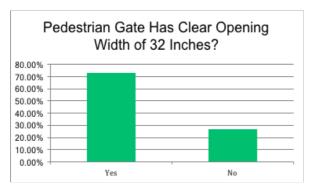
Graph 6: This graph represents the responses on the lighting at the entrance of the building of the polling stations



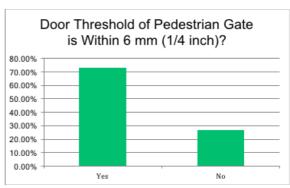
Picture 2: The polling station has no lighting arrangement on the gate

4. Exterior and Interior Doors Opening Width and Maximum Threshold.

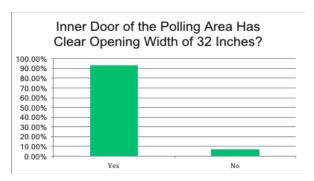
The mandatory criteria also require entrance gate and inner doors of the polling station building to be at least 32" wide and the door threshold not exceed 6mm or ¼ of an inch. The charts seen below provide details of findings on ground.



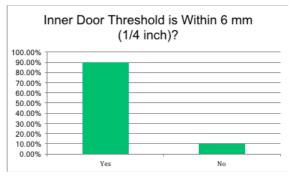
Graph 7: This graph depicts results of the polling stations having standard width of passage.



Graph 8: This graph depicts results of the polling stations having standard threshold of passage.



Graph 9: This graph depicts polling stations having standard width of inner door of the polling area.

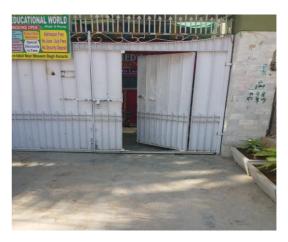


Graph 10: This graph shows results of the polling stations having standard threshold of inner door

To team also assessed the vehicle gates³ on criteria of door threshold to assess how many vehicle gates could be used to facilitate the PWDs in case the pedestrian gate does not fulfill the criteria? All the vehicle gates are far wider than the required criteria but 9% of these did not meet the maximum threshold standard of 6mm.



Picture 3: Door with Proper opening width

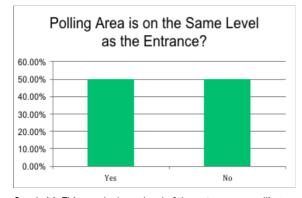


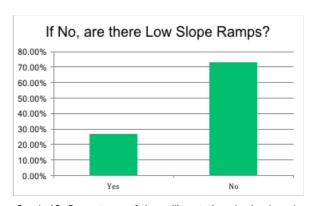
Picture 4: Door threshold is not within maximum 6mm

³ The charts for vehicle gates have not been provided here but the detailed data sheet is given at the end of report that will provide data for all questions.

5. Voting Area / Inner Building on Same Level as Entrance

The mandatory criteria require that the voting area and polling station entrance should be on same level. In other words, the entrance from main gate, the inner pathway, entrance to the inner building and the rooms in the main building should be on same level i.e. without stairs. The data presents 50% buildings are not on same level. Further, 73% of such buildings do not have low slope ramps to facilitate PWDs in avoiding stairs.





 $\label{thm:continuous} \textit{Graph 11: This graph shows level of the entrance as polling area.}$

Graph 12: Percentages of the polling stations having low slope ramps at the entrance of polling area

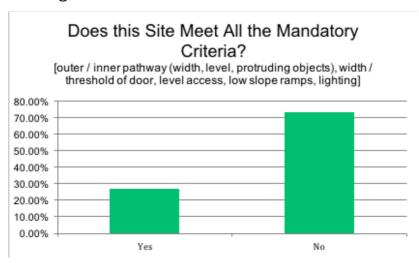
It has been observed that the government buildings are generally constructed on a foundation higher than the ground. This necessitates stairs in almost every government building. The survey team observed that that the stairs were seldom compensated with proper low slope ramp for use of PWDs. The data seen in the graphs above confirms provision of proper ramps with stairs is a rare phenomenon.



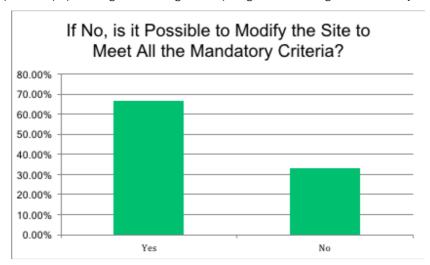
Picture 5: Building entrance and voting area are not on same level and there is no ramp for PWDs.

6. Overall Assessment

Assessment of the status of the buildings of polling station depicts 73% buildings are made in such a way they do not fulfil one or more mandatory criteria. Therefore, they remain inaccessible to PWDs. It was reported that 67% of the buildings that did not meet essential accessibility criteria could be easily modified by making partial or minor changes to them. Or undergo little changes



Graph 13: Graph presenting the Percentages of the polling stations meeting all the mandatory criteria



Graph 14: Percentages of the polling stations which could be altered with minor changes

Most of the polling stations had one main gate for regular use, along with other additional gates or side doors which were not frequently used. As per methodology, accessibility of only main gate was assessed that was operative and under use on regular basis. We could not be sure if the other gates were accessible for PWDs. There were total 72 gates (including the 30 main operative gate and additional gates) in sampled polling stations.

On the Election Day, additional or side doors are also opened if the building is hosting more than one polling stations, ECP ought to ensure that if these additional doors are also accessible for persons with reduced mobility. ECP and government agencies should modify infrastructure of polling stations so that person with disability can have access to them.

Conclusion

Pakistan is not just a signatory of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) but it has also ratified this convention. According to the article 9 of the convention the government is responsible "To enable persons with disabilities to independently and participate fully States Parties shall take appropriate measures to ensure to persons with disabilities access, on an equal basis with others, to the physical environment, transportation, to information and communications, including information and communications technologies and systems, and to other facilities and services open or provided to the public, both in urban and in rural areas". In the strategic plan 2014-18 of the ECP, it has undertaken to eradicate the problem of inaccessibility. It is incumbent upon the government and Election Commission of Pakistan to enable PWDs' inclusion in electoral processes and make sure that the systems, procedures and infrastructure are accessible for them to play their democratic role without any restriction or difficulty.

The findings of the audit demand an urgent attention towards making polling stations accessible for PWDs. Following are few recommendations in this regard:

- It is strongly recommended that the ECP immediately set some minimum accessibility standards for polling stations that should be followed by the government.
- It is understood that the polling stations are set up in government buildings that
 are not in control of the ECP other than the election time. This means that the
 government departments responsible for maintenance of these buildings should
 modify the existing structures to meet minimum accessibility criteria.
- Making accessibility criteria the part and parcel of government building is the ultimate solution for this problem. The government should formulate detailed accessibility standards for all government buildings that must be adhered to while constructing any new government infrastructure.
- The civil society should be vocal and composed in pursuing government functionaries for making all government building accessible so that the issue of accessibility gets settled on permanent bases.

The ECP, the federal and provincial governments, civil society and all other stakeholders need to join hands in achieving the common goal of inclusive elections.

Annex-A: The Survey Data Sheet

Sr. #	Constituency #	Polling Station number	Name of polling station	Surface of pathway to main gate is firm and	Pathway is at least 36 inches (3 feet) wide?	Building exterior is free of any protruding objects?	Exterior Building Lighting?	Building has a large vehicle gate?	Vehicle gate provides level access to	if no, is there a low slope ramp?	Door threshold of vehicle gate is within	Pedestrian gate has clear opening width of	Pedestrian gate provides level access	if no, is there a low slope ramp?	Door threshold of pedestrian gate is	Pathway from the main gate to the	Pathway is at least 36 inches (3 feet) wide?	Interior of the building is free of any	Polling area is on the same level as the	If No, are there low slope ramps?	Corridors have a minimum width of 36	Inner door of the polling area has clear	Door threshold of inner door is within 6	Does this site meet all the mandatory	If not, is it possible to modify the site so that
1	NA-243 Karachi East-II	200	GBSS Sharfabad	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes		Yes	No	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
2	NA-243 Karachi East-II	207	H.E.J Foundation Public School Maqboolabad, Block-3	No	Yes	No	No	No				Yes	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
3	NA-243 Karachi East-II	214	Gulshan Public School Block- 14 Gulshan-e- Iqbal	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	
4	NA-243 Karachi East-II	5	Little Hearts School A-82 Block 13D/2 Gulshan-e- Iqbal	No	Yes	No	No	No				No	Yes		Yes	No	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
5	NA-243 Karachi East-II	12	Sir Jee Collegiate 130 Block 13/A Gulshane-e- Iqbal	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes		Yes	No	Yes		Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
6	NA-243 Karachi East-II	19	Zia Public School BI-13 Gulshane- Iqbal	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes		Yes	Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
7	NA-243 Karachi East-II	26	GGSS School, KDA School Block-17 Gulshan-e- Iqbal	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes		No	No	Yes		No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
8	NA-243 Karachi East-II	33	Seedling Public School Block-18 Gulshan-e- Iqbal	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	

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9	NA-243 Karachi East-II	40	Beacon House School ST-5, Block-10, Gulshan e Iqbal	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes		No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
10	NA-243 Karachi East-II	47	Gulshan e Iqbal Secondary School Block- 10 Shanti Negar	Yes	No	No	Yes	No				Yes	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No
11	NA-243 Karachi East-II	54	GBPS Anjum-e- Taraqi, Shanti Nagar Gulshan-e- Iqbal	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
12	NA-243 Karachi East-II	61	Ahmed's Academy Educational World, Block- 13/D-2 Gulshan-e- Iqbal	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes		Yes	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No	Yes	No	No
13	NA-243 Karachi East-II	68	The Smart School Plot No. D-8, Block 13D/1 Gulshan	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes	Yes		Yes	No	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes
14	NA-243 Karachi East-II	75	DEBS School System Block- 2 Gulshan Iqbal	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No				Yes	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
15	NA-243 Karachi East-II	82	Iqra University, Plot No. 0-1, Block-2 Gulshan-e- Iqbal	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes		Yes	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes

Sr. #	Constituency #	Polling Station number	Name of polling station	Surface of pathway to main gate is firm and	Pathway is at least 36 inches (3 feet) wide?	Building exterior is free of any protruding objects?	Exterior Building Lighting?	Building has a large vehicle gate?	Vehicle gate provides level access to	if no, is there a low slope ramp?	Door threshold of vehicle gate is within	Pedestrian gate has clear opening width of	Pedestrian gate provides level access	if no, is there a low slope ramp?	Door threshold of pedestrian gate is	Pathway from the main gate to the	Pathway is at least 36 inches (3 feet) wide?	Interior of the building is free of any	Polling area is on the same level as the	If No, are there low slope ramps?	Corridors have a minimum width of 36	Inner door of the polling area has clear	Door threshold of inner door is within 6	Does this site meet all the mandatory	If not, is it possible to modify the site so that
16	NA-243 Karachi East-II	96	GBPS Block-1 Gulshan-e- Iqbal	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes	Yes		Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No
17	NA-243 Karachi East-II	103	Blooms Schooling System, Plot B- 48, Block-3 Gulshan-e- Iqbal	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	
18	NA-243 Karachi East-II	110	Karachi Public School Block-6 Gulshan-e- Iqbal	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes		No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
19	NA-243 Karachi East-II	117	Zubair Public School Block-7 Gulshan-e- Igbal	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	
20	NA-243 Karachi East-II	124	City School of Excelance Plot No. A-130 Block-3 Gulshan-e- Iqbal	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	
21	NA-243 Karachi East-II	131	Merit N Merit School Abu Al- Hassan Isphani Road	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes		Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	No
22	NA-243 Karachi East-II	138	Hashmat Memorial College Abu Al Hassan Isphani Road	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
23	NA-243 Karachi East-II	145	Faculty of Islamic Studies Inside Karachi University Campus	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No				Yes	No	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes

Sr. #	Constituency #	Polling Station number	Name of polling station	Surface of pathway to main gate is firm and	Pathway is at least 36 inches (3 feet) wide?	Building exterior is free of any protruding objects?	Exterior Building Lighting?	Building has a large vehicle gate?	Vehicle gate provides level access to	if no, is there a low slope ramp?	Door threshold of vehicle gate is within	Pedestrian gate has clear opening width of	Pedestrian gate provides level access	if no, is there a low slope ramp?	Door threshold of pedestrian gate is	Pathway from the main gate to the	Pathway is at least 36 inches (3 feet) wide?	Interior of the building is free of any	Polling area is on the same level as the	If No, are there low slope ramps?	Corridors have a minimum width of 36	Inner door of the polling area has clear	Door threshold of inner door is within 6	Does this site meet all the mandatory	If not, is it possible to modify the site so that
24	NA-243 Karachi East-II	152	GBPS Ahad Primary School Pehlwan Goth	No	Yes	No	No	No				Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No
25	NA-243 Karachi East-II	159	Shaheen Public School Block-2 Gulistan-e- Johar	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes		No	Yes	Yes		No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No
26	NA-243 Karachi East-II	166	Income Tax Building Block- 15	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes	Yes		Yes	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
27	NA-243 Karachi East-II	173	Geological Survey of Pakistan Block-2 Gulistan-e- Johar	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	
28	NA-243 Karachi East-II	180	Kids foundation School, Block 11, Gulshan-e- lqbal	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No				Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
29	NA-243 Karachi East-II	187	Al-Nafees Scholars Academy Block 11, Gulshan-e- Iqbal	No	No	Yes	No	No				No	No	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes		No	No	No	No	No
30	NA-243 Karachi East-II	194	"Z" International School Bahadurabad	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes	Yes		Yes	No	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes

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Centre for Peace and Development Initiatives (CPDI) is an independent, non-partisan and a not-for-profit civil society organization working on issues of peace and development in Pakistan. It is registered Under Section 42 of the Companies Ordinance, 1984 (XLVII of 1984). It was established in September 2003 by a group of concerned citizens who realized that there was a need to approach the issue of peace and development in a an integrated manner. CPDI is a first initiative of its kind in Pakistan. It seeks to inform and influence public policies and civil society initiatives through researchbased advocacy and capacity building in order to promote citizenship, build peace and achieve inclusive and sustainable development. Areas of special sectoral focus include promotion of peace and tolerance, rule of law, transparency and access to information, budget watch, media watch and legislative watch and development.





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