

Cheap tool to make ballot papers accessible to the blind

South Africa - Electoral Commission of South Africa

SUMMARY OF PROJECT

The Universal Ballot Template (UBT) is a voting aid made of hard black plastic into which a ballot paper is inserted. The right front of the template has a flap that has cut-out windows numbered in braille and in large, raised white print. When the ballot paper is inserted into the template, each window aligns to a particular candidate or party, and the voter is free to make his or her secret and independent mark accurately. This can be used by blind and partially-sighted people, low-vision users, people who are dyslexic, the elderly, people with low literacy, and people with motor and nervous conditions that do not allow for a steady hand

“The UBT is one of the best examples of collaboration and partnering in the pursuit of making voting and elections easy and accessible to all our people, especially the disadvantaged, the sick, and those living with disabilities.”

—Mosotho Moepya, Chief Electoral Officer

FACTS & FIGURES

- The UBT has been continuously used in by-elections since June 2011, and since then over 1,288 by-elections have been held almost every month.
- In 2014, UBT was used in national and provincial elections in which more than 18.6 million voters had the option available to them.

PROBLEMS TARGETED

The aim of the UBT is to assist voters with disabilities to vote independently without the assistance of another person. Every person should have the right to vote secretly, and this is only possible with the use of the UBT.

SOLUTION & METHODOLOGY

The UBT is aligned with the ballot such that each candidate/party's voting block is aligned to a specific hole on the template. In this way the voter can simply look (through counting or reading) for the space of their preferred candidate, thus minimizing the risk of spoiling the ballot paper through

human error. Importantly, the UBT also removes the need for assistance by another person, thereby preserving the individual's right to a secret ballot.

OUTLOOK & TRANSFERABILITY

The concept can be easily copied and used by any and all election management bodies. The most important design consideration is alignment with the ballot design. The rest is a matter of training and familiarization as well as logistic considerations. Costs are relative, and will depend on volume and manufacture. In South Africa the UBT was manufactured at approximately \$1 for the cardboard unit and \$2 for the plastic one.

Photo: Yes

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<http://www.elections.org.za/content/For-Voters/Voting-aid-for-voters-with-disabilities-and-special-needs/>

<http://www.elections.org.za/content/uploadedfiles/Universal%20Ballot%20Template.pdf>