

VOICE International

A Quarterly Global Magazine for Voter Information, Communication & Education

A VolCE.NET & India A-WEB Center Publication

Sharing Global Knowledge on Voter Education & Election Management

Strategies for Bridging the Gaps in Voter Participation



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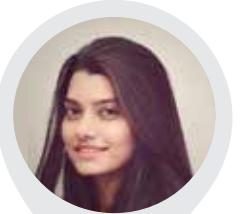
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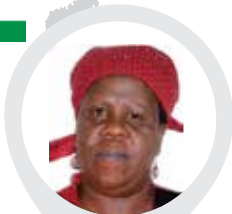
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MESSAGE



The quest for global knowledge sharing in election management was the harbinger of VolCE International. The quarterly magazine has stepped into the fourth year of its publication. It is deeply satisfying to see the bandwidth and reach of this magazine and the enthusiasm of all stakeholders.

Each and every issue of this magazine addresses varied challenges that democracies face in our mutual endeavour to conduct credible and participatory elections in our specific country contexts. All of us as EMBs also realize that each election proffers unique challenges and demands creative solutions that place the citizen-voter at the center of the matrix of processes and procedures. The touchstone of every successful election is the accessibility and satisfaction of the voter.

COVID 19 confronted all EMBs with an unprecedented situation wherein a balance had to be struck between public health concerns and democratic rights. It is not an easy call and demands extraordinary response from EMBs that have to go through the process of elections at this crucial juncture. It is here that the sharing of best practices and experiences of other countries/ states becomes all the more relevant.

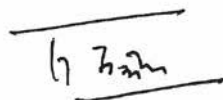
I would like to place on record our appreciation for NEC Korea which conducted its elections in April 2020 despite severe constraints posed by the outbreak of COVID 19. It is a tribute to the sound electoral management practices of NEC Korea and the dogged faith of its people/voters as a result of which Democracy triumphed in the battle against the pandemic and its fears. Elections held in such unique circumstances hold key lessons for all EMBs as we explore ways to guarantee safe and credible elections in our own countries/states in similar circumstances albeit different local milieus.

I would also like to mention the special webpage launched by the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES), titled 'COVID19: A Survival Guide for Democracies'. Sharing of knowledge will prove a key determinant during this testing time.

The current issue of VoICE International offers rich insights on 'Strategies for Bridging the Gaps in Voter Participation', besides other equally engrossing and informative content.

I must also mention that the Eighth Meeting of the A-WEB Executive Board, scheduled for 13th April 2020, has been postponed in the wake of the pandemic. We shall soon embark on a suitable course of action to minimize the consequent delay and impact.

The Commission congratulates Mr. Umesh Sinha, Secretary-General, ECI and Editor-in-Chief, VoICE International and his entire team, the Members of Editorial Board, and the Advisory Board for their dedicated efforts towards ensuring the timely publication of this issue, despite the constraints imposed by COVID 19.



Sunil Arora

Chief Election Commissioner of India &
Chairman A-WEB

FOREWORD



Dear Reader

Greetings from the Election Commission of India.

I am happy to present to you the current issue of VolCE International. This issue marks the fourth year of our vibrant journey in global knowledge sharing, and it has been our constant endeavour to enrich the readers on themes related to voter education. We have also been covering significant global events related to elections and electoral processes.

In this issue, we share global perspectives on 'Strategies for Bridging the Gaps in Voter Participation.' There are interesting articles, stories and experiences from Argentina, Bosnia and Herzegovina, India, Kazakhstan, Myanmar, Nepal, Ukraine, International IDEA, IFES, etc. Some of the topics touched upon, include enhanced electoral participation through accessibility initiatives, and the experience of compulsory voting towards the same objective. The issue also reproduces a 'Question and Answer Session' on Gender Equality in Elections with Ms Viktoriia Hlushchenko, the Central Election Commissioner of Ukraine.

This issue also reports on various important events in India in connection with the National Voters' Day celebration. On that occasion, we instituted an Annual Lecture Series to celebrate the seminal contribution of the architect of the Indian Electoral System, Mr Sukumar Sen. Mr. Sen, as first Chief Election Commissioner of India, led the Commission in the conduct of the first two General Elections in India in 1952 and 1957. He was also Chairman of the International Electoral Commission in Sudan for the first Parliamentary Elections in 1953.

It is a great pleasure for us to congratulate Mr. Sunil Arora, Hon'ble Chief Election Commissioner of India, who has taken over as the Chairman of FEMBoSA in January for the year 2020. Mr. Arora is also the Chairman of A-WEB. We look forward to him for his continued guidance and leadership, in our quest to share the best of elections and electoral practices with you.

The current issue contains a brief report regarding the successful conduct of national elections in South Korea, during the COVID-19 pandemic. Several other countries have also launched important initiatives in managing electoral processes during the pandemic. We look forward to more success stories on the topic. Our partner organizations, IFES and International IDEA, are also doing a lot of work in this area. In this context, we plan the theme for the next issue to be: **'Strategies for Managing Elections despite the COVID-19 pandemic.'**

I thank all the members of the Editorial Board and the Advisory Board for their rich contribution and support in bringing out this issue. I also appreciate the editorial team that worked tirelessly to complete this issue despite the challenges of COVID19.

With Best Wishes,



Umesh Sinha

Editor-in Chief, VolCE International
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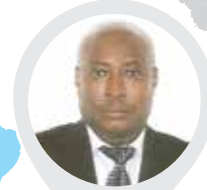
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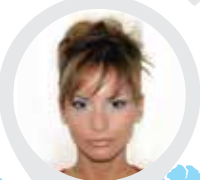
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Inclusion and Electoral Accessibility in Argentina

ARAKA'ÉPA JAIPORAVO HA MBA'ÉPA JAIPORAVO?
 Ojedoravo 127 Diputados Nacionales opa tetãme ha 24 Senadores Nacionales: Buenos Aires-pe, Formosa-pe, Jujuy-pe, La Rioja-pe, Misiones-pe, San Juan-pe, San Luis-pe ha Santa Cruz-pe.

13
DE AGOSTO
PASO

El 13 de agosto
Primarias, Abiertas,
Simultáneas, Obligatorias
(P.A.S.O.)

22
DE OCTUBRE
GENERALES

El 22 de octubre
Elecciones Generales

MBA'E ARAVÓPA IKATU JAIPORAVO?


8:00 hs.
Oñepyrũ japoravo

18:00 hs.
Oñemboty Japoravo

MOÏPA REIPORAVOVA'ERÄ?
 14 de julio guive ikatúma reporandu moõpa reiporavóta, aripaka papapy, orden papapy ha mba'e kuatiarandu reguerahava'erã reiporavo haguã.


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PORAVOHÁRA OJAPOVA'ERÄ

JEPORAVO 2017
AVA-GUARANI



Electoral Training Material translated into Ava-Guarani - National Electoral Directorate 2017

In Argentina, electoral abstentionism is a matter of concern. There are large number of causes ranging from personal to cultural, social, physical and other communicational obstacles, which tend to exclude a significant portion of citizens of their political rights. Hence, governmental actions are required are in order to assure that all citizens are able to choose their representatives.

Electoral participation in presidential elections rounds is 77.86%. Since vote is universal, equal, secret and obligatory, there is a Infractions' register that economic sanctions on those who did not vote or did not justify their absence correctly. However, people under 18 years and over 70 years are exempted from this penalty fee. In

In addition to that, International laws and rights also propagate the universality of electoral processes.

The obstacles or difficulties at the electoral process, as mentioned above affect and impact negatively population groups that we identify as Preferential Care Groups (PCG):

- *People with disabilities or limitations* that interfere in their physical movement, sight, orientation or comprehension, due to a physical, sensorial, intellectual, psychosocial or mental aspect
- *Older adults*;
- *Population without access to Information and Communication Technologies (ICT)*;
- *Indigenous peoples and Communities* based on language, identity and the construction of citizenship;
- *People living in vulnerable conditions* that do not have access to electoral information due to their social and educational context

The National Electoral Directorate has undertaken certain measures to promote and facilitate the citizenry's complete access to the electoral process. In order to decrease the communicational, social and cultural barriers in transmission and reception of electoral information, the Electoral National Directorate generates all its contents with accessible characteristics:

- Audiovisual content with accessible format and language across the media including digital and social media.
- Consultation of the electoral roll with audio description;
- Electoral publicity in popular mediums of communication with subtitles and mentions of political proposals, information of political

parties and first candidates in image and audio

- Informative materials translated in indigenous languages
- Materials for Electoral Authorities (Chairperson) includes good practices for non-discrimination, promotion of political right to everyone and supportive actions
- Presidential debate with accessible characteristics;
- Telephone for consultation and orientation

To overcome architectural barriers on the Election Day, the following certain measures are taken;

- Voters with any type of limitation or disability are requested to vote first
- Accessible Room, which is intended for the voters with reduced mobility. It is located in the space with the easiest access, signposted, and closest to the establishment's entrance.
- It is allowed the entrance for voters accompanied by a guide or assistance dog, their entry and stay in the voting establishment is enabled.
- At the time of introducing the envelope into the ballot box and signing the electoral roll, the Electoral Authority (Chairperson) has a Guide Template that facilitates the procedure. It is a ruler that has a space that is located above the signature box which is identifiable by touching it.
- 'Assisted Vote' is a procedure for any voter who presents some type of limitation or disability to carry out the voting. The voter might request the help of a person of his/her trust.

Electoral Accessibility which includes measures, procedures and regulations that promote and facilitate the complete access to citizens to the multiple aspects of the electoral process, ensuring their political rights on an equal basis with others.

ACCESIBILIDAD ELECTORAL - Recomendaciones para Autoridades de Mesa

¿QUÉ ES LA ACCESIBILIDAD ELECTORAL?

La accesibilidad electoral abarca las medidas, procedimientos y normativas que tienen como finalidad promover y facilitar el acceso pleno de los/las ciudadanos/as a los múltiples aspectos que constituyen el proceso electoral, asegurando el goce de sus derechos políticos en condiciones de igualdad.

¿A QUIÉNES SE DIRIGE?

Se dirige tanto a las personas con discapacidad -motriz, sensorial, mental, intelectual o visceral- como aquellas que presentan limitaciones que interfieren en su desplazamiento, visión, orientación y comunicación. Estas limitaciones pueden ser de características permanentes o temporales, visibles o invisibles.

En este sentido, se dirige también a adultos mayores, mujeres embarazadas, personas con lesiones temporales en miembros superiores o inferiores y personas con diversas "discapacidades invisibles" (personas con cardiopatías, diálisis o en tratamientos oncológicos, enfermedades psiquiátricas no incapacitantes, entre otras).

VOTO ASISTIDO

Todo elector con discapacidad o limitación que dificulte la emisión del voto, puede optar por sufragar con la asistencia del presidente de mesa o de una persona de su confianza.

En estos casos:

- Usted deberá acreditar y registrar los datos de la persona que acompaña al elector, quien además registrará su firma en el espacio de observaciones del padrón.



- Si quien lo asiste es usted, también consignará sus datos y firmará en el espacio indicado.

ASISTENCIA PARA LA FIRMA DEL PADRÓN

En el caso de que un/a ciudadano/a presente algún inconveniente para la firma en el padrón, puede hacer uso de la Plantilla Guía la cual facilitará el procedimiento. Debe ser ubicada de modo tal que el dibujo de la flecha se oriente sobre el margen izquierdo de la hoja del padrón. El espacio con relieve se ubicará precisamente sobre el recuadro para la firma, fácilmente identificable al tacto. Cuando el elector se encuentre firmando, presione firmemente la Plantilla Guía para que no se mueva.

Será orientativa tanto para las personas con discapacidad o disminución visual, así como para las personas con limitaciones en su motricidad fina. Tenga en cuenta que algunas personas pueden presentar dificultades en su lecto-escritura o utilizar diversos medios para firmar (pie, boca, etc.). Si el elector no pudiera firmar, asiente su firma en su reemplazo y deje constancia de esta circunstancia en el espacio de observaciones del padrón.



RECOMENDACIONES GENERALES

• Es necesario hacer efectiva la prioridad y el acceso al voto de las personas con discapacidad con reducción en su movilidad, en su visión o en su audición, como así también de los adultos mayores, mujeres embarazadas y personas con niños/as en brazos.

- Informe sobre la existencia del COA - Cuarto Oscuro Accesible.

- Si el elector no comprendiera sus indicaciones o viceversa, procure hacerse entender por otros medios (gestos, utilización de bolígrafo y papel, etc.).



- Consúltelo al elector si necesita asistencia para su orientación, desplazamiento o para el ejercicio del voto.

- Si un/a votante con discapacidad se presenta acompañado/a por su perro de asistencia, permítale ingresar al cuarto oscuro con él.



CUARTO OSCURO ACCESIBLE - COA

SI USTED ES AUTORIDAD DE LA MESA DONDE ESTÁ INSCRIPTO UN ELECTOR QUE SOLICITA VOTAR EN EL COA, DEBERÁ:

- Requerir al/a la suplente o al personal del Comando General Electoral el resguardo de la documentación de la mesa a su cargo y trasladarse al COA con la urna, el sobre y el padrón de su mesa.

- Solicitar autorización a la autoridad de la mesa del COA para que el elector ejerza allí su voto.



Cuarto oscuro ACCESIBLE

SI USTED ES AUTORIDAD DE MESA DEL COA DEBERÁ:

- Observar que el COA se encuentre adecuadamente señalado.

- Si fuera necesario, solicite asistencia al personal del Comando General Electoral o al/a la Delegado/a de la Justicia Nacional Electoral.

¿CÓMO INTERACTUAR CON LAS PERSONAS CON DISCAPACIDAD MOTRIZ O CON MOVILIDAD REDUCIDA?

- Si existen barreras arquitectónicas (escalones, escaleras, etc.) proporcione la ayuda necesaria para que el elector pueda ejercer su derecho.

- Si piensa que la persona está en dificultades, ofrézcale su ayuda y en caso que ésta sea aceptada, pregúntele cómo debe hacerle.



Electoral Training Material for Mesa Authorities - National Electoral Directorate 2019

In Argentina, there have been great advances to stimulate the political participation of citizens. National legislation and international conventions promote the right to voting. However, this is not enough as other barriers persist. Although measures are initiated from the electoral body throughout the electoral process to facilitate the suffrage of the Preferential Care Groups, there

is still a need to continue deepening the work together with civil society organizations, electoral justice and government agencies related to the issue.

National Electoral Directorate
Argentina



Strategy for Bridging the Gaps in Voter Participation



Assistance of another person at the polling station

“General suffrage in principle means that every individual has the right to vote and to be elected.” Therefore, persons with disabilities should be able to exercise their right to vote and participate in the political and public life as elected representatives on an equal basis with other citizens. The participation of all citizens in the political and public life and in the democratic process is essential for the development of democratic societies.

Persons with Disabilities

The Election Law of Bosnia and Herzegovina sets forth that upon the request of a voter who is blind, illiterate or bodily incapacitated, the President of the Polling Station Committee approves the procedure wherein another person, selected by the voter concerned, may assist the voter in signing

the excerpt from the Central Voters Register, and casting his or her ballot. The helping person may not be a member of the Polling Station Committee, an accredited observer, or an observer of a political party, coalition, list of independent candidate or independent candidate. The person helping the voter prints his or her name and signs the excerpt from the Central Voters Register next to the name of the voter whom he or she assisted. The person helping the voter does not need to be a registered voter. One person may only assist one voter.

In addition, the Central Election Commission of Bosnia and Herzegovina adopts regulations for voting by the BiH citizens who have the right to vote, are home bound due to old age, illness or disability, and cannot come to the polling station.

The implementation of the provisions of the BiH Election Law relating to persons with disabilities or persons who are illiterate is realized in the following ways:

- Assistance of another person at the polling station,
- Voting in front of a polling station and
- Mobile team

a) Assistance of another person at the polling station

When a voter is blind, illiterate or disabled, the President of the Polling Station Committee

approves assistance of another person to help the voter cast his/her ballot. The helping person can neither be a member of the Polling Station Committee nor an accredited observer. A member

Voting in front of the polling station



of the polling station committee enters "XX" in the section intended for signature, the number of ID document of the voter and the person assisting the voter, next to his/her signature. The assisting person does not have to be registered in the Central Voters Register. The limitation is that one person can only assist one voter.

b) Voting in front of the polling station

Physically incapacitated voters are also those voters who come to the polling station, but due to physical obstacles and the lack of adaptation of the space to their disability cannot enter the polling station. The BiH Central Election Commission puts a lot of efforts, gives instructions, and insists

The person helping the voter does not need to be a registered voter. One person may only assist one voter.



that polling stations are located in accessible places. But, if a polling station is not accessible, and a voters comes e.g. in a wheelchair or in any other way, and cannot access the polling station, the voter sends someone to the polling station to inform the polling station committee that the voter cannot enter the polling station. Furthermore, a member of the polling station committee goes in front of the polling station with the minutes, an envelope and ballots. The voter signs the minutes and votes, puts the ballot paper in an envelope, and the person chosen by the voter for assistance goes and puts the envelope into the ballot box.



Voting by mobile team

c) Mobile team

The next category of people who require additional assistance are people who are home bound and are simply physically unable to leave their homes. There are regulations in the BiH Election Law that the BiH Central Election Commission developed and implemented in cooperation with the Municipal Election commissions –thus the mobile teams are formed. Mobile teams are essentially one special polling station – it has one president and two members. The president manages the work of the mobile team and is responsible for its legality. The mobile team visits all persons on a pre-prepared list and they can vote in their homes. After the voting process is completed, the mobile team submits election material to the municipal / city election

commission. The mobile team starts its work at 7:00 a.m. and ends at 7:00 p.m.

With all the aforementioned ways of voting by voters with disabilities, the BiH Central Election Commission, in cooperation with the Municipal Election Commissions and Polling Station Committees, strives to make the electoral procedures and voting facilities accessible to persons with disabilities so that they can exercise their democratic rights and, where necessary, provides assistance with voting, taking into account that voting is done independently.

Voter Education

From the day of the announcement of the elections until the Election Day, the BiH Central Election Commission conducts educational and motivational campaigns for all categories of voters. The campaign is done over print media, and the electronic media (TV stations and radio stations). TV spots with a detailed explanation of how to

The mobile team visits all persons on a pre-prepared list and they can vote in their homes.





TV spots are prepared and broadcast in sign language in order to inform voters in a timely manner.

vote, as well as motivating TV spots are prepared and broadcast in sign language in order to inform voters in a timely manner. It is important to note that the BiH Election Law prescribes that the Public Broadcasters are obliged to broadcast radio and TV spots, announcements and information of the BiH Central Election Commission entirely and free of any charge so that voters are informed about all aspects of the election process.

The website of the BiH CEC is also regularly maintained and updated aimed at timely provision of information to the voters and all participants of the election process. All information relevant to the election process, polling station check, decisions, announcements, statistics, by-laws and norms are thus made available to the public. Furthermore, the video material used in informative and motivational campaigns is also available on the website and the YouTube channel.

Audio version of the Election Law of Bosnia and Herzegovina

The Association of the Blind Citizens of Sarajevo Canton, in partnership with the Central Election Commission of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and with the financial support of the Council of Europe, implemented a project to record the audio version of the Election Law of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Law on Financing of Political Parties. To make these laws accessible to the blind, they were published on the website of the BiH Central Election Commission and the website of the Association of the Blind Citizens of Sarajevo Canton. In

this way, Bosnia and Herzegovina fulfills one of the commitments set out in the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the Uniform Policy on Disability in BiH, and the recommendations of the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities submitted to Bosnia and Herzegovina. This ensures that the partnership between organizations of persons with disabilities and the state institutions is beneficial and that it can continue to be promoted in the interest of the entire community.

Bosnia and Herzegovina, General Elections, October 7, 2018: Final Report

The CEC published voter information materials on how to fill the ballot paper in print media and aired spots on the same topic on major television (TV) channels in three local languages, accompanied with the sign language. The CEC acknowledged the need for more awareness raising programmes to facilitate the electoral participation of persons with disabilities, but highlighted that it could not run them due to the lack of funds. The BiH CEC

TV spot "How to vote" with translation to sign language





Motivational TV spot - persons with disability "Our voice should be heard in this country"

noted that the national parliament refused to increase the budget despite of many request made. The ODIHR EOM noted the lack of comprehensive voter information. The CEC could have been more proactive in this respect and could have carried out targeted information campaign with a focus on specific issues such as family voting, assisted voting and Election Day procedures, underscoring the importance of secrecy of the vote.

Authorities should enhance voter education programmes, including on preventing family voting and irregular assisted voting. The CEC should further intensify its efforts to provide accessible voter education and information to all groups of voters, particularly to persons with disabilities, in close consultation with the organizations representing them.¹

Half of the polling stations observed were accessible for voters with different kinds of disabilities, and the layout was generally suitable

for the requirements of voters with disabilities for independent voting (80 per cent). Additional efforts should be undertaken by the authorities to ensure barrier-free access to polling stations.

Article 29 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) obligates the states to "guarantee the persons with disabilities political rights and the opportunity to enjoy them on an equal basis with others ... inter alia, by ensuring that voting procedures, facilities and materials are appropriate, accessible and easy to understand and use"



Zehra Tepić

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Central Election Commission
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¹ ODIHR Election Observation Mission Final Report, General Elections, October 7, 2018, page 8.

Bridging the Participation Deficit in India



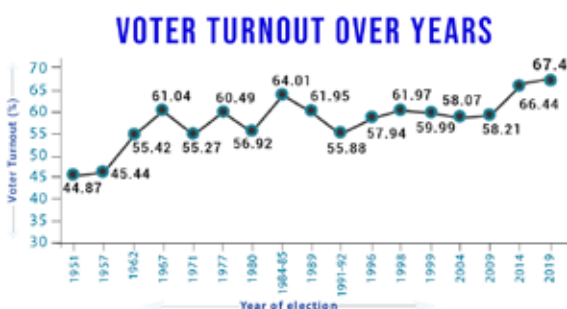
India, the world's largest democracy by electorate was established with independence in 1947. It has moved on its path of democratic consolidation through vibrant electoral participation for seven decades. It happens to be the largest democracy with a robust and rich democratic culture marked by faith of Indian Citizens in the electoral process, its non partisan nature and with the basic tenet of 'No Voter to be Left Behind.' – a perfect intent for inclusion of all categories of voters.

Managing Participation Deficit: Issues and Challenges

Election in world's largest democracy has its own challenges in terms of sheer scale, size, diversity and complexity besides logistics for men and materials management. As a matter of ethos and work culture, the Commission has effectively addressed the challenges with pride and honor through demonstration of professionalism, commitment, integration of state-of-the-art technologies, structured consultations

with the stakeholders, strategic interventions and meticulous planning down to the polling station level. In the process the Election Commission of India (ECI) have evolved and brought in place a comprehensive, efficient and effective framework for smooth and timely delivery of free, fair and credible elections in line with our commitment to the constitutional mandate, legislative obligation, institutional values and traditions established since independence.

One of the key areas of focus for the ECI relates to maximizing participation of all categories of voters and obliteration of participation deficit. Voter turnout, an index of participation, is the barometer of health of democracy. In India, the voter turnout has shown an increase from 44.87% in the first General Election to 67.4% in the 17th General Election conducted in 2019. (Fig. 1) In absolute terms it means an awesome increase from 173.2 million electors in 1951 to 911.9 million electors in 2019 and an increase from about 105.9 million actual voters in 1951 to 614.68 million voters in 2019. One may say that the population has increased, but the fact is that the democracy has expanded and consolidated with increasing participation. Voter turnout at the State Legislative Assembly elections are still higher and that is the reflection of efforts made for bridging the participation deficit.



It is not a question of simply enhancing participation in numbers and the percentages. The strategies and action plans of the Commission have focused on enhancing participation on the premise of 'Inclusion' from all categories of voters not only in quantitative terms but also improving the quality of participation by way of voter education, facilitation and ethical participation.

The three main pillars of ECI's strategy include: Ease of Registration, Enhancing participation especially informed and ethical participation; and Facilitation to enhance inclusion and accessibility.

The three main pillars of ECI's strategy include: Ease of Registration, Enhancing participation especially informed and ethical participation; and Facilitation to enhance inclusion and accessibility. The article aims to share the ECI's initiatives, strategies, action plans for bridging the participation deficit and the outcomes in brief with the Readers.

The approach to the General Election 2019 termed as 'Desh Ka Mahatyohar' included identification and focusing on different categories of voters such as gender, PwD's, Senior Citizens, the members of armed forces, diplomatic personnel posted abroad and marginalized sections of society. Special initiatives specifically launched for each of these categories and for the electorate as a whole in terms of participation outcomes are discussed in the paper with special reference to the record outcomes at the above said General Election.

Constitutional provisions: Universal Adult Suffrage

The strong foundation that 'The Founding Fathers' of the nation laid comprises all essentials ingredients for conduct of free, fair, inclusive and credible elections in Part XV (Elections) of Indian Constitution. While Article 324 provides for an independent Election Commission charged with the responsibility of maintenance of the electoral rolls and vested with powers superintendence, direction and control of elections, Art 325 and 326 provide

for Universal adult suffrage: free and equal, elimination of all kinds of discrimination. The Representation of People Acts 1950 and 1951 further lay down the comprehensive framework, guidance for conduct of elections and the related matters. This strong foundation has helped democratic polity and culture in India to sustain itself on the basis of prescription of 'Every Vote Matters'; grow and shape up as the largest and one of the most stable and confident democracies of the world.

ECI's Overall Strategy: 'No Voter to be Left Behind'

Preamble to the Constitution proclaims India as a Sovereign Socialist Secular Democratic Republic. Inclusion of all categories of voters in electoral participation is the foundation on which political democracy stands as a way of life in the Indian polity. And the spirit flows through the Statute as a common thread. The Constitution in Part XV Elections provides complete and overarching mandate and framework for elections in India

Drawing support from the constitutional mandate and legislative framework, ECI, works on the premise of 'No Voter to be Left Behind': a perfect intent for inclusive and accessible elections. The ECI encourages and endeavours to obliterate participation deficit through its campaigns to disseminate information, awareness; motivates and facilitates participation of all categories of electors and through its strategies, action plans and well designed voter education campaigns that connect with all categories of voters.

Initiatives for Enhancing Electoral Participation:

ECI's commitment to free, fair and credible elections based on universal suffrage, inclusive, accessible, informed and ethical participation has driven strategic and new initiatives in voter education for empowering voters, facilitation right from inception in general and in specific and more focused in the recent period.

Major initiatives in this area include Systematic Voter Education and Electoral Participation (SVEEP) including National Multi Media Campaign,

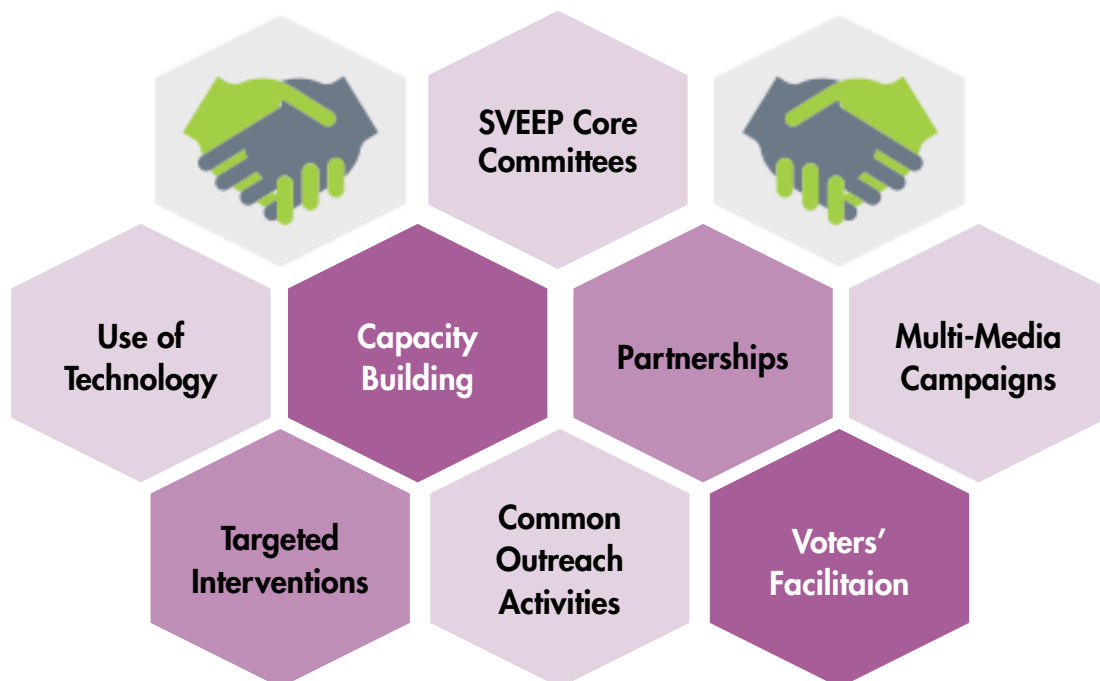
Electoral Literacy Clubs, Voter Awareness Forums; National Voters' Day (NVD) celebration, National Consultation on Accessible Elections, user friendly registration and polling stations, Integration of state-of-the-Art Technologies including digital technologies in addressing the challenges of voter connect and customized facilitation initiatives for different categories of voters. The approach has been enriched through several international thematic voter education conferences focusing on different categories of voters; Knowledge sharing on VoICE.NET, besides publications such as VoICE International, 'My Vote Matters' etc. Strategic Plan 2016-25 of the ECI serves as the umbrella document for moving ahead with initiatives in a structured and systematic manner. The initiatives and their impact for bridging the deficit are discussed briefly in the article.

Systematic Voter Education and Participation (SVEEP)

SVEEP, the flagship voter education programme of the Commission works to connect people with electoral processes down to polling station level and empowers them by way of awareness, information, motivation, facilitation and exhorts them for ethical voting. SVEEP develops and implements targeted interventions for securing 'Inclusion' of different categories of eligible persons in voter registration and electoral participation. Comprehensive State SVEEP plans were prepared well in advance of the GE 2019, implemented and monitored in a meticulous manner to engage citizens for maximizing their electoral participation through involvement of CSO's, voluntary organizations, youth organizations, State and National Icons and the state election machinery besides multimedia campaigns. To further strengthen the outreach, SVEEP Division launched massive National Multi-media/ Social Media campaigns for achievement of premise of 'No Voter to be Left Behind'.

As a result of SVEEP campaigns, Lok Sabha Election 2019 achieved a historic Voter Turnout of 67.4%. Voter turnout had increased to 66.44% in 2014 from 58.21% in 2009 after introduction of SVEEP programme. Women participation also increased to a historic 67.18% in 2019

Implementation of SVEEP through



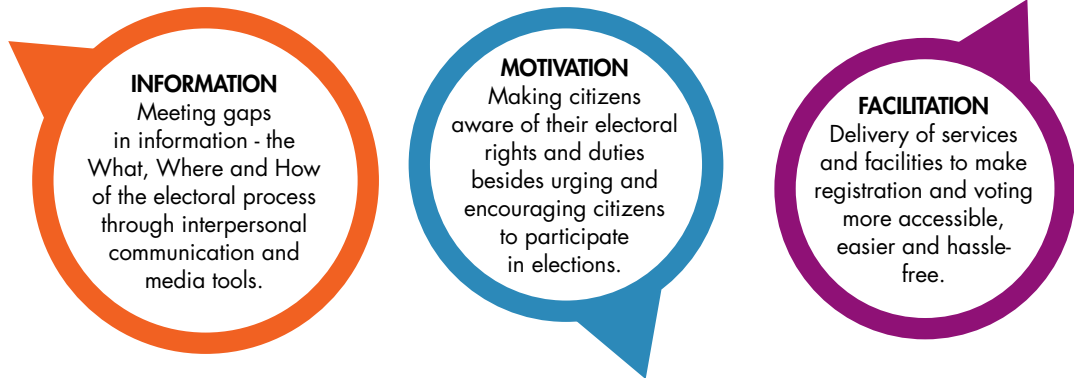
surpassing the gender gap by 0.17% as compared to 1.46% in 2014 elections. The number of electors that was 834 million on the eve of 2014 general elections, has increased to 911.9 million for the Lok Sabha Election 2019. Many States have recorded over 80% voter turnout, highest being Nagaland (83%). Among the union territories, Lakshadweep recorded the highest turnout at 85.21%

Some New Initiatives under SVEEP

- Initiatives for maximizing inclusion of New and future voters, Gender, Service Personnel, Personnel on election duty, diplomatic missions, NRI's etc.
- Starting with January 2018, about Seven Lakh Electoral Literacy Clubs in schools and colleges for new and future voters, 'Chunav Pathshalas' for communities and school drop outs.
- Voter Awareness Forums for organizations have been established for continued electoral literacy and enhancing voter awareness by easy engaging activities.
- National Consultation on Accessible Elections followed by time bound actions for inclusion of PwD's, Senior Citizens etc.
- 'Sankalp Patras': letters issued to students in schools ahead of elections to be resubmitted to the school after signatures of their parents for taking a pledge for voting in the forthcoming elections.
- Association of Civil Society Organizations, NGO's, Voluntary Organizations including Youth organizations, Campus Ambassadors etc.
- Appointment of National and State Level Icons
- Major events such as International Conference on 'Informed, Inclusive and Ethical Participation' (Oct 2016), 'Strategies for Empowering Young and Future Voters' (Jan 2017), Accessible Elections for PwD's (Jan 2018), 'Making our Elections Inclusive and Accessible' (Jan 2019) and launch of VoICE. NET and VoICE International have provided global leadership to ECI in voter education. International experience has helped in enriching voter connect.

Plan of Action

Three pronged strategy of IMF (Information - Motivation - Facilitation)



INFORMATION

Meeting gaps in information - the What, Where and How of the electoral process through interpersonal communication and media tools.

MOTIVATION

Making citizens aware of their electoral rights and duties besides urging and encouraging citizens to participate in elections.

FACILITATION

Delivery of services and facilities to make registration and voting more accessible, easier and hassle-free.

- A new user friendly SVEEP Portal was launched for voter information, education with accessible features for easy navigation.
- **National Multi-Media Campaign**
National Multi-Media campaign was launched during GE 2019 (election period) to further strengthen the impact of SVEEP outreach. The NMM Campaign was operated through major national electronic media, both the TV and Radio, social and digital media, major newspapers, cinema halls, outdoor media at airports and major railway stations. Partnerships with Railways included long distance trains for coverage. Metro rail in Delhi and many other cities have also been included.
The campaign focuses on core areas such as registration, voter verification, voter helpline, informed and ethical voting, inclusion, gender, service voters, overseas electors besides motivational messages.
- **Voter Guides**
Voter Guides carry valuable information regarding poll day, voting procedure, EVM and VVPAT, important contact numbers and other information of use to a voter. Braille supported guides were made to visually impaired electors.

of electoral process. The Commission's endeavor has been to ensure regular update of the Roll and improve its quality, efficiency and efficacy through technology integration. Electoral Rolls were revised with reference to 01.01.2019 as the qualifying date and finally published in all States and UTs. Updating continued till the last date of filing nominations. Commission's National Voter Service Portal (NVSP) provides Citizen Centric Electoral Registration services to ensure ease of registration. Broadly, the services offered at NVSP include:

- Apply online in for registration and corrections.
- Efficient search of names in the Roll, details of one's Polling booth, Assembly Constituency and Parliamentary constituency.
- Contact details of Booth Level officer, Electoral Registration Officer and other Election officer.
- Short audio visual films to get educated about election processes.
- Audio Visual scripts are also available for polling processes.

States across the country are increasingly adopting online voter registration to improve ease of registration, reduce costs, enhance efficiency, and build more accurate voter lists.

Ease of Voter Registration

Ease of Voter Registration and maintenance of electoral roll in good health constitutes the bedrock

Photo Electoral Rolls and Elector Photo Identity Cards (EPIC's)

The Commission decided to give Electoral Photo

Identity cards (EPICs) to all electors in 1993 with the intent of eliminating impersonation at polls. The EPIC contains details like name, father's/mother's/husband's name, date of birth, age on the qualifying date, sex, address and most importantly, the photograph of the elector. EPIC has become a valued possession that empowers a common man as it serves valid ID card –cum- address proof along with being valid identity to vote at elections. Practically every voter has been provided with EPIC by GE 2019.

Photo Electoral Rolls were first introduced in General Elections 2009. By now, all the States and UTs have Photo Electoral Rolls (PERs).

Photo Voter Slips

The Commission has directed that official voter slip with Photograph of the elector to be distributed in time well in advance of the date of poll as per a time schedule. A close monitoring of the distribution process is done by DEOs and General Observers. Booth Level Officers (BLOs) have been entrusted with the responsibility of handing over voter slips to electors. Political parties are also kept apprised of the distribution schedule.

Braille Photo Voter Slips

Accessible Photo Voter Slips with Braille Features for Persons with Disabilities (Visually impaired) were prepared to facilitate equal access.

National Voters' Day

NVD connects citizens with electoral processes down to the polling station level across the country. Started as a new initiative in 2011 on the eve of Diamond Jubilee celebrations, ECI dedicated its Foundation Day, 25th January, to the cause of voters of the country especially the young and future voters. The day is celebrated as National Voters' Day. A rigorous exercise is taken up every year (i) to identify all eligible voters attaining the age of 18 as on ensuing 1st January in each polling station area of the country (ii) enroll them and (iii) hand over their Elector Photo Identity Cards (EPICs) on NVD that is 25th January. The initiative, aims at providing youth a sense of citizenship, empowerment and pride in electoral participation as also to inspire them for exercise of newly acquired franchise. NVD has evolved into an instrument of enhancing electoral participation among all categories of voters with annual thematic progression. Based on the annual theme, a series of major activities are organized leading to analysis and improvement in 'Inclusion' of different categories of voters. Theme for NVD 2019 was 'No Voter to be Left Behind', a befitting theme for the election year.

Accessible Elections

The subject was selected by the Commission as the NVD theme for 2018. The activities started with an



International Conference on ‘Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Electoral Processes’ on January 24, 2018. National Consultation on Accessible Elections for inclusion of PwDs was conducted by the Commission in July, 2018. The Commission directed enhanced facilitation measures for PwDs as given below:

- Printing of EPIC (Electors Photo Identity Card) with Braille for Persons with Visual Impairment or Blind,
- Accessible Communication Awareness Materials
- Mobile Application to motivate and educate
- Appointment of Disability Coordinators at AC, District and State Level.
- Cascaded training on Accessibility to Poll officials
- Auxiliary Polling Stations
- Accessible Photo Voter Slips
- Sign Language window in all the audio visual training and advertisement content material for the convenience of deaf persons
- Free Transport Facility for PwDs and their Assistants

With the motive of making elections more accessible, 6.2 million. Persons with Disabilities (PwD) electors were identified and suitable arrangements made for their transport for user friendly access inside polling station.

The Commissions endeavour continues. Number of PwDs identified and mapped on electoral roll has increased to 6.56 million as on December 16, 2019. The Commission has extended facility of Postal Vote to PwDs and senior citizens of 80+ age to facilitate participation among this category of voters. The facility was run as a pilot in some constituencies in Jharkhand General Elections, 2019 followed by operational application extended during the recent State Legislative Assembly elections in NCT of Delhi.

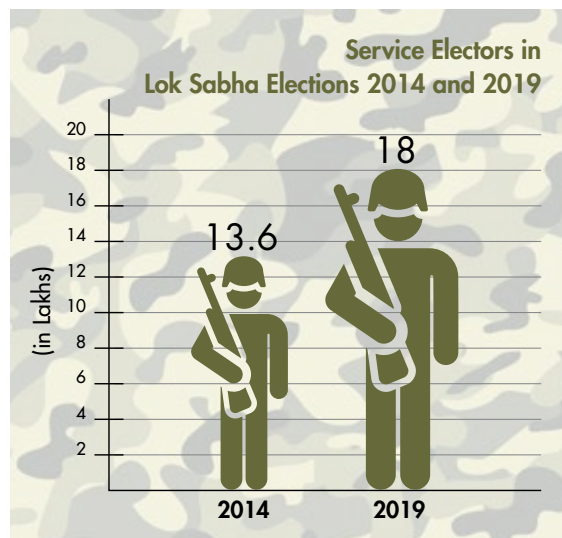
Electronically Transmitted Postal Ballot System (ETPBS)

Online voter registration facility was provided for enhancing voter registration especially for service voters. Nodal Officers were appointed

from Armed forces for enrolment, capacity building and awareness with a view to maximise the participation. Following are the salient points for service voters:

Use of Technology – Intranet of armed forces was used for voter education

Sensitization – Voter awareness content in internal newsletters, magazines and also dedicated posters and brochures



Film – An informative and motivational film to promote voter registration and voting through postal ballot by members of the Indian armed forces was produced and circulated among armed forces for easy understanding of facilitation.

Electronically transmitted postal ballot system (ETPBS) was launched for transmitting postal ballot electronically for service voters to facilitate their participation. In all 1.8 million. Service voters were registered and facilitated at General Election 2019 against 1.36 million. Service voters during GE 2014.

Strengthening Facilitation

- Model Polling Stations were established with Waiting halls, queue time announcement, medical attendant, play area for children
- Assured Minimum Facilities (AMF) – Ramps, toilets, sheds and drinking water at polling stations
- Voter Facilitation Centres (VFCs) – For information and services near the polling stations were established.

- Photo Voter Slips – Delivered at residence before polling day by the Booth Level Officers to all the electors. These slips while enhancing elector confidence, provide guidance to the voter and facilitate the voter as to location of the polling station, reduce voter apathy and also serve as a check against impersonation.

- **'Service to Voters only One Call Away': Toll Free No 1950**

The Commission established an efficient Voter Helpline App and Helpline at toll free number 1950 for any information related to elections, voting dates, EPIC, electoral roll, online registration or lodge a complaint. Voter education and voter awareness was also disseminated over this number. Efficiency and effectiveness of the facility was monitored.

- Refreshing the Memory: Polling day information was provided to citizens through SMS, radio, television and Public Address Systems.
- Awareness Observers were appointed to monitor ground level implementation of SVEEP interventions at the ground level

Direct Outreach

- EVM Familiarization Camps in schools, colleges, haats and other places
- Field workers: Direct outreach through ASHA, AWW, Postal Deptt. and Educations field functionaries
- Mid-Media: Through Song and Drama Division, Directorate of Field Publicity, NYKS, NSS, NCC, Bharat Scouts & Guide etc
- Pledge to vote – Sankalp Patras/ Pledge letters for parents through school students, signature campaigns, democracy walls

- **360 Degree Campaigns**

Leading to Lok Sabha Election 2019, SVEEP has undertaken extensive Voter Connect exercises in the remotest regions of the country through Radio, Television, Cinema, Outdoor Media, Print Media, Social Media, Digital Media, Posters and Pamphlets, Banners and Hoardings.

Stakeholder Empowerment through Technology Driven Initiatives

These initiatives included Voter Helpline 1950, citizen empowerment through cVigil, Voter Helpline

Mobile App, PwD App, Suvidha Candidate App, Samadhan web portal for grievances, Election Observer App, Sugam for transport management, EVM management system, Election Management Dashboard and whole lot of technological integration for enhancing efficiency, efficacy, transparency, accuracy, credibility and above all the integrity of election process.

Ease of Polling, User Friendly Polling Stations, Assured Minimum Facilities at Polling Stations (AMF)

Number of polling stations has been increased to 10.38 lakhs to enhance voter access to polling stations. Every polling station was equipped with Assured Minimum Facilities (AMF) like drinking water, shade, toilet, and ramp for PwD's, medical kit, adequate lighting, proper signage and a standard voting compartment etc.

Facilitation at Polling Stations

Facilitation centers nearer to the polling stations for voters were set up. Measures were taken for ensuring delivery of voter slips at home. Helpline 1950, digital booth locaters were provided. Special Facilities were provided at the polling stations for PwDs, senior citizens and women to facilitate their participation. It has been ECI's endeavor to make voting a memorable experience for every voter.

Enhancing Gender Participation

Voter education programmes focused at removal of gender gap in electoral participation. Targeted interventions are designed with a roadmap for facilitation down to the polling station level. Women specific campaigns for registration, cultural interventions, BLO's sensitization, women self help groups including government programmes infrastructure are involved for encouraging, motivating and facilitating women in enrollment and participation. Women specific cultural events, women Icons at all levels as strategies are also included. Facilitation for women at polling stations

has been enhanced to include inter alia separate queues for women. Following specific interventions are noteworthy for obliterating Gender Gap.

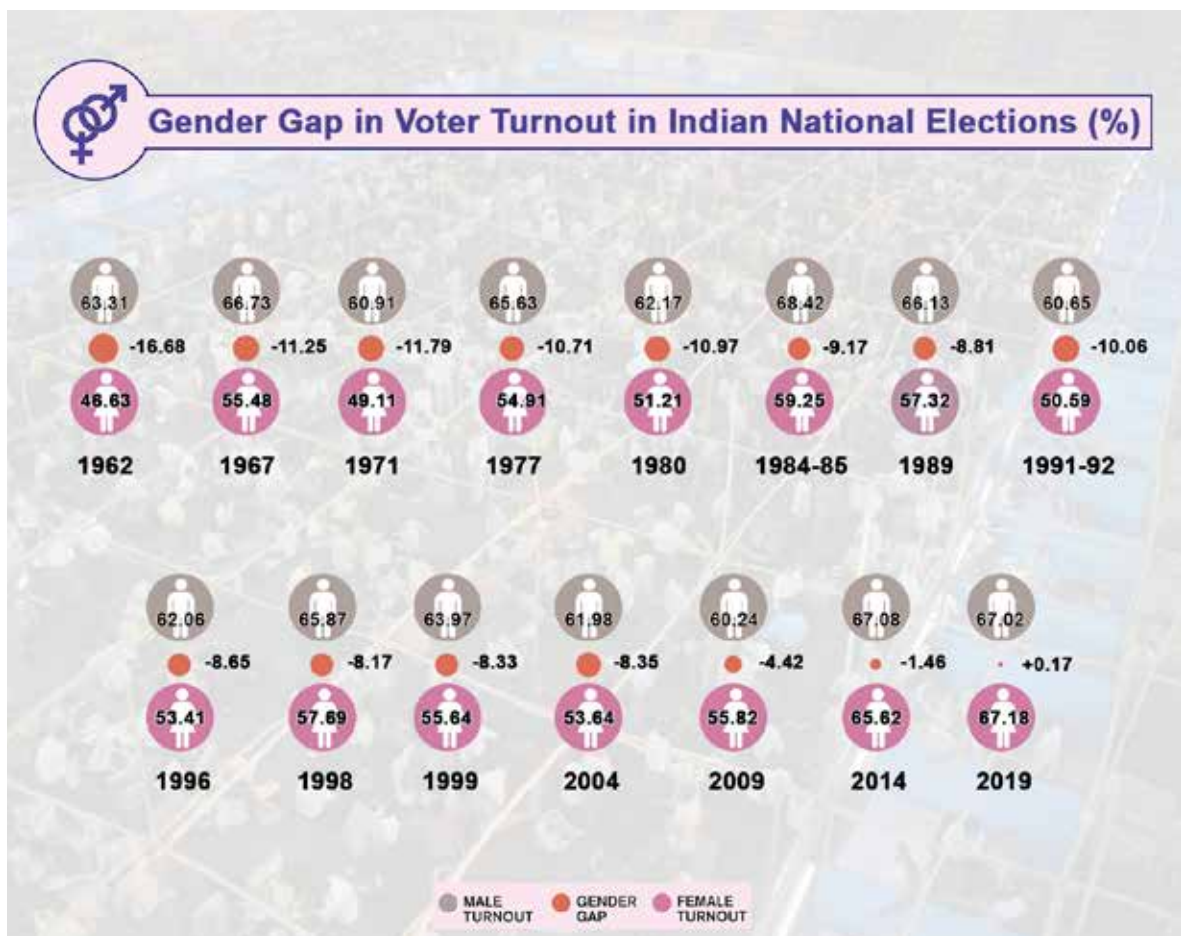
- **Women centric messages** and advocacy material in mass media
- **Door-to-Door** information and motivation through ASHAs, Anganwadi Workers, Shiksha Mitras
- **National Icons** – Popular faces of woman empowerment like MC Mary Kom and Saina Nehwal
- **Activities and Competitions** – Rangoli, folk art, songs and activities like Henna application to engage women
- **All Women Polling Stations** – managed exclusively by women officials and women security personnel. Starting with the practice and experience of West Bengal in 2014, all women polling stations (including security personnel) have become increasingly popular.

A norm of at least one such polling station per assembly constituency was established.

- **Women voters** facilitated through separate queues, toilet arrangements, crèches and volunteers at polling stations

General Election 2019: ‘Desh Ka Maha Tyauhar’

The Election Commission of India conducted the General Elections to the 17th Lok Sabha along with provincial legislatures of four states from 10th March, 2019 to 27th May, 2019. Termed as ‘Desh Ka Maha Tyauhar’, it was a unique celebration of the democracy, largest in the world, that engaged an all time high record of 911.9 million. Electors were spread over more than one million polling stations in the country. Highlights of electoral participation at the GE 2019 are given here for reference.



Highlights of Electoral Participation in Lok Sabha (House of People) Election 2019

- At 67.4% Voter turnout, General Election 2019 for 17th Lok Sabha witnessed the highest voter participation in the history of India. It eclipsed the previous turnout records of 66.44% in 2014 and 64.01% in 1984.
- 614.68 million voters cast their vote in LS 2019 as against 554.2 million voters in 2014 GE meaning an increase of 60.48 million. Thereby, marking an increase of voters by 10.9 %.
- The size of national electorate has grown to 911.9 million in 2019 from 834 million in 2014. This is an addition of over 77.9 million Electors. Of these 41.5 million are women and 36.3 million are men Electors.
- Targeted SVEEP interventions over these years have resulted in tremendous increase in female voter turnout as well. Women turnout stands at 67.18% as against 65.62% in 2014.
- Gender gap in LS 2019 has increased by 0.17 percentage point (male turnout at 67.02%) from 1.46 percentage point lower in 2014.
- 16 States/UT recorded higher women turnout percentage than men.
- With the motive of making Elections more accessible, 6.2 million. Persons with Disabilities (PwD) electors were indentified and suitable arrangements were made for their transport and comfortable access at polling station.
- Total postal ballots cast in 2019 are unprecedented 2.8 million of which 1.8 million are from service voters.
- Nagaland has continued to achieve the highest voter turnout among all states with 83% in LS 2019 and 87.91% in LS 2014. Lakshadweep recorded highest turnout in all (UT/States) at 85.21%.
- Madhya Pradesh has achieved the highest increase in voter turnout (9.59%) followed by Himachal Pradesh (7.97%) and Andhra Pradesh (5.74%) compared to LS 2014.
- 78 Females MPs have been elected in this election.

What Next?

Two inferences emanate from Voter turnout at 67.4 percent; firstly it is a record turnout till date and it is

a satisfactory note, secondly it is an affirmation of the strategies adopted for bridging the participation deficit. But it is essential to build on what has been achieved. End line survey reports from many states have been examined; weak spots of participation are being identified. We have to traverse much beyond 67.4 percent, therefore the unfinished agenda has to be reshaped and relentless efforts have to be made to realize the so called 'lost votes' and achieve ECI's mission 'No Voter to be Left Behind'.

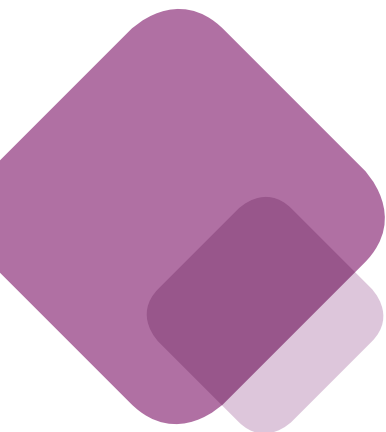
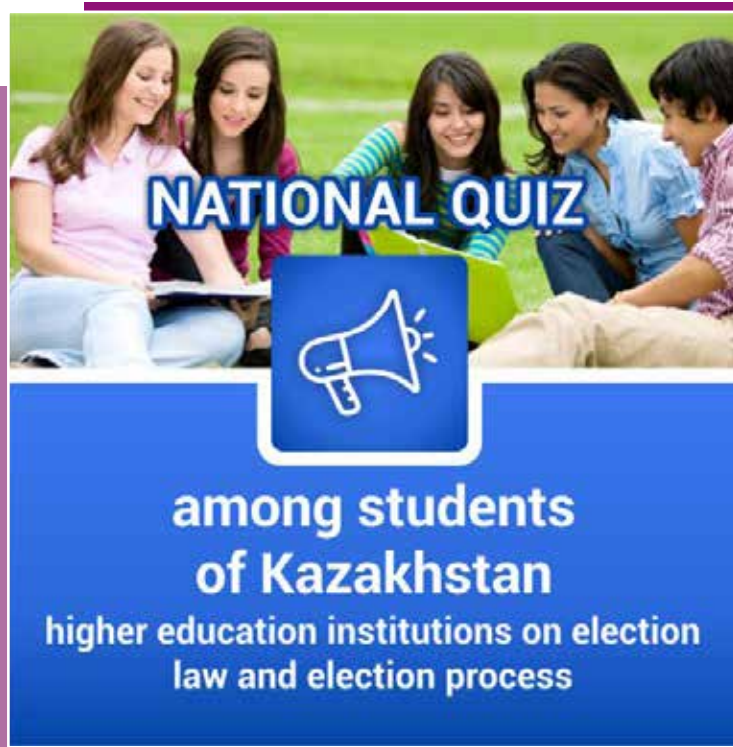


Umesh Sinha

Editor-in-Chief, VoICE International
Secretary General ECI &
Sr. Advisor India A-WEB Center



Innovative Practice of Voter Education for Youth in Kazakhstan



Development of political, electoral and legal culture amongst the youth is a priority goal of the nationwide youth policy of the Republic of Kazakhstan. The year 2019 was declared as the Year of Youth in our country.

The Central Election Commission is adequately experienced in reaching out to young and future voters (Mustafina S. About the pilot project "Elections of the school president" // Voice International. - 2019, No. 1. - p.55-59). Measures and initiatives are regularly delivered at the national and international levels aimed at testing new forms and tools of improving the legal culture of young and future voters and involving an active segment of young students and workforce.

One such activity is an intergovernmental project pursued by the Central Election Commission in partnership with the Interparliamentary Assembly

of the Commonwealth of Independent States. At the national stage, the project challenged students of Kazakhstan universities with a quiz on electoral law and the election process.

The main task of the national stage was to select a winning student at the country level to further participate in the International Scientific Debates hosted by the IPA CIS on the International Day of Democracy.

Organizing the quiz competition at the national level required significant intellectual, communication, organizational and technical support, and was therefore, entrusted to the National Steering Committee. A national jury was constituted to evaluate and select winners and recap the quiz results. These collegiate bodies included representatives from the Central Election Commission, the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan, the Association of Universities of the Republic of Kazakhstan, as well as leading researchers with constitutional and electoral law background. The powers of the members of the Steering Committee and the National Jury were elaborated in the Quiz Provision.

The first round of the quiz where the participants were expected to demonstrate their knowledge of the constitutional foundations of voting legislation was held on May 24, 2019 as an interactive online test for students. The quiz was launched simultaneously in the cities of Almaty and Taraz with the participation of Secretary of the CEC of the Republic of Kazakhstan Sabila Mustafina and head of the Electoral Education Department of the CEC of the Republic of Kazakhstan Mahabbat Boleeva.

In a well-organized partnership, the CEC and the Association of Universities of Kazakhstan engaged students from national and regional universities, both privately and publicly owned. Participating students – who totaled 175 – from 30 national and private universities across all regions of the country demonstrated a fairly high level of knowledge of the provisions of the Constitution of the Republic of Kazakhstan and the Constitutional

Half of the polling stations observed were accessible for voters with different kinds of disabilities.

Law “On Elections in the Republic of Kazakhstan”. All first round participants were presented with personal certificates on behalf of Berik Imashev, the Chairman of the CEC of the Republic of Kazakhstan, and Dmitry Gladey, the deputy head of the Secretariat of the CIS Interparliamentary Assembly.

The second stage of the quiz on June 4, 2019 was attended by ten students from nine universities that scored the most in the first round. The first round winners demonstrated their debating skills to the National Jury. The National Jury presided through a video conferencing, with territorial election commissions connected to the session.

The debates reflected current socio-political developments in anticipation of the election of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan. Participating debaters defended their stances on such issues as a voting activity of young people



CEC Secretary Sabila Mustafina at the opening of the quiz in Taraz State University named after Dulati

in the elections, participation of women, the role of the media, social media and bloggers in a pre-election campaign, and responsibility of presidential hopefuls for making sure their election programs are delivered, etc.

The national jury appraised the content and presentation of the material. The criteria for evaluating debating skills were previously agreed upon by experts experienced in scientific debates, and psychologists. The jury noted a high degree of engagement and concern demonstrated by students in matters of electoral law. All participants showed consistency, firm reasoning and depth of judgments about the pre-election considerations.

An intriguing point of the second qualifying round was an evaluation system. Through a preliminary draw, students chose the numbers of questions which they would be required to address. These numbers became their "cipher codes" in the course of interactive performance in front of the National Jury. Jury members accessed students' portfolio only after scoring was completed and winners of the second round were identified. This made sure the winner selection procedure was kept objective and impartial.

The results of the two rounds revealed winners – these were student of the Kazakh-Russian International

(Right) Head of the CEC's Electoral Education Department Mahabbat Boleeva during online testing (bottom) Videoconferencing with territorial election commissions during the second round of the quiz



University Roman Yesenalin, student of the Caspian Public University Ruslan Bukenov and student of Al-Farabi Kazakh National University Zhanibek Kanyatov.

Kazakhstan presented the national stage winners during the interstate teleconference organized by the International Institute for Monitoring

Democracy Development, Parliamentarianism and Suffrage Protection of Citizens of IPA CIS Member Nations, with six

states connected to the teleconference:

Azerbaijan, Armenia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova and the Russian Federation.

During the teleconference, the organizers praised the innovative nature of the content and technique of the quiz, high level of competition, the selection system and unique criteria for assessing debate skills.

The national jury appraised the content and presentation of the material.

To make sure finalists from Kazakhstan are well trained and ready to present their knowledge for the international stage of debate in the summer, they were consulted by IIMDD experts through Skype interactive meetings.

On September 16, 2019, an international conference was held in St. Petersburg in the format of the scientific debate "Development of Parliamentarism in the IPA CIS Member States" organized by the Secretariat of the IPA CIS Council and the IPA CIS IIMDD.

Two composite teams competed in the debate. One of the teams included finalists of the national stages that challenged students of CIS universities. The second team consisted of the winners of the previous year's quiz - university students from St. Petersburg and the Leningrad Region of the Russian Federation.

Over three rounds, contending teams deliberated on the development of practical democracy, the preference for parliamentary or presidential forms of government, as well as problems of economic and political integration in the modern world.

Victory in the International Scientific Debates was awarded to the CIS national team led by Roman Yesenalin from Kazakhstan.

The international jury for the scientific debates included Doctor in Law and Professor M. Kogamov, who is the head of research projects on scientific and legal due diligence. Moreover, the group of international experts awarded prizes to students Ruslan Bukanov and Zhanibek Kaniyatov from Kazakhstan who performed well at a quick-fire questions session.

Engaging young people in the voting process is one of the most important challenges in our time. In

Quiz winner Roman Yesenalin (center), prize-winners Ruslan Bukanov (left) and Zhanibek Kaniyatov (right)



The team of students from universities of the CIS countries - winners of the International Scientific Debate

order to get young people in discussing elections, we should use forms that they understand and are popular among them. It is at this young age that a person accesses the right both to elect and to be elected, with foundations of the political system, views and beliefs getting anchored in his mindset. The measures aimed to propagate electoral and legal culture among youth are most effective for personality development and successful socialization of young citizens.

Central Election Commission of the Republic of Kazakhstan

Regaining The Value Of The 'Invisible' Votes



At a critical time when voter turnout is steadily declining worldwide, Electoral Management Bodies (EMBs) are increasingly under pressure to maximize the participation of eligible voters in their electoral processes. When defining their strategies for bridging gaps in voter participation and determining the most effective course of action to increase voter turnout in elections, it is normal for an EMB to ponder: “where do we start”?

A logical starting point is to examine voter turnout data of the past cycles of elections. While not losing sight of voters who traditionally uphold their right to vote, the EMB should focus its attention on the percentage of eligible voters who didn't participate and, by not casting their votes, remained politically “invisible”. Election after election, these non-voters contribute to systematically lower percentages in voter turnout and, for this reason, they should be the primary target of the EMB's strategies seeking to bridge gaps in electoral participation.

Self-imposed or Inflicted Disenfranchisement?

To formulate its corrective strategies, the EMB can examine the non-voting segment of its electorate by more precisely ascertaining who these *invisible* voters are, and why – willingly or unwillingly – they do not participate in elections. To gain such a critical understanding, the EMB can attempt to cluster its *invisible* voters in relation to the specific *individual motivations* and contextual barriers that inhibit their electoral participation. A closer look to this non-participating segment of the electorate allows, in the interest of simplicity, to cluster *invisible* voters into two main categories:

1. Eligible voters who deliberately decide not to participate in elections; and
2. Those voters who would be willing to vote but, against such will, are instead disenfranchised.

The first category of *invisible* voters encompasses voters abstaining from voting. Their abstention is triggered by the consecutive incidence of two mechanisms, *indifference* and alienation, inhibiting their motivation to vote. Hence, the non-

ultimately prompts these voters to regard voting as a meaningless act and perceive that they are not being left with any viable option than keeping away from the ballot box.

The second category consists of disenfranchised voters, where their disenfranchisement is instead inflicted upon them, against their will. In fact, unlike indifferent and alienated voters, these *invisible* voters would normally be, at least in principle, willing to express their say in elections, but several contextual barriers prevent them from doing so. Regrettably, their exclusion from the electoral process may often be, fairly or unfairly, the result of various contextual barriers of a legal, normative or factual, casual or deliberate nature which, alone or combined, eventually contributes to their disenfranchisement.

Motivational and Contextual Inhibitors to Electoral Participation

Once having broadly categorized its *invisible* voters, the EMB can then undertake an in-depth examination of the main *motivational* factors or *contextual* barriers having so far inhibited their



With the electoral outcome no longer mattering to them, indifferent voters gradually become less and less likely to vote, with their presence at the polling stations also becoming sporadic.

participation triggered by these two mechanisms is a self-imposed one. In its initial stage, abstention typically manifests itself through *indifference* (or apathy) to vote; with time, and irrespective if it occurs for valid or untenable reasons, *indifference* prompts voters to perceive little or no difference among the political alternatives available to them. With the electoral outcome no longer mattering to them, indifferent voters gradually become less and less likely to vote, with their presence at the polling stations also becoming sporadic. In serious circumstances, *indifference* degenerates into alienation. A hopeless sense of resignation

participation in previous electoral processes. This examination is a critical important step in the definition of the corrective strategies of the EMB, as it allows to customize the type, scale and reach of the corrective measures that it is going to deploy to maximize the participation of its *invisible* voters.

By identifying what primary *motivating* factors and *contextual* barriers inhibit equal and equitable electoral participation, the EMB can better evaluate the reasons and the extent to which each of them contributes to lower voter turnout in its electoral processes, and then define the most suitable and realistic strategies to address them.

MOTIVATIONAL INHIBITORS	CONTEXTUAL INHIBITORS
<p>Several <i>motivational</i> factors may prompt political <i>indifference</i> and <i>alienation</i> in voters, transforming politically active citizens into <i>invisible</i> voters. Most typically, these factors originate from:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mistrust in the way the EMB manages elections • Large-scale and grossly unsanctioned electoral fraud • Electoral cycles repeatedly failing to produce credible results and genuine political alternation • Progressively restricting political freedoms, spaces and competition • Elections becoming, or simply being perceived, a means to legitimize the “democratic” installation of autocratic and oppressive regimes • Protracted misuse of political power, or corruption, coupled with blatant impunity • Crisis of political parties, their unappealing platforms or candidates • Political detachment, loss of partisan affiliation and identity from the once preferred leaning and consequent inability to reorient it towards an equally trusted and inspiring ideological alternative • Abstention practiced as a form of protest “vote” as a result of one, or more, of the above inhibitors 	<p>Main <i>contextual</i> barriers that most commonly inhibit participation of voters include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Restrictive eligibility requirements disenfranchise vulnerable segments of the electorate on grounds of citizenship, place of residence, mental or intellectual infirmity, ethnicity, bankruptcy or criminal record. • Inadequate levels of voter information (or of access to it) due to its weak or limited dissemination, or due to illiteracy or other types of historical, social, cultural or ethnic barriers • Large distance to polling stations due to residence in geographically remote or inaccessible locations • Involuntary or deliberate administrative or procedural omissions in being registered as a voter • Insufficient numbers of polling stations, or physical barriers limiting their access to persons with disabilities • Operational shortfalls leading to shortage of essential voting materials on election day • Fraud or procedural irregularities in the voter identification or voting processes • Election-related security threats, political intimidation, interference and violence • Absence from the constituency on the election day, either due to being temporary or permanently located in another part of the country, or abroad.

These strategies are critical to establish the course of action required by the EMB to overcome:

1. The apathy, sense of resignation, progressive political *indifference* and *alienation* of those *invisible* voters who, no longer believing in the value of their vote, are forced to resort to the stern decision of abstaining from using it; and
2. The *contextual* barriers confronted by those who instead, while fully believing in such value and be willing to uphold it, are disenfranchised.

Ensuring Equal and Equitable Electoral Participation

Ultimately, winning back the participation of *indifferent* and *alienated* voters, and helping them to regain the critical trust in the value of their vote, could be almost an insurmountable task for an EMB. Often, the type of efforts required to address the root causes that have triggered a profound disillusionment in these voters may transcend the EMB’s mandate, its scope of work, or be outside its direct sphere of control, or simply of its capacity to contain their perverse effects. This is particularly

the case when the factors that have triggered these *indifferent* or *alienated* voters to abstain from participating in the elections are deeply rooted in the historical, social, cultural, democratic, political or electoral fabric of the country. Further, it can be even more difficult to adopt corrective measures when these factors have proliferated, unresolved and with impunity, for extended periods. In such cases, unless a major, consensual and convincing process of genuine political and electoral reform (or radical and credible alternation of political power) takes place, the EMB could only have a limited power to win back the minds and the confidence of current generations of disillusioned voters who feel as being left with the only option of becoming politically *invisible*.

In seeking to address the *motivational* factors that have prompted the *invisible* voters to relinquish their voting rights, the EMB's strategies should be geared towards advocating genuine reforms to strengthen the integrity of future electoral processes. To be a credible driver of change, the EMB needs to assert its role and reputation (or re-assert them, in case they are eroded) as an electoral management body guided by core principles of independence, impartiality, integrity, transparency, efficiency, professionalism and service-mindedness. While advocating for such reforms in the immediate, the EMB can also simultaneously adopt a forward-looking strategy targeting segments of the electorate considered most at "risk" to potentially become *invisible* voters in the future, such as the youth. Such forward-looking strategies may entail conducting tailored voter and civic education programmes (possibly, in schools) stressing the importance of engaged and active citizenry and of the profound meaning and inalienable value of voting in elections.

Finally, when instead it comes to ensuring the participation of eligible voters *disenfranchised* by *contextual* barriers, the EMB can play a stronger role in addressing specific factors that are inhibiting the enfranchisement of this vulnerable segment of its electorate. Strategies for bridging gaps in the participation of *disenfranchised* voters are numerous and may include, for example: advocating for, or undertaking, genuine reform of the legal, normative and procedural framework of elections and the political system; enhancing the quality and reach of voter information; professionalizing the implementation of all administrative and operational phases of the elections; increasing the numbers of polling stations and ensuring their physical accessibility; improving the training of pollworkers; enhancing transparency and security measures; strengthening electoral dispute resolution mechanisms; adopting absentee and out-of-country voting provisions, and more.

While perhaps not succeeding to entirely resolve the perverse effects of the various *motivational* and *contextual* inhibitors to equal and equitable voter participation, it is by putting these corrective strategies into action, that the EMB can at least endeavor to reverse steadily declining trends in voter turnout and help its *invisible* electorates to regain their voice and their trust in the inviolable value of their vote.



Antonio Spinelli

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Strategies for Bridging the Participation Deficit

■ General

Free and fair elections are fundamental to democracy and essential constituent of legitimacy in democratic governance. Levels of electoral participation function as thermometers of the health of a democracy. If large number of citizens fails to turn out to vote, not only they abstain from contributing to a political choice leading to participation deficit, but they are an indicator of pertinent barriers and also signal voter apathy.

Inclusion of voice as a right in electing the representatives is enshrined in UDHR and as such constitutes a basic human right in democracy. In this context, to start with, let us briefly look at the prescription for participation under some of the 'International Treaties'.

Universal Declaration of Human Rights and Democracy

The principal and universal legal instruments that define participation as a right include Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) signed and ratified by over 160 countries. Other universal treaties that elaborate standards for inclusion in electoral participation are: the Convention on Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the Convention on the Rights of Persons With Disabilities (CRPwD) etc. Following provisions of UDHR and ICCPR are noteworthy in this context:

“Article 21

1. Everyone has the right to take part in the government of his country, directly or through

freely chosen representatives.

xx

xx

xx

xx

3. The will of the people shall be the basis of the authority of government; this will shall be expressed in periodic and genuine elections which shall be by universal and equal suffrage and shall be held by secret vote or by equivalent free voting procedures.”

Article 25 of the ICCPR reads as below:

“Every citizen shall have the right and the opportunity, without any of the distinctions mentioned in Article 2 and without unreasonable restrictions:

- a) To take part in the conduct of public affairs, directly or through freely chosen representatives;
- b) To vote and to be elected at genuine periodic elections which shall be by universal and equal suffrage and shall be held by secret ballot, guaranteeing the free expression of the will of the electors;
- c) To have access, on general terms of equality, to public service in his country.”

Further, the constitutional, legal and legislative framework of each country shapes up the respective electoral process. An elector or a voter is the central figure who elects representatives.

Voter Registration: Gateway to Enfranchisement

While voting on Election Day is the final expression of this right, the process of registering voters and maintaining a healthy electoral roll

is the 'Gateway' to enfranchisement and a key component of the electoral process that enables the exercise of suffrage. Eligibility criteria and the process may vary from country to country. A formal registration process backed by force of law and maintenance of healthy electoral roll means inbuilt legitimization benefit of enabling and empowering eligible voting age population with an opportunity to exercise their franchise. Removal of barriers to registration is necessary to realize larger electoral participation. All-inclusive, clean voter registers should be considered a safeguard to the integrity of the suffrage, an essential condition to legitimacy of democracy and in turn the political stability of a country. And to follow, there must be a guarantee that the right to vote in elections is universal, equal, direct and secret.

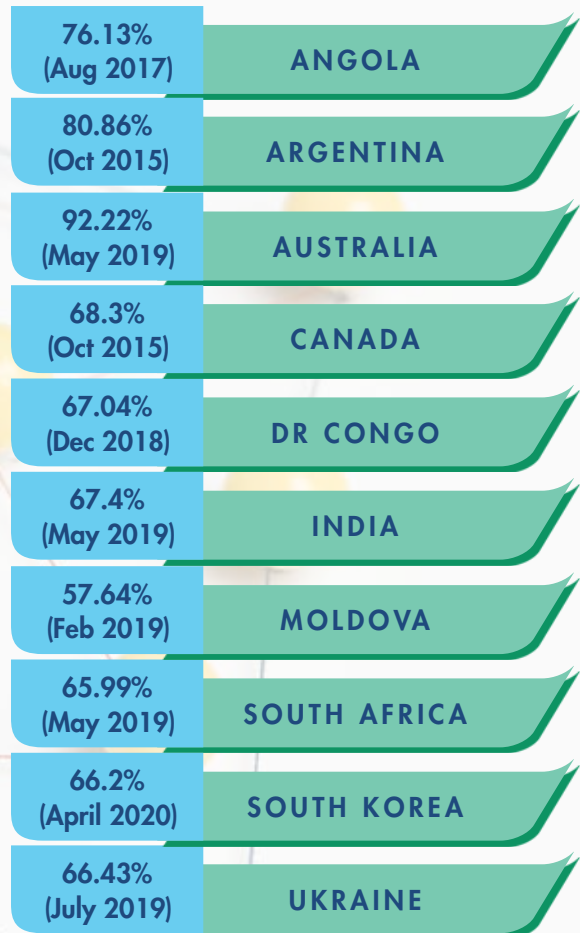
Participation Deficit: Strategies for Bridging the Gap

"Get out the vote" or "getting out the vote" (GOTV) strategy is used in many countries for enhancing the voter turnout in elections especially in countries which do not have or enforce compulsory voting. The strategy may include voter registration campaigns by the EMB's or nonpartisan organizations that are launched for motivating voters to register and to vote. Campaigns cover initiatives to register voters, encourage them to vote by available facilities such as absentee ballot, early voting or the Election Day voting. The campaigns utilize multimedia interventions including along with digital communication to connect with the voters and may vary from country to country. EMB's may develop partnerships with civil society organizations, voluntary organizations, Icons and brand ambassadors to enhance their outreach and maximize their voter connect and its outreach. Systematic Voter Education and Electoral Participation (SVEEP) of ECI is worth mentioning here as a multimedia mega intervention that connects 911 million voters in India. Some countries have adopted compulsory voting as an option to maximize the participation.

Voter Turnout

Voter turnout is the percentage of eligible voters who exercise their franchise by casting a ballot at an election. Different countries have very different

voter turnout rates. For illustration, the voter turnout rates in some of countries are as below:



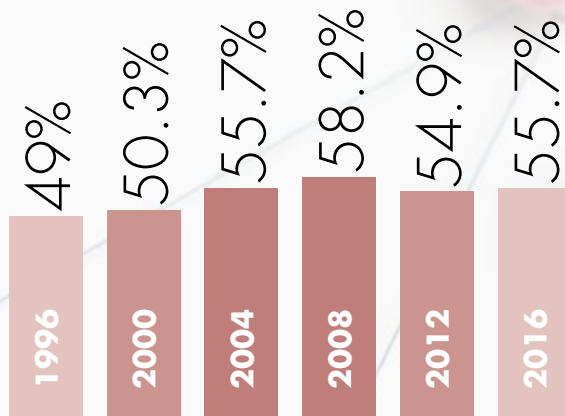
■ The Issue and the Challenge

Despite constitutional and legislative mandate for universal suffrage and inclusion of all categories of voters in the participation, low voter turnouts in different countries have been a matter of concern and studies have been carried out to appreciate issues involved. EMB's across the democracies of the world have taken robust initiatives for enhancing voter turnouts and encourage participation in the political process. Interventions through Multimedia campaigns including digital communications, conventional methods and all have been used. Considered efforts have been made to remove barriers to voter registration and facilitate voting with a view to bridge the participation deficit or the gap. Yet the challenge remains.

This article attempts to look at the strategies to 'Bridge the Gap' adopted by different countries.

■ The United States of America

In the US, voter turnout during Presidential elections have ranged from 49% in the year 1996 to 58.2% in 2008 and 55.7% in the year 2016 as mentioned below:



In the US, voting is voluntary. Low voter turnout has been a subject of study and research especially under projects like the 'Vanishing Voter Project'. A large number of nonpartisan voter turnout organizations have formed in an effort to "get out the vote". Such voter turnout organizations include the League of Women Voters, Rock the Vote, The Voter Participation Center and the Vote.org etc which work to motivate voters to register and to vote in the belief that failure of any eligible voter to vote in any election is a loss to society.

■ Help America Vote Act (HAVA)

The U.S. Election Assistance Commission (EAC) established by the Help America Vote Act (HAVA) of 2002 is an independent, bipartisan commission charged with developing framework for enhancing electoral participation, standards and guidance to meet HAVA requirements, adopting voluntary voting system guidelines, and serving as a national clearinghouse of information about election and connect with voters besides maintenance of National Mail Voter Register. A number of programmes have been directly established by provisions in HAVA for different categories of voters. These programmes include Help America Vote College Program (HAVCP), National Student

and Parent Mock Election, Help America Vote Foundation, AVTI and support to a number of other programmes. Some of the important programmes are as below:

Help America Vote Foundation

Section 601 of Help America Vote Act provides for establishing the Help America Vote Foundation as a charitable and nonprofit organization to (i) Mobilize secondary school students in the US to participate in the election process in a nonpartisan manner as poll workers or assistants. (ii) Place secondary school students as nonpartisan poll workers or assistants to local election officials in polling places across the US. (iii) Establish cooperative efforts with State and local election officials, local educational agencies, superintendents and principals of public and private secondary schools, and other appropriate nonprofit charitable and educational organizations exempt from taxation.

Non-partisan Approach: an Essential requirement for Eligibility

The foundation is expected to carry out its purposes without partisan bias or without promoting any particular point of view regarding any issue.

Partnerships with non-partisans and non-profits Election Assistance Commission (EAC) encourages partnerships with non-partisans and non-profits for implementation of its programmes. Necessary funds are also provided as per prescribed procedures. A large number of such organizations are working for voter education and collaborate with educational institutions, election offices. Standards and the guidelines of EAC and use of technology tools are vital to the partnerships besides non partisan approach. Some illustration of such partnerships are voter education programme of National Education Association of America for school children, Campus Election Engagement Project, League of Women Voters, New America Foundation and like that a large number of organizations.



The **Federal Voting Assistance Program (FVAP)** is a voter assistance and education program established by the US Department of Defense (DoD) in accordance with federal law to ensure that members of the U.S. armed forces, their eligible family members, and U.S. citizens overseas are aware of their right to vote and have the efficient facilities for the objective.

FVAP is responsible for:

- Providing military and overseas voters covered under UOCAVA with nonpartisan information about voter registration and assistance with the absentee voting process.
- Producing and distributing voting resources to election officials, Voting Assistance Officers, and voters in order to help them navigate the absentee voting process.
- Informing states of their requirements under UOCAVA and the particular challenges military and overseas voters face in the absentee voting process.



The **U.S. Vote Foundation (US Vote)** is a non-partisan non-profit 501(c)(3) voter assistance and civic tech organization that helps American citizens, domestically, overseas or in the military, participate in elections.



Rock the Vote is a non-profit progressive-aligned group in the United States whose mission is “to engage and build the political power of young people.”



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS®

■ The League of Women Voters (LWV)

The League of Women Voters (LWV) is a non-partisan American civic organization formed to initially to help women take a larger role in public affairs as they won the right to vote. LWV operates its online strategies through tools such as Facebook, RSS, Twitter, LinkedIn and YouTube. It engages the voters, men and women, through its web based operations to Find a Local League or Contact the Elected Officials.

Inclusion in Voter Engagement: Key Objective

LWV’s work especially seeks to aid those from traditionally underrepresented or underserved communities, including first-time voters, non-college youth, new citizens, minorities, and low-income Americans. Hundreds of local volunteer teams work year-round to register, inform and mobilize hundreds of thousands of voters in the lead-up to Election Day.

The League mobilizes voters, facilitates registration of millions of voters through its technology driven online service as its one-stop elections information and facilitation hub.

Voter Engagement by Nonprofit VOTE

Nonprofit VOTE was founded in 2005 by a consortium of state nonprofit associations and national nonprofit networks to provide resources and training to conduct nonpartisan voter participation and election activities. Nonprofit VOTE partners with America’s nonprofits to help

the people they serve participate and vote. They are the largest source of nonpartisan resources to help nonprofits integrate voter engagement into their ongoing activities and services. They are an official voter participation partner of the National Association of Secretaries of States.

Accessible Voting Technology Initiative

The EAC's **Accessible Voting Technology Initiative (AVTI)** supports accessibility research on transformative technologies and approaches. Through the AVTI, the EAC has produced over 45 solutions for assisting voters with disabilities. The initiatives include the EAC's Military Heroes grant to provide assistance needed for recently injured military personnel to participate in elections.

■ The United Kingdom: IT Driven Campaigns

The United Kingdom has system of voluntary voting, allows postal voting and voting by Proxy. Universal suffrage, on an equal basis for men and women over the age of 21, was established in 1928. Voting age was reduced from 21 to 18 by The Representation of People Act, 1969. Further, the Representation of People Act 1985 provides that the British citizens abroad have the right to vote for a five-year period after they had left the United Kingdom. The RP Act 1989 extended the period to 20 years; and citizens who were too young to vote when they left the country also became eligible. In England and Wales, anyone who is aged 18 or over on polling day is entitled to registration as a voter.

During the last five parliamentary elections, voting turnout was: 2005 65.1%; 2010 65.1%; 2015 66.1%; 2017 68.7%; 2019 67.3%

As in many Western democracies, voter apathy is an important concern, after a dramatic decline in election turnout around the end of the 20th century. Turnout in UK General Elections fell from 77% in 1992, and 71% in 1997, to as low as 59% in 2001. It has, however, increased in subsequent elections. In other elections turnout trends have been more varied.

The Electoral Commission of the UK has

been using multimedia including IT driven communications for information, awareness of voters about elections and electoral processes to enhance participation. Some of the communications for May 2020 election are given below (Election Postponed because of COVID2019)

Instagram story for PCC elections (Bath)



Instagram story for PCC elections (Laundrette)



Facebook header for PCC

Besides Instagram Story, Posters, Twitter headers and like that a lot of other communications have been developed and pressed into dissemination by the Electoral Commission of the UK for May 2020 Police Commissioner election (It is a different matter that the election stands postponed because of the COVID 2019 challenge) The Commission also publishes voter guides for different categories of voters such as Postal voting quick start guides, Accessibility guides



SOURCE UCU.ORG.UK

SOURCE BBC.CO.UK

■ Compulsory Voting

There are 32 countries with compulsory voting. 19 of these countries pursue it through enforcement. Illustrations of countries following enforcement of compulsory voting are: Argentina, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Brazil, Chile, Cyprus, Ecuador, Fiji, Greece, Lichtenstein, Luxemburg, Mexico, Nauru, Peru, Singapore, Switzerland, Turkey and Uruguay etc. There are others which do not enforce compulsory voting. These countries include Bolivia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Egypt, France, Gabon, Guatemala, Honduras, Italy, Netherlands, Paraguay, Philippines, and Thailand etc.

These countries use compulsory voting as such, as a strategy for bridging the gap in voter age population and voter turnout. One of the important features in such countries is significant enhancing of facilitation for polling by giving several easy and user friendly options to electors for convenience of voting besides ease of registration. Enforcement may have some options or relaxations for certain age groups.

We take the example of Argentina and Australia for a brief discussion. These two countries follow compulsory voting and easy registration.

■ Argentina: Mandatory Voting

The electoral reform of 1912 made the vote secret and compulsory in Argentina for all males over 18 years of age. The reform came up as a dramatic turning point in the country's political development, as the turning of Argentina into a modern democracy. Citizen residents are automatically registered in the 'electoral rolls', updated for each electoral proceeding. Citizens living abroad have to register at the consular or diplomatic offices of their country of residence in order to be able to exercise their right to vote.

Voting is mandatory for all Argentine citizens. During an election, voters have a stamp placed on the National Identity Document at the voting table to prove that they voted during that election. A citizen who does not vote is subject to a fine and a suspension of his or her political rights; there is no detention or jail for not voting. In practice, the penalties are not enforced, since amnesties for persons who did not vote during previous elections are usually enacted before an election.

There are legally acceptable reasons for not voting during an election, which the voter must explain in writing before an authority to avoid any possible penalty. These justifications include being absent from the country during an election, or being sick and having to remain at home or elsewhere. If the citizen is outside Argentina, the written explanation can be presented at a consulate, whereas in Argentina an explanation has to be presented before electoral authorities.

Method of voting is manual marking of Ballots although electronic voting has been tested in some parts of the country. A voter gets a blank envelope which s/he takes into a dark room. The voter places the ballot(s) of the respective candidates of her/his preference in the envelope and puts it into a ballot box.

In 2005, four different voting devices were tested in the Buenos Aires Congressional elections, viz. (a.) direct recording electronic (DRE) device; (b.) touch-screen DRE machine with voter verifiable paper trail; (c.) optical scan technology; and (d.) optical scan device with a single ballot listing all parties/candidates.

In 2009, the province of Salta used 'single electronic ballot' system. Therein, voters selected candidates through a computer. The machine printed and recorded the casted votes in a Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) chip, located within the paper. This ballot was then put in a ballot box and votes were counted by the computer. The same technology was then used in the 2015 local elections of Buenos Aires

Electoral Inclusion and Accessibility

The electoral process can present various barriers that affect the full exercise of citizens' rights. These can be evident (such as architectural or environmental aspects) or subtle but with more restrictive characteristics (For illustration communication, procedural, and informative aspects). As a whole, the existence of barriers constitutes an impediment to the full exercise of rights. The obstacles impact on the electorate in general, but undoubtedly mainly affect certain groups of voters:

- People with disabilities.
- Older adults.
- Population without access to information and communication technologies (ICT).
- Peoples and original Communities.
- People in vulnerable situations.

Mandatory to Vote

All voters who are 16 years of age or older as of the date of the national election, have the right and the civic duty to vote in the Primary and General Elections. This means that those who are 15 years old but turn 16 until the day of the General Election, inclusive, must go to vote. However, those under the age of 18 and those over the age of 70 will not be included in the Register of Violators to the Duty to Vote, if they do not appear to vote.

Challenges: Barriers to the electoral process - Recipients

In some cases complexity of the electoral process implies the existence of obstacles in the full exercise of electoral rights. As mentioned, a significant and very diverse number of voters may encounter difficulties at different stages of the electoral process and consequent limiting of the exercise of their political rights.

Accessible vote: Electoral Inclusion and Accessibility Measures

With the purpose of promoting and facilitating full access to the exercise of political rights under equitable conditions, various measures for a progressive elimination of existing barriers in the electoral process are implemented

Before the Election Day

Electoral information is provided for all citizens, taking into account the diversity of the electorate. Electoral Roll, Information and other training materials were prepared in accessible formats. Presidential debate was facilitated with audio visual with Electoral Advertising. All the information was accessible both in the mass media and on the website, networks and social platforms.

On Election Day

- **Voting priority:** A PwD voter can request for priority to vote in case of certain type of limitation or disability.
- **Voting in the Accessible**

Darkroom (COA): Each voting establishment must have an Accessible Darkroom (COA) constructed to vote by the PwDs, as well as older adults and pregnant women and / or children. It will have the following characteristics:

- It will be located in the space with the easiest access and closest to the entrance of the establishment.
- It will have signage so that it can be easily identified.

A citizen who does not vote is subject to a fine and a suspension of his or her political rights; there is no detention or jail for not voting. In practice, the penalties are not enforced, since amnesties for persons who did not vote during previous elections are usually enacted before an election.

- It could be exclusive or it could be a common dark room.
- **Assisted voting:** If a voter presents some type of limitation or disability to carry out the voting procedure, he / she may request the assistance of the Presiding Officer or a person he or she trusts, who must present their document of identity.
- **Assistance dog:** If the voter is accompanied by a guide or assistance dog, he may enter the establishment and access the dark room with him.
- **Attendance for the signature:** If the voter presents difficulties for the signature of the register, the Table Authority has a Guide Template that will facilitate the procedure. It is a rule that has a space with relief that will be located on the box for the signature, easily identifiable by touch.

Inclusion of Native Peoples and Communities in the electoral process

They are aimed at people who recognize themselves as **descendants (if they have any ancestor), or belonging to Original Peoples or Communities** who face difficulties in exercising their vote, either due to access to information, or in understanding language, or in communication. There is great diversity regarding the use of their languages, which are transmitted from generation to generation. In some cases, they have been disappearing or mixing with each other and in others, they have persisted over time. There are monolingual people, that is, they only communicate through their native language. Therefore, the necessary measures, information and activities are progressively adopted to guarantee the exercise of suffrage, taking into account essential aspects of their languages and identity. In this sense, information and training materials are produced and disseminated in various native languages.

■ Australia: Compulsory Voting

In Australia, voting is compulsory. The Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918, under section 245(1) mandates that : "It shall be the duty of every elector to vote at each election". An elector has to attend a polling place, have his/her name

marked off the certified list, receive a ballot paper and take it to the voting booth, mark it, fold the ballot paper and place it in the ballot box.

Generally an elector goes to the designated polling station in his area for ordinary voting. Since voting is compulsory, Electors are provided with several options to facilitate casting of their vote at an election. The options include postal voting, pre-poll voting, absentee voting, voting at Australian overseas missions and voting at mobile teams at hospitals and nursing homes and in remote localities.

History of Compulsory Vote.

Compulsory voting was first advocated by Alfred Deakin at the turn of the 20th century. Compulsory enrolment for federal elections was introduced in 1911. In 1915, consideration was given to introducing compulsory voting for a proposed referendum, which of course was not held because of certain reasons. In 1915, compulsory voting was introduced in Queensland, apparently concerned that ALP shop stewards were more effective in "getting out the vote", and that compulsory voting would restore a level playing ground. The significant impetus for compulsory voting at federal elections appears to have been a decline in turnout from more than 71% at the 1919 election to less than 60% at the 1922 election. In 1924, a private member's bill to amend the Electoral Act was introduced in the Senate by Senator H. J. M. Payne. It was only the third private member's bill passed into law since 1901.

The result was loud, clear and immediate to the effect turnout at the 1925 election rising to over 91%. Victoria introduced compulsory voting in 1926, NSW and Tasmania in 1928, WA in 1936 and SA in 1942. When enrolment and voting at federal elections was introduced for Australian Aborigines in 1949 it was voluntary, and continued to be so until 1984 when enrolment and voting became compulsory for all eligible electors.

It is compulsory by law for all eligible Australian citizens to enroll and vote in federal elections, by-elections and referendums.

Facilitation for Participation

The Australian Electoral Commission (AEC) facilitates eligible voters through an impartial and

independent system by way of active electoral roll management, efficient delivery of polling services to different categories of voters besides targeted voter education and public awareness programs.

Early Voting

In person at an early voting centre

If a voter is not able to visit a polling station on election day he/she can vote at an early voting centre in Australia. A list of early voting centers is made available after an election is announced.

Postal voting

After an election is announced, one can apply for a postal vote to have ballot papers sent by mail. One can apply online via the AEC website, or by completing a postal vote application form available from AEC offices at election time.

AEC mobile voting

AEC mobile polling teams visit many voters who are not able to get to a polling place. Mobile polling facilities are set up in some hospitals, nursing homes, prisons and remote areas of Australia. Mobile polling is carried out around Australia during the election period. A list of visit locations is made available after announcement of election.

Telephone voting

The PwDs with vision impairment can cast their vote through the AEC's telephone voting service. More information on this service is made available after announcement of election. Other PwD Voters may also be eligible to cast their vote by post, or they may vote with assistance at a polling place.

Election Day Voting

One can vote at any polling place in respective state or territory on election day. Polling places are usually located at local schools, churches and community halls, or public buildings. A list of polling places is available after election is announced.

Overseas Voters

If a voter is overseas during the federal election period, one can vote at an overseas voting centre or by post. A list of overseas voting centers is

made available in the weeks after election is announced. If a voter is going overseas for a **short** period of time and plans to return to one's address in Australia one may still enroll and vote with an option to vote overseas or back at home address. Further, if a person is not enrolled and is overseas one has option to enroll online and vote.

Challenges

It may be mentioned that because of the secrecy of the ballot, it is not possible to determine whether a person has completed his ballot paper before placing it in the ballot box and as a result, it is not possible to determine whether the electors have fulfilled their statutory obligation to vote. However, it is possible to determine that an elector has actually attended a polling place or mobile polling team (or applied for a postal vote, pre-poll vote or absent vote) and been issued with a ballot paper.

Donkey Voting

One of the odd challenges of compulsory voting in Australia is the 'donkey vote'. A donkey vote is not the same as an informal vote that is a spoilt ballot paper or a wasted vote. A donkey vote is valid and influences the outcome. A **donkey vote** is a ballot cast in an election that uses preference voting system. As such a voter is supposed to rank candidates on the ballot paper in order of his choice, but ranks them simply in the order they appear on the ballot paper. Such a vote is called a 'donkey vote' and the voter that votes in this manner is referred to as a '**donkey voter**'.

Typically, this involves numbering the candidates in the order they appear on the ballot paper: first preference for the first-listed candidate, second preference for the second-listed candidate, and so on. However, donkey votes can also occur in reverse, such that someone numbers the candidates from the bottom up the ballot paper. In systems where a voter is required to place a number against each candidate for the vote to be valid, the voter may give the first preference to the candidate they prefer, then run all the other numbers donkey fashion.

Donkey Voting: An illustration

There may be several reasons for 'Donkey voting' such as voter apathy, protest voting, simplicity on

How-to-vote cards, the complexity of the voting system, or voter ignorance of the voting system rules. Alternatively, what appears as a donkey vote may in fact be a genuine representation of a voter's choice.



Has compulsory voting helped Australia?

One of the initial key reasons for introducing compulsory voting in Australia, and one of the arguments frequently advanced for continuity thereof, is that it supports a high degree of electoral participation. The turnout at Australian elections has never fallen below 90% since the introduction of compulsory voting in 1924. Table that follows compares voter turnout at selected House of Representative elections, including the election held immediately before the introduction of compulsory voting, with House of Commons elections held in the United Kingdom at around the same time. The UK has voluntary voting:

Election Year	House of Representatives
1922	59.38
1924	77.0
1925	91.38
1929	94.85
1951	95.97
1966	95.13
1974	95.40
1983	94.64
1997	
1998	94.99
2001	94.85
2004	94.69
2007	94.76
2010	93.21
2013	93.23
2016	91.01
2019	92.48

Epilogue

EMB's across the world are seized of the issues and challenges in bridging the participation deficit in elections. Strategies do differ, intent remains common that is to expand democracy, deepen democracy. Intensive voter education campaigns under Systematic Voter Education and Electoral Participation (SVEEP), the flagship voter education programme of the ECI, have helped in quantum jump in voter turnout and also improve 'Inclusion'. Strategies for different categories of voters both, for enrollment and polling, have helped. Compulsory voting has produced better voter turnouts. But more important is the connect between the voters and the candidates, how the candidates address the problems of the voters after return to respective legislatures. Disconnect is the reason for voter apathy and consequent feeling of 'My vote does not matter'. This is the real challenge that has to be addressed for enhancing participation and bridging the gap.



S D Sharma

Senior Fellow
Election Commission of India

Assembly Election in the capital of India sets New Benchmarks in Accessibility



Election Commission of India is committed to Accessible Elections. The Commission has issued detailed guidelines on Accessible Election from time to time, focusing on registration, voting process and voter education/ facilitation of the Persons with Disabilities thus ensuring their holistic participation in electoral process. During Lok Sabha Elections 2019 (Indian Elections), numerous initiatives were taken up at the centre and state level such as ramps, wheel chairs, braille EPIC, braille EVM and ballot paper, accessible toilets, tactile signage, sign language interpreters, volunteers and transport facility to ensure hassle free participation of Persons with Disabilities. In addition to that, emphasis was laid on strengthening inclusive voter education, better use of IT applications and efficient mapping, sensitization training programs and improved

facilitation at the polling station. The Indian Election witnessed a collective effort of Election Machinery and numerous other stakeholders to make elections inclusive and accessible in all aspects.

Hitherto, every Election gives an opportunity to reflect and improve further. A detailed report on Accessibility was sourced from all states and a conference was organized to review the initiatives, identify challenges and chalk out strategy for future endeavors.

Carrying forward the takeaways of the conference, special efforts were made for ensuring participation of centenarian voters, voters aged over 80, and Persons with Disability, during the Assembly Elections in Delhi, in February 2020.

With the announcement of Assembly elections, a 360 degree campaign was adopted that ensured

Information, Motivation and Facilitation (IMF) to ensure Accessible Elections. Further, in the run-up to polling day, the office of the Chief Electoral Officer reached out to all voters with disabilities, centenarian voters, and voters aged above 80, through various media and outreach avenues, informing them of the facilities and administrative arrangements being made to assist them in casting their vote.

Many of these measures have, of course, been part of the Election Commission of India's accessibility initiatives earlier as well, and were used extensively during the Lok Sabha elections of 2019. They include the following:

- Voters with disabilities, centenarian voters, and voters aged above 80 are to be given priority for entering the polling station, without having to wait in the queue. If necessary, a separate queue will be made for them.
- Seamless access for wheelchairs by providing ramps of adequate slope, wherever required, and clear space for movement within the polling room till the voting compartment.
- Transport facility to be provided for Persons with Disability (PwDs), centenarian voters, and electors aged more than 80 years, upto Polling Station and back.
- If due to disabilities, an elector is unable to vote on his/her own; the Presiding Officer shall permit the elector to take a companion of not less than 18 years of age to the voting



compartment (preferably a relative) for recording the vote on his/her behalf and in accordance with his/her wishes.

- Staff on polling duty including police personnel, are trained/sensitized about the special needs of the voters with disabilities, courteous behaviour, and for providing necessary support to them. Volunteers will be deployed at polling locations to assist the voters with disabilities.
- Wheelchairs to be provided at polling stations for convenience of voters with disabilities, centenarian voters, and voters above 80.

Nodal officers were appointed in all eleven districts of Delhi to assist such voters. The names and contact details of these nodal officers were widely shared.

Pick and Drop Facility

In order to ensure maximum use of the facility of pick and drop being provided to voters with disabilities, centenarian voters, and electors aged more than 80 years, four different mechanisms were put in place to receive such requests. Electors could reach out through:

- The regular call centre number – 1950
- A dedicated pick-drop mobile app
- The website of the Chief Electoral Officer, Delhi
- SMS at a dedicated mobile number

All four channels proved effective in reaching out to the Persons with Disability (PwDs) centenarian voters and voters aged above 80. A total of 719 requests were received for pick and drop, through the four channels. All those eligible were informed through an SMS alert about the time at which they would be picked up. This SMS alert was sent twice. Once, on the eve of polling day, and then, early morning on polling day.

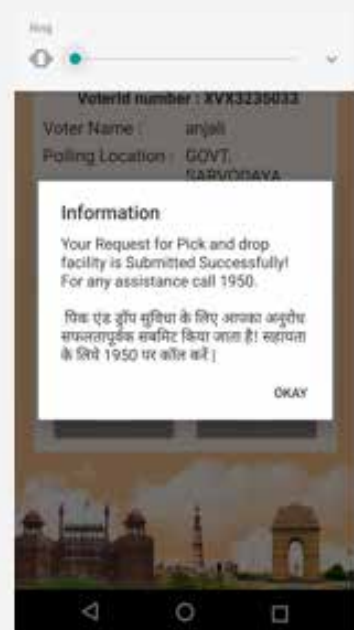
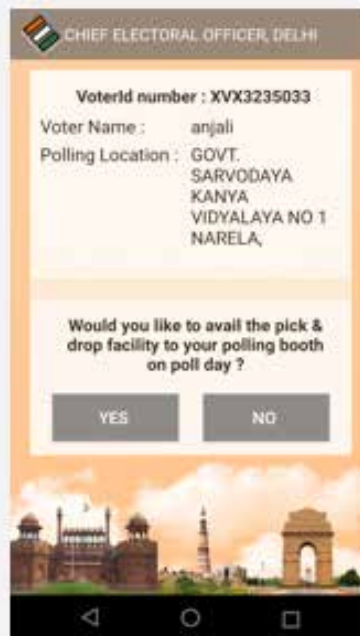
Special App for Monitoring Request Status

A special App was put in place for Block Level Officers and Supervisors to monitor the progress of pick-and-drop on polling day. This enabled them to effectively ensure in real-time, that the facility reached the intended beneficiary.

REQUEST THROUGH 1950 CALL CENTRE

- On receiving the call, an agent asks the elector for his/her EPIC Number and Mobile Number
- The Agent enters this data on a special link provided on the CEO Website
- An OTP is generated and sent to the elector on his mobile number. The agent asks for this OTP and enters it in the appropriate field
- A message goes to the elector's mobile number with full details of the name and electoral roll. It has one of the following two alerts, as appropriate
 - Your request for Pick & Drop facilities submitted successfully. For any assistance call 1950 .Your request ID is....
 - You are not registered in PwD/80+ elector category

REQUEST THROUGH MOBILE APP





Ram Nath Kovind, the President of India and the First Lady casting their vote



The Chief Election Commissioner and Election Commissioners of India at the polling station

REQUEST THROUGH CEO WEBSITE

REQUEST PICK & DROP FACILITY FOR 00+ AND DIVYANG VOTERS'

ENTER MOBILE NO. : 803648706 ENTER OTP : 6431

ENTER EPIC NO. : YDS431356

Your Request for Pick & Drop facility is submitted successfully! For any assistance call 1950.

AC No. :	33
Part No. :	228
Serial No. :	1346
Name :	HARDEY KASHI
Relation Name :	PREM SINGH
EPIC No. :	YDS431356
Age :	66
Gender :	M
Category :	00+

REQUEST THROUGH SMS

- Elector sends an SMS at 7738299899
EPIC <space> EPIC number <space> PICK
- A message goes to the elector's mobile number with full details of the name and electoral roll. It has one of the following two alerts, as appropriate
 - Your request for Pick & Drop facilities submitted successfully. For any assistance call 1950 .Your request ID is....
 - You are not registered in PwD/80+ elector category

Performance Evaluation

An evaluation of the performance of this facilitation measure reveals a high degree of success, as can be seen from the chart.



Feedback about the facility was taken from 343 voters. As many as 290 voters (nearly 85%), rated it as “excellent”, “very good” or “good”.

The arrangements for pick-and-drop for PwD voters, centenarian voters, and voters above 80 years of age in Delhi, mark the setting of new benchmarks towards Accessible Elections.



In all, 429 Persons with Disabilities, and 2257 voters above the age of 80, availed this facility.

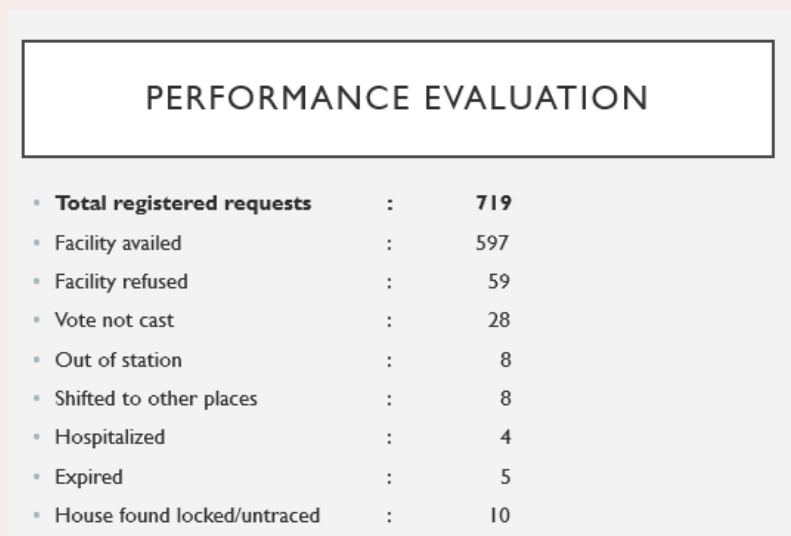
Postal Ballots

Senior citizen of more than 80 years of age, centenarian voters and PwD electors marked in the electoral roll now have a choice of voting either as an absentee voter or as a regular voter on the poll day.

The Delhi Assembly Elections of 2020 also witnessed significant facilitation measure in the form of postal ballots. This facility was extended to voters above the age of 80, centenarian voters and Persons with Disabilities electors. All these voters were given the choice of casting votes through postal ballots, at home. Six centenarian voters cast their vote using this facility. In all, 429 Persons with Disabilities, and 2257 voters above the age of 80, availed this facility.

Centenarian Voters

An initiative was taken to reach out to, and honour, all centenarian voters. 82 centenarian voters were felicitated during this initiative. They were assigned one Liaison Officer each. The Officer met the Centenarian Voter before the



polling day, and fixed an appointment for polling day. The Centenarian was escorted to the polling booth by the Liaison Officer, and assisted for priority voting. Each Centenarian Voter was felicitated with a bouquet of flowers, and escorted back to his/her residence.

A survey of all Centenarian electors – numbering 150 – was undertaken with the help of Bharat Scouts and Guides. Stories were prepared and photographs were taken during the survey. 111 could be successfully reached out to, and 73 of them interacted in detail, recounting their stories, in the course of India's journey of democracy.

A number of other measures were taken to ensure Accessible Election in Delhi. They have been summarized in the table.



Sharat Chander

Director, SVEEP
Election Commission of India



Accessible Election

Election Commission emphasizes that the electoral system be made fully accessible for Persons with Disability (PwD). There are 50471 registered PwD voters in Delhi. Following facilities were provided to PwD voters during Assembly Election-2020 in order to ensure PwD vote in large numbers.

- ◆ **Ramp:-** All the polling station locations were provided with proper ramp facility.
- ◆ **Wheel Chairs:-** 3875 Wheel Chairs were provided for the PwD Electors.
- ◆ **Volunteers:-** Total 9997 volunteers to assist old aged and PwD voters were provided in collaboration with the Directorate of Education, GNCT of Delhi.
- ◆ **Sign Language Interpreters:-** Sign Language Interpreters were provided at the 80 locations with high incidence of Deaf and Hard of Hearing voters. For creating voter awareness amongst the Deaf and Hard of Hearing voters, a video was developed in Indian sign language, and uploaded on social media and website of CEO, Delhi.
- ◆ **Toilet Facility:-** Every location was provided with sufficient toilet facility for male and female voters and accessible toilets for the PwD.
- ◆ **Accessible Posters:-** For Deaf & Hard of Hearing Voters posters in Indian sign language were displayed at all polling stations.
- ◆ **Magnifying Sheet for low vision:-** Magnifying Sheet was made available for low vision voters at each polling station.
- ◆ **Proper Signage:-** Proper signages were put at the polling stations for guidance of the voters.
- ◆ **Braille Facility:-** Braille Voter slips, Braille EPIC, Braille dummy ballot sheet and Braille voter assistance guide were provided to all visually impaired voters.

Advanced She Leads program supports 40 women leaders in Myanmar

The energy and enthusiasm in the training room was palpable as the 40 women taking part in module one of IFES' landmark "Advanced She Leads" program work together to prepare power maps on issues that they are working on, such as gender-based violence, disability rights, women's empowerment and the environment.

The advanced training comes five years after "She Leads" began in Myanmar and is part of the next phase of this highly successful initiative that to date has trained over 1,800 women in Myanmar. Launched in January 2020 elections as a key focus, this expanded program takes "She Leads" to the next level, building on the beginner and intermediary programs to include two

Participants prioritize strategies to work effectively with men; a visual aid used during the sessions on building resilience.

“

MU MU THAN, Bago, a participant from class:

"I really love this program. The training is increasingly challenging and we are gaining more insightful knowledge to meet our needs. I will not stop at the level I am now, I have decided I want to become a member of Parliament. I want to show how women can lead for change."

”



new components: the advanced training and a tailored leadership program for women living in conflict-affected areas in Kachin and Shan states.

The modular advanced program, which will run over a 16-month period, has been designed to support 40 carefully selected women leaders – 30 “She Leads” alumnae and 10 women who are new to “She Leads.” It will provide them with the skills and knowledge to effect positive change in their communities and influence policies and decisions at the local, state, regional and national levels.

The eight module program is intense and highly participatory. It focuses on content and topics that the women have highlighted as crucial to increasing their impact and influence in their diverse areas of work. Topics include transformational change leadership; project proposal development and fundraising; advanced advocacy and the media; and women and the law. In between each module, the participants will be given assignments, such as the module one mentoring assignment and self-development exercises, to put their learning into practice.

The program is being facilitated by a mixed international and national team, which includes Dr. Nyo Nyo Thinn, a former member of Parliament. In addition, to maximize learning and enable participants to ask questions and develop their networks, each module will involve topic experts and guest speakers. In module one, Sanda Thant, a leading gender activist, inspired participants during a panel discussion when she highlighted the importance of evidence-based advocacy.



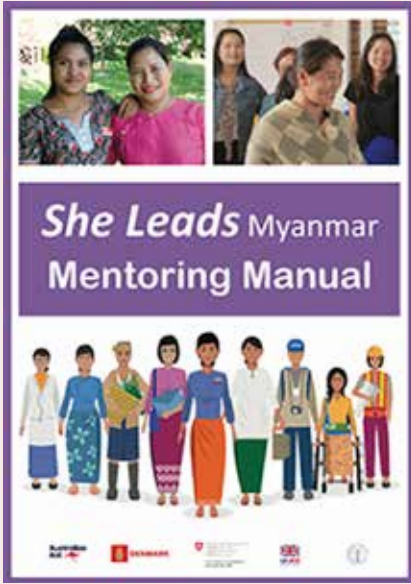
MYO MYO THET, from Lashio

Just before this training I was offered funding for a two-year project. I have been worried about whether to accept the funding. I woke up at 4 a.m. this morning and self-reflected. I have learned so much in the last four days. I want to be a change-maker for persons with disabilities. I want to prove that I can do this and become a role model for other persons with disabilities and work to cultivate the next generation of leaders. I have decided to take on the project and apply what I have learned from ‘She Leads.’



Module one was a great success, with participants providing positive feedback about the content and methodology. It is clear the training is already having an impact. Participants commented on how the training has motivated them to reflect on themselves as leaders, and to think about how best to harness their knowledge and skills to the greatest effect.

Another important way the advanced program is already having an impact is in



“
LU SAN, a leader of an internally displaced persons camp in Kachin

I am the leader of my camp and I try to fight for the rights of the people who have been displaced by conflict and advocate for them. Sometimes I lose heart, but the training sessions on stress management and resilience have really helped me. The training has given me new hope and energy and on Monday when I am back in my camp, I will fight for their rights again feeling full of energy.

The “Advanced She Leads” mentoring manual and a program visual

helping the women deal with the practical and emotional hurdles they can face daily as leaders. In addition to sessions on managing stress and building resilience, the training provided an environment in which the women can share their experiences and support each other – a powerful combination.

“She Leads Myanmar” is supported by Australian Department for Foreign Affairs and Trade, the Embassy of Denmark, the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation and UK aid.

Source – www.ifes.org

Digitalization of Electoral Processes

Humanitarian Dimension

Statement of Ella A. Pamfilova, Chairperson of the Central Election Commission of Russian Federation



Dear friends!

It is very important for us that the democratic development of our huge multinational country is impossible without an electoral system: modern, well-adjusted very reliable and maximally open for the society. And no circumstances, no difficulties should prevent the realization of one of the basic constitutional rights a citizen of the Russian Federation: the right to elect and be elected. We have developed so-called selective standards, and you know that every year we add new requirements. We have elections every week. Since the beginning of this year about 500 different elections have already been held, but, of course, the largest elections, the largest campaign takes place on the Election Day: On September 8, the voting will take place within the framework of six thousand election campaigns. The country is huge, 11 time zones, and when in Kaliningrad the first voters come to the polling station to vote, in Petropavlovsk-Kamchatsky voting is already coming to an end. For the entire electoral mechanism to work like a clock, it is necessary to introduce uniform electoral standards based on the cutting-edge information technology.

What do we mean by them at the moment (it's clear that the list will be extended)?

First, it is video surveillance at polling stations and in territorial commissions. Let me emphasize territorial commissions. We introduced it for the first time in the presidential election last year, which significantly strengthened public control over the voting process.

Further, our pride, our know-how is the mechanism Mobile Voter, which removed

many barriers for the huge country. This is very relevant in terms of the mobility of voters and the availability of voting.

The next one is the technical equipment of the election commissions, and as well as the production of the final protocols of the precinct commissions in machine-readable format: QR coding.

The Information and Reference Center of the CEC of Russia, which works absolutely for all participants of the election process, as well as the permanent RF CEC Information Center.

And the most important element is public observation at the elections. Now, a little more detail on each item.

We have elections every week. Since the beginning of this year about 500 different elections have already been held, but, of course, the largest elections, the largest campaign takes place on the Election Day: On September 8, the voting will take place within the framework of six thousand election campaigns.

Video surveillance. For the first time it was applied at the Russian presidential election in 2012. At that time, video surveillance covered more than 91,000 premises for voting, which is practically all the polling stations. Over 180,000 cameras have been installed nationwide. How does it work? Voting premises and the premises of the territorial election commissions in the 2018 presidential election are equipped with video surveillance cameras, which gives the opportunity to remotely observe the voting process, and, counting the votes of the voters, establishing the results of the voting, as well as recording the entire voting process online from any computer and by any citizen. And our citizens are very active and observers take advantage of it.

Mobile Voter. Mobile voter is the voting mechanism of voters at their place of residence that replaced absentee certificates since 2017. We call this process the abolition of the so-called serf suffrage. A person is not now tied exclusively to his or her own polling station, and he or she has the opportunity to vote, at another place in the country, if necessary. This mechanism is open to any voter who is eligible to vote in the respective elections. To do so, you need to submit an application for inclusion in the voter list at the place of residence. First of all it is addressed to those people who are registered in one place and live, in connection with various circumstances, in another. The advantage of this mechanism can also be used by citizens

It is addressed to those people who are registered in one place and live, in connection with various circumstances, in another. The advantage of this mechanism can also be used by citizens who are on business trips, on vacation, travel and other trips.

who are on business trips, on vacation, travel and other trips. The voter submits the application in a convenient way: on the public services portal, in the multifunctional center, in the territorial or district commission. Acceptance of applications shall begin 45 days before the voting day and shall end 3 days before the voting day. What are the 3 days left for? In order for the data entered into the State Automated System Elections to be fully processed. After all, the person who filed the application should be registered at one polling station and un-registered at the other, where he or she had previously voted, and in order to ensure control and avoid double voting attempts.

With regard to the technical equipment of the electoral commissions, it reached 98.8% this year. That is, we consistently, step by step, automate the work of election commissions and equip them with the means of counting the votes. These are ballot processing facilities (BPF), e-voting facilities (EVF) and innovative mobile voting terminals, which will be used for the first time in digital polling stations on September 8 here in Moscow.

What's a BPF? This is a technical tool designed for automated vote counting, accumulation of completed, I emphasize, paper ballots and printing of the final protocol of the precinct election commission. BPF have been used in elections and referendums in Russia since 2003 and were positively assessed by all election participants. We have improved this mechanism, and here we have a new generation: BPF-2017. BPF-2017 consists of two ballot boxes equipped with a scanning receiver, which combines the entire electronic hardware of the complex. A BPF also has a printing device for manufacturing the final protocol. BPF-2010 has also been modernized in order to provide the possibility of using the QR coding system. The total number of BPF to be used in the September 8 elections is about 8 thousand, which is 2.5 times more than in 2016.

The EVF is an electronic voting system, i.e. without the use of a paper ballot. The EVF was used a little less, just over 270 units. An EVF includes 5 sensor devices for voting.

Together with the state authorities and local governments we have managed to solve almost all the questions of equipping the district election commissions with computer equipment that has

opened new perspectives for using QR coding. How does it work? The protocol of the precinct commission on the results of voting with a QR code is delivered to the territorial election commission, where it is automatically read through the scanning device, and the data of the protocol are immediately received by the SAS Elections. The system has a program for checking the control ratio of data contained in the protocol, which allows to eliminate technical errors that may be made when filling out the protocol of the district commission. Thus, QR-coding of protocols, firstly, allows to exclude the human factor at transfer of the data of the protocol in SAS Elections, to exclude or eliminate the technical mistakes made at filling in of the final protocol at polling stations, and secondly, it accelerates process of data input in SAS Elections, accordingly, and process of summarizing the results of elections. Due to the use of QR-coding the data on the voting results are received by the SAS Elections not later than 4 a.m. Moscow time. This means that 100% of the protocols have been processed by now. Earlier, before the use of QR coding, the data input into the system was delayed till 12 o'clock of the day following the day of voting. It's very important, that is, we have a faster protocol input process and control over this process. This year over 95% of the precinct commissions, except for the areas in hard-to-reach areas, will use total QR-coded protocols.

Information and Reference Center of the CEC of Russia. This is a unique center, operating on the basis of the cutting-edge information technologies. Only last year, during the period of preparation and holding of the election of the President of the Russian Federation, they processed more than 1 300 000 appeals of citizens. The Information and Reference Center includes an automated speech module for processing messages on the first line, the work of the experts of the Contact Center and employees of the CEC Apparatus Russia on the second and third lines, respectively, as well as Internet service for independent search of information about the objects of electoral infrastructure: an interactive map of Territorial Election Commissions and precinct election commissions on the map of Russia, a multichannel chat for independent voter receipt, or candidate or expert or party representative

Due to the use of QR-coding the data on the voting results are received by the SAS Elections not later than 4 a.m. Moscow time. This means that 100% of the protocols have been processed by now.

information on the elections. The main functions of the Information and Reference Centre are: Organization of direct telephone communication with voters and other participants of the electoral process; ensuring outreach activities during the election campaign; clarification of the legislation and its innovations, i.e. everything that interests our voters. Also relevant to the work of the Centre is the provision of information on the exercise of active suffrage of the citizens, including Mobile Voter, early voting and (mainly in inaccessible areas and remote areas, on long-distance vessels voting information outside the voting room, on election commissions at the place of residence and at the place of residence: addresses, contacts, and other comprehensive information, including election commission sites. Receiving and analyzing information on alleged violations during election campaigns and campaigns of the referendum, as well as taking prompt action are also very important functions of this center. I would like to say that we are very efficient in this direction, and our observers are very active, and members of the commission use it.

The Information Centre of the CEC of Russia is a permanent operating information and technical complex providing multimedia support of official events of the CEC of Russia. During the official events of the CEC of Russia, simultaneous interpreting into English is provided. I want to emphasize that the Information Center provides communication sessions with any point of the globe. The main function of the Information Centre is to display online information about the voting



and preliminary results in a single voting and federal election days. It is all live on air: how does the vote count begin, how does it go? Information about the turnout is also broadcast live, which is also the first time that we have introduced it. The Information Center also broadcasts video from the premises for voting and TEC premises. In the rotation mode on a special video wall installed in the atrium of the CEC of Russia, there is a simultaneous broadcast of the scenes from 192 video cameras, and you can see what happens in the east, in the north, in the south, in the west of the country. Accreditation of Russian and foreign

media outlets is also one of the functions of the Information Center: more than a thousand media outlets are accredited on the Election Day on September 8. In addition, the Information Center broadcasts official events online on the CEC website. I'd like to emphasize that each of our meetings is broadcast live on the Internet.

Now for public observation of the election. On the Election Day, observers may be present in the voting room from the time of the beginning of the work of the polling station before the adoption by the higher election commission of the voting records. And territorial election commissions have

video cameras installed and control groups of different parties working in, which brought the control process to a new level. An observer may be appointed by a registered candidate, political parties that have nominated candidates, parties that have registered candidate lists, other public associations, as well as subjects of public control: the Civic Chamber of the Russian Federation or regional public chamber, an initiative group on referendum holding. By the way, we have, in addition to elections of different levels, which will be held in all the constituent entities of the Russian Federation on September 8, a number of regions will also host about 50 local referendums.

An observer has the right to inspect the lists of voters and the registers of out-of-office ballots, to observe the issuance of ballots, and to be present at the voting outside the voting room, monitor the count the number of citizens included in the voter lists the number of ballots issued and cancelled, observe the vote count, draw up the protocol on the results of voting and other documents, address with proposals, comments on the voting arrangements to familiarize oneself with the minutes of on the voting results, on the results of elections and on the documents attached to them, to receive from the relevant commission certified copies of the said minutes, appeal against the actions or omissions of the commission to a higher-level commission or court, to be present at the recount votes, and to make a photo or video recording in the voting room with prior notice of the commission.

We are also interested in the wide participation of reputable international experts in the observation of elections in the Russian Federation. Our doors are open, we receive all those who are interested in the manner in which our elections are held and traditionally invite observers from the electoral bodies of foreign States, international organizations, specializing in electoral legislation, protection of the rights of citizens to participate in elections and referenda, including international associations of organizers of elections. Foreign and international election observers have very broad rights in Russia to observe all stages of the election process. I would like to say that at the last presidential election of the Russian Federation on March 18 last year, in the CEC of Russia, a

record in the history of international monitoring of elections in Russia was registered by the number of observers: 1,513 people from 115 countries.

Of course, it is necessary to say a few words about the automated system: the State Automated System "Elections" of the Russian Federation, without which it is simply difficult to imagine the electoral process in Russia. It has been working for 25 years. It is completely autonomous, it is invulnerable, and we are very proud of that. The unique data processing system designed to implement the information processes during the preparation and conduct of elections provides transparency, reliability, efficiency and completeness of the information on elections and referendums.

The main tasks of SAS "Elections" are: collection and processing of information on election campaigns, formation of calendar plans and control of their implementation, formation of voter lists, entry of information about candidates and their registration, monitoring the flow of funds to the election funds of candidates and electoral associations and the use of these funds collection of information on the results of voting and the results of elections, as well as informing voters promptly about the voting process and the results of elections. In addition, the SAS Elections provides a uniform order for the registration of voters, participants in the referendum. Today, the system is used at all stages of the electoral cycle from the time of publication of the election decision to the time of the vote count. It covers all the 85 entities of the Russian

On the Election Day, observers may be present in the voting room from the time of the beginning of the work of the polling station before the adoption by the higher election commission of the voting records.

The Central Election Commission of Russia is included in the state program Digital Economy of the Russian Federation, and in cooperation with other agencies we make maximum use of what has been developed in other spheres for the electoral system.

Federation, has a protected information technology infrastructure, consisting of a communications network and data transmission, complexes of software and hardware at the whole territory of the country, single software support and unified procedures of information processing at all levels.

All modern electoral standards are already fully applied in Russia at various levels of elections, but we are looking ahead. My colleague Nikolai Ivanovich Bulaev will speak in greater detail about the digitalization of the electoral process. I just want to dwell on digital services for participants in the electoral process.

One of the Russian Federation CEC's digital projects is the creation of and implementation of public digital services on the state service portal for all electoral participants. This innovation aims to create a new level of openness and accessibility of electoral procedures for citizens. As you know,

the Central Election Commission of Russia is included in the state program Digital Economy of the Russian Federation, and in cooperation with other agencies we make maximum use of what has been developed in other spheres for the electoral system. Digital services will be created to optimize the activities of all participants of the electoral process, they will be able to be used by voters, election commissions of different levels, candidates, mass media information, parties, observers, that is, everyone who is interested in it

The project will be implemented in several stages, most of the information services have already been implemented by the Election Day, i.e. September 8 this year. Already now a citizen can use the service of informing about the inclusion in the voter list at the polling station, get information about the elections and referendums and the timing of their holding, about candidates and electoral associations. The website provides information about all parties, election commissions with their addresses and phone numbers, a service of informing about submitting an application for inclusion in the voter list and so on. In addition, we have added a media service here. We consider this an important option to ensure transparency and awareness of our citizens.

Dear Colleagues, concluding my report, I wish us successful work and high spirits. We will continue the discussions and will be happy to listen to all those who wish to share their experiences. I hope that our interaction will be very useful.

Thank you.



Young Ukrainians Design Civic Education Student Action Project on Disability Rights

Building on a successful civic education program it implemented in Georgia, the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) piloted an innovative and interactive university-level civic education course, *Democracy: From Theory to Practice*, in Ukraine. The pilot, which initially covered eight universities across the country in 2018, was expanded to 22 universities in 12 regions of Ukraine. The goal of the course is to foster students' democratic values and attitudes while equipping them with the knowledge and skills that are essential for effective democratic citizenship. The knowledge-based components of the course cover topics such as human rights, democratic governance, civil society and citizen engagement. Social inclusion, disability rights and accessibility are among the course's priority cross-cutting areas.

As part of the course, students work in small groups on a capstone project to identify one important societal issue or problem of their choice, conduct comprehensive research and create an action plan to address the issue in their city or community. At Lviv Polytechnic University, one capstone group created "The Right to Life" project on disability rights and social inclusion. The project identified barriers that people with disabilities face in their everyday life and challenged negative stereotypes and stigma related to disability. The students in this group included Dmytro Rokos, Khrystyna Shorubura, Anastasiia Kovalchuk, Vlad Pavlyuchenko, Inna Snishchuk and Liliia Sika. The team conducted public surveys with random Lviv residents and representatives of the disability rights community, including people with auditory, physical and visual disabilities. Students partnered with local Deaf organization Lviv Happiness Workshop, which enabled them to learn more about the organization's work. The study found that people with disabilities face numerous infrastructural



“ A young woman advocate with a physical disability shares her story in “The Right to Life” film produced by students in the *Democracy: From Theory to Practice* course in Ukraine.

”



and architectural barriers, yet negative public perception, stigma and the lack of sufficient societal support remain the biggest barriers to inclusion.

As part of their action plan, the capstone group advocated with university and government officials and raised awareness among the public. They shared the research results with the vice rector of their university and advocated to make the university buildings and grounds more accessible. Meeting with City Council officials, they raised the issue of discriminatory practices and insufficient financial support to reduce infrastructural barriers. The project also provided a platform for members of Lviv Happiness Workshop to present to the Lviv City Council on specific barriers to inclusion faced by the Deaf community and supported a fundraising event for the organization. Notably, the students produced the awareness-raising film below, called *The Right to Life*, featuring people of different ages and genders with various types of disabilities who shared their stories of barriers and opportunities they face participating in public life. The film also highlights the main findings from their survey. Both the film and survey research report were shared with local media outlets to increase awareness of disability rights among the public. As a result of this awareness raising, City Council

officials recently voted to increase the number of accessible parking spaces at the Lviv Police Department to expand access for persons with disabilities.

Through this project, the students learned to identify problems in their community and take action, an essential part of civic conscience and social responsibility.

IFES' activities in Ukraine are made possible with support from USAID through the Consortium for Elections and Political Process Strengthening (CEPPS), GAC and UK aid. Established in





1995, CEPPS pools the expertise of three premier international organizations dedicated to democratic development: IFES, the International Republican Institute and the National Democratic Institute. CEPPS has a 20-year track record of collaboration and leadership in democracy, human rights and governance support, learning from experience, and adopting new approaches and tools based on the ever-evolving technological landscape.

Source – www.ifes.org

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Women's Voting Day Celebrated in Brazil



On February 24, 1932, the Electoral Code began to guarantee Brazilian women's right to vote. Even many of them who understand the importance of women's right do not realize how recently have some of these rights been conceded by the state in historical perspective. Only 88 years ago, women could not even participate in the country's political life, as they were forbidden to vote. On February 24, 1932, did the Electoral Code ensure the female vote. However, this right was granted only to married women, with the authorization of their husbands, and to widows with their own income. These limitations ceased to exist only in 1934, when the female vote came to be provided for in the Federal Constitution. This scenario was not exclusive to Brazil. In France, for example, the female vote became a reality in 1944 and in Switzerland in 1971. In Brazil, however, the

banner of women for the right to vote and to be voted on began decades earlier, at least since 1891, when a proposal to amend the Brazilian Constitution was presented, with this prerogative. The proposal, however, was rejected. The theme gained even more strength in the early twentieth century, as a result of women's political activism in Britain and the United States. This organized and strategic action inspired other women around the world. The internationalization of the movement, known as suffragette, favored the establishment of the female vote in several countries. The Women's Voting Day in Brazil started to be celebrated in 2015, with the enactment of Law 13, 086.

Source: <http://www.tse.jus.br/imprensa/noticias-tse/2020/Fevereiro/dia-da-conquista-do-voto-feminino-no-brasil-e-comemorado-nesta-segunda-24-1>

Spectacular Rise in Women Participation in Politics

Women's participation in politics has increased remarkably in Nepal over the years.

Thousands of women have joined politics, enabling them to enter the top decision-making level as well as play critical role in the overall affairs of the state.

Prior to the Constituent Assembly (CA) election in 2008, there were only 10 women in the 205-member House of Representatives. The Interim Constitution, 2007 helped women secure 33 per cent of seats in the first CA under proportional representation system.

Although women representation dropped to 30 per cent in the second CA, the participation of women lawmakers was very meaningful because there was a shift from quantitative representation to qualitative one.

Furthermore, the Constitution, 2015 has made it mandatory that there should be 33 per cent women in both the federal and State parliaments. Additionally, the Election Commission (EC) has obliged the political parties to implement this provision, which has greatly enhanced the women's access to the parliament.

With the three-tier elections, a large number

Nepal has made it to top position in South Asia in the representation of women in parliament. It ranks 36th out of 193 countries, with Afghanistan 60th, Pakistan 93rd, Bangladesh 97th, Bhutan 136th and India 150th.



of women climbed on the leadership ladder. A total 32.7 per cent of women are in lower house and 37.3 per cent in the upper house. But it is at the local level where the surge of women is phenomenal. Over 14,000 women (40 per cent) are playing their different roles in the local governments across the country.

With 33.5 per cent women parliamentarians represented in the two houses of the Federal Parliament, Nepal has now moved above the global average of 24.3 per cent, according to the Inter Parliamentary Union (IPU) 2019.

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Nepal is now among the eleven countries where women are holding the post of the Head of State. Between October 2015 and June 2016, Nepal made history by electing women to the country's three powerful positions- the President, the Speaker and the Chief Justice, creating the milestone in the women's rights movement.

The current constitution has specific provisions aimed at boosting gender parity.

Source: <https://therisingnepal.org.np/movement>.

Gender Equality in Elections:

Q&A with Viktorija Hlushchenko,
Ukrainian Central Election Commissioner

On December 19, 2019, the *Verkhovna Rada* approved a new electoral code, a significant step for democratic progress and elections in Ukraine. The code introduced important changes, including new mechanisms to ensure equal representation of women and men in elections.

Ahead of International Women's Day, the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) spoke with Central Election Commissioner Viktoriia Hlushchenko, who leads gender mainstreaming and gender equality in organizing elections and referendums in Ukraine.

Hlushchenko spoke about women's access to electoral processes in Ukraine and how the new electoral code will ensure gender equality in politics.

In your opinion, do men and women have equal access to political life in Ukraine?

The Constitution, which has the highest legal force, enshrines the principle of equality and the right to vote. Although, from a legal point of view, men and women are equal in their rights and capacities, I believe, that Ukrainian society remains subject to certain stereotypes about social roles that create artificial barriers to women's participation in politics.

Also, some women lack confidence, which stands in the way to participation in political life. Experience in previous election campaigns, including parliamentary elections using a mixed electoral system, shows that women are rarely self-nominated in single-member constituencies. When women's opportunity to be elected is driven by their desire to run, they do not always actively participate.

At the same time, the socio-political processes that have taken place in Ukraine in recent years



and systemic changes to electoral legislation have led to a significant increase in women's participation in political life. Today, in quantitative terms, Parliament has 424 MPs (members of Parliament) elected in the nationwide multimember and single-member constituencies and 87 are women. This is the highest number of women in Parliament since Ukraine's independence.

Speaking of local elections, there are many MPs in city, town, and village councils, but women's representation is still 15 percent in regional *oblast* councils.

The new electoral code introduces tools to ensure gender balance in all elections. What are the tools and how will they affect the electoral process?

The task of the state is to create favorable conditions for improving women's access to politics.

Preconditions for women's parity in Parliament and local self-government have been established. The Law on Political Parties stipulates that statutes of political parties should contain an electoral quota of at least 30 percent women's and men's representation on the candidate lists for the Verkhovna Rada and local councils. The same quota was envisaged in the Law on Local Elections. Unfortunately, political parties have not always complied with these requirements due to the lack of effective sanctions.

Today, the electoral code's parliamentary nomination quota is 40 percent. When nominating candidates for the Rada during the formation of national and regional candidate lists, political parties must ensure the presence in every five seats of each electoral list at least two candidates of each gender – seats from one to five, six to ten and so on.

Violation of this requirement by a political party gives the Central Election Commission a legitimate reason to refuse to register MP candidates nominated by this party.

Although the procedure for parliamentary candidates' nomination is regulated, we cannot

influence the will of the citizens. Nobody can predict how they will vote and choose candidates from open regional election lists. Therefore, it is only after the parliamentary elections that we will be able to assess, in practice, the results of implementing gender quotas. It is important to realize that despite creation of a legal basis, much depends on changing voters' mentality.

To my mind, setting a 40 percent gender quota at the nomination stage is already a significant step toward increasing women's participation in politics.

As different electoral systems are applicable in parallel at local elections, 40 percent of the gender quota is in formation of electoral lists of deputies to regional and city councils for cities with 90,000 or more voters. The ratio of candidates in the list will be the same as in parliamentary elections – two candidates out of five should be of the opposite gender. This requirement applies to both the single electoral list of candidates from a political party and the regional lists of that party.

As for the electoral system for other councils, a political party must retain a 30 percent gender quota when forming the electoral list of candidates for deputies in cities with fewer than 90,000 voters, as well as district, city, village and town councils.

That is to say, a differentiated approach to formation of electoral rolls is applied in local elections. Again, we're talking about the nomination phase, not the election.

In my opinion, another positive aspect of the electoral code to facilitate women's participation in the election process is the requirement to avoid discrimination and sexism in the coverage of election information. This should affect campaign ethics and accuracy.

The electoral code authors have likely secured a ban on sexism because the gender



Viktoriia Hlushchenko and her fellow commissioner Vitalii Hren at a meeting of the Central Election Commission. © CEC



CEC members Oleksandra Karmaza, Viktoriia Hlushchenko and Andrii Hevko lead a meeting with women's civil society organizations with the goal of increasing gender equality in the electoral process.

quota was raised and because of the need to enhance the understanding of legal aspects among participants in the election process.

In addition to legislative changes, what other measures do you think should be taken to ensure gender equality in the electoral process?

First of all, voter education – increasing willingness to vote for women candidates.

Recently, I came across interesting research on whether there is a difference for voters regarding who they vote for based on gender: whether they choose a man or a woman, given that potential candidates have equal qualifications. The statistics were very pleasing. For the average voter, it is not the gender that matters but the fundamental personal qualities of the candidate.

Recently, with IFES' assistance, a meeting with leaders of women's civic organizations was held at the CEC. Representatives of women's movements formulated their needs and voiced problems they are facing as well as the roadmap of activities that we will be implementing. For example, cooperation between political parties and civil society must be established.

Moreover, despite establishing a framework for

women's representation in the electoral code, and given its novelty, many have not yet been informed of gender quotas and that women and men should be represented equally in local governments and Parliament. Elections affect many factors, so people need to be socially active. I am confused by the passivity of some groups to participate in elections. We need to inform the public about the electoral code, gender quotas, the procedure for forming electoral lists and the importance of participating in elections. This education will increase trust in the authorities.

What advice would you give to other women working in the sector of democracy-building and governance?

Do not be afraid, be more active, constantly work on self-improvement. Do not be afraid of self-realization, do not be afraid of stereotypes, do not be afraid to overcome them, go beyond your comfort zone and participate in elections.

Source – www.ifes.org

Civic Education for Democracy:

Q&A with Dr. Greer Burroughs,
Senior Civic Education Expert

For over 20 years, International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) Senior Civic Education Expert Dr. Greer Burroughs has contributed to the growth of democratic civic education around the world.

In 2018, IFES unveiled an innovative, semester-long civic education course, *Democracy: From Theory to Practice*. Today, the course is offered at over 20 universities across Ukraine. The course was tailored for the Ukrainian context and is based on IFES' global university-level civic education methodology, Strengthening Engagement Through Education for Democracy (SEED). Through SEED, IFES introduced an innovative, university-level civic education course in Georgia in 2011 that is currently offered at the majority of the country's accredited universities.

IFES' SEED methodology integrates democracy and gender equality into all areas of civic and political participation, minority rights and other key aspects of democratic citizenship. The SEED methodology is designed to foster students' democratic values and attitudes while equipping them with the knowledge and skills essential to being mindful and effective citizens in a democratic, digital society. This is done through hands-on, student-centered active learning experiences, an interactive teaching methodology and student-led civic action projects that address problems, such as gender-based inequalities, in students' communities and beyond.

In this Q&A, Dr. Burroughs reflects on the global expansion of SEED, the role of civic education in the digital age, and her professional journey.

When did you first encounter the topic of civic education and why did it interest you?

I have always been interested in motivations for people's behavior. I studied sociology for my



bachelor's degree as I was interested in group behaviors, group dynamics, the development of social norms and customs. Later I studied political science and history. I began a career as a social studies teacher, which enabled me to combine these interests in working with young people.

I taught history and social movements through the lens of why people are doing what they do and most of the time it was either because they have or want power or they want to see a change in society.

I vividly remember one of the first workshops I attended at the beginning of my career about civic education. It completely changed my life. The methods I learned there transformed my teaching approach and the information that I received there was the last piece I needed to understand in which direction I should develop my career path.

How would you define the main impact of civic education on society?

Civic education terminology is an interesting idea because it doesn't always mean the same thing to

everyone. In the U.S., traditionally in the 1950s, we had civic classes where we learned about the structure of government. The kind of civic education I do is very specific towards preparing people to be active, engaged and informed members of the democratic society and this can prepare individuals to make a difference in their society.

Today we have two systems of civic education. One is a passive system, where students are just given information and are told to memorize it, study it and take a test. Some of it they remember, some of it they don't; but, either way, students are passive in their role and as a result, we have a passive society over which leaders can have lots of control. People in passive societies are often not skilled or confident enough to take action or hold the government accountable. And when they do act, it's not always from an educated, informed perspective.

Another system of education, which is how I teach civic education, is designed to help young people develop skills, confidence and commitment to the ideals of democracy. Not only are students given information, but they are also asked to think about it critically and use it in meaningful ways. In the process, they are learning how to think about all the information they receive, internalize it, make sense of it, use it in practical ways and apply it to real life. It's that real-life piece that hopefully gives them confidence to be active citizens.

All in all, I think, civic education has the power to transform people in a society where one feels a sense of responsibility and commitment

Civic education has the power to transform people in a society where one feels a sense of responsibility and commitment and also holds the government accountable to democratic ideals.

and also holds the government accountable to democratic ideals. In other words, a society where people are willing to stand up, take action and speak out when they see government officials engaging in behaviors that are contrary to democratic principles.

You used to work and are currently involved in civic education projects in various countries. How is work in Ukraine different from other countries you worked in?

Previously I worked on the project in Georgia. And when I came to Ukraine, I thought there should be similarities due to the common Soviet past between these countries. Whereas the Soviet Union had a strong influence on both Georgia and Ukraine, both countries are unique in their own way. What I came to realize in my work is that it's essential to learn from the local people about things they care and worry about.

I did my first work in Ukraine in 2008 and 2009. Since that time Ukraine's role has changed in this region and geopolitically. Therefore, it's critical for anybody doing this kind of work to really try to understand the country they are working with and even the larger global context.

Are there different approaches to teaching civic education in a country?

It's not that there are different approaches; but, you need to adjust the content so that it is relevant to the most important issues in that country.

How would you describe the aim of the Democracy: From Theory to Practice course?

The aim of this course is to give students a foundational knowledge about different components of democracy – what makes a democracy function. It's not a course that is deeply theoretical. It's a course that provides knowledge that every citizen needs to know: What is the structure of government, what are the features of democracy, what role does civil society play in a democracy, what are individuals' human rights and how do you protect them? And, then what actions can each citizen take?



The next thing is to help students develop skills so that they can act, think critically, access information, collaborate effectively with others, make rational decisions and advocate for a position.

The last piece is to develop attitudes where they come to see that democracy is worth it.

Democracy is hard. Often people, especially in a transitional democracy, hope that everything will change quickly, but change takes time. People have to be ready for a commitment to democracy, to show improvements over time. These are some of the attitudes that we want to develop in young people.

Democracy is hard. Often people, especially in a transitional democracy, hope that everything will change quickly, but change takes time. People have to be ready for a commitment to democracy, to show improvements over time. These are some of the attitudes that we want to develop in young people.

What do you like the most about your work?

I am one of the luckiest people in the world because I have a job that I love. The fact that every day I go to a job that has the potential to do good in the world – what more can I ask for? We all have certain talents and skills in life and I am grateful that I have an opportunity to use mine in a way that is positive.

Source – www.ifes.org

India assumes Chairmanship of The Forum of the Election Management Bodies of South Asia (FEMBoSA) for 2020



CEC of Bangladesh passes on the FeMBoSA chairmanship to Sunil Arora, CEC of India

Chief Election Commissioner of India, Sunil Arora assumed Chairmanship of The Forum of the Election Management Bodies (EMBs) of South Asia (FEMBoSA) for the year 2020. The Outgoing Chair of FEMBoSA, K.M.Nurul Huda, CEC of Bangladesh handed over the Logo of FEMBoSA to the Incoming Chair, Sunil Arora at the 10th Annual Meeting of FEMBoSA held in New Delhi on January 24, 2020.

In his address, Nurul Huda stated that in keeping with the objectives of the Forum, members have been sharing experiences and skills and taking steps to enhance cooperation with other EMBs. Bangladesh Election Commission presented the Stewardship Report on the activities of FEMBoSA members during the last year.



Accepting the responsibility as Chairperson of the Forum, Sunil Arora thanked the delegates for the trust and confidence reposed in the Election Commission of India. He said, "The democratic scaffold and superstructure can be enacted and strengthened on the principle that the political power is validated by the will of the people. In democracy, power is won and legitimized only by regular elections, based on the universal, equal, direct and freely expressed suffrage". Strong participatory and inclusive democracies are better able to ensure good governance and empowerment of all the citizens", he said. Arora also added that for capacity building, Election Commission of India has established the India International Institute of Democracy and Election Management (IIIDEM) in June 2011.

FEMBoSA was established at the 3rd Conference of Heads of Election Management Bodies (EMBs) of SAARC Countries held at New Delhi in May, 2012. With its eight members, FEMBoSA represents a very large part of the democratic world and is an active regional association of EMBs. Annual FEMBoSA meeting is held by rotation among the members. The last (9th) annual meeting of FEMBoSA was held in Dhaka in September 2018.

A New Delhi Resolution was unanimously adopted at the 10th FEMBoSA Annual Meeting by the seven FEMBoSA members present at the meeting. The Members resolved to:

Implement the Work Plan for 2020 as approved by the member EMBs in the 10th Meeting of FEMBoSA;

Cooperate in capacity building of the member countries; Host election visitor programmes in the respective countries as feasible;

Provide technical assistance to the members as requested and as feasible;

Actively share best practices and knowledge in ICT tools and modules being used by the member EMBs and to develop standards for sustainable use of ICT in elections;

Take steps to curb use of money power and muscle power;

Enhance and ease participation of Persons with Disabilities and Senior Citizens in the election process;

Maintain the permanent content management based web portal of FEMBoSA to share information among the EMBs through the www.fembosa.org web portal;

Design and implement regional research projects.

The Work Plan for 2020 on 'Use of Technology in Elections' calls for Members to undertake projects and initiatives on various aspects of use



of technology in elections and present a report on their experiences and challenges faced in this regard at the next FEMBoSA Meeting.

On the sidelines of the Conference, ECI renewed Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for cooperation in the field of election management with the Independent Election Commission of Afghanistan. The MOU was signed by Hawa Alam Nooristani, Chairwoman, IEC Afghanistan and by Sunil Arora, CEC on behalf of Election Commission of India. A MoU for cooperation in the field of election management was also signed



The Work Plan for 2020 on 'Use of Technology in Elections' calls for Members to undertake projects and initiatives on various aspects of use of technology in elections

with the Independent High Authority for Elections (ISIE) of Tunisia. The MOU was signed by Nabil Baffoun, President, ISIE of Tunisia and by Sunil Arora, CEC India.

An International Conference was also organised January 24, 2020 on the theme "Strengthening Institutional Capacity", where nearly 30 delegates gathered to attend the International Conference. The day long International Conference included delegates from participating FEMBoSA members as also participants from EMBs of Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kyrgystan, Mauritius, Tunisia and three

International Organisations viz. the A-WEB, International Foundation of Electoral Systems and International IDEA. Presentations were made by delegates from ECs of Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Kyrgyz Republic, Maldives, Mauritius, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Tunisia, IFES and Intl. IDEA. The representatives shared their experiences, best practices and initiatives. Experts also analysed barriers, policy interventions, strategies, programmes, good practices and technological innovation for strengthening Institutional capacity of EMBs.

On this occasion, Sunil Arora along with the two Election Commissioners of India Ashok Lavasa and Sushil Chandra and Secretary General, ECI Umesh Sinha also launched the 10th issue of ECI's magazine – 'VOICE International' which carries articles on the theme of "Innovative Methods of Voter Registration". The 4th Issue of magazine "My Vote Matters" was also released on the occasion. A web portal on Association of World Election Bodies (A-WEB) was also unveiled. IIIDEM will host the India A-WEB Centre for documentation, research and training for sharing the best practices and capacity building of officials of A-WEB members. The Commission also released "ICT 2020; a compendium of 20 Apps for Election".

Election Commission of India has endeavoured to play a pioneering role in organizing free, fair and credible elections in a participative manner in the largest democracy in the world. It enjoys impeccable reputation in imparting knowledge and sharing skills and best practices with other EMBs through its robust international cooperation programme. In September 2019, India also took over as Chair of the 115 member Association of World Election Bodies for 2019-21 terms. India remains committed to the ideals and objectives of these Associations and looks forward to further strengthen its cooperation and interaction with fellow EMBs to spread the march of democracy globally.



Tanishk Shyamyaa

Executive, SVEEP
Election Commission of India

Election Commission of India Organises International conference on **Strengthening Institutional Capacity**



An International conference on Strengthening Institutional Capacity was organised by Election Commission of India on January 24, 2020. The day long International Conference included nearly 30 delegates from participating FEMBoSA members, EMBs of Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kyrgyzstan, Mauritius, Tunisia and three International Organizations viz. A-WEB, International Foundation of Electoral Systems and International IDEA.

On this occasion, Chief Election Commissioner of India & Chairperson A-WEB, Sunil Arora along with Election Commissioners of India Ashok Lavasa, Sushil Chandra and Secretary General, Umesh Sinha launched the 10th issue of 'VOICE International', a quarterly publication of VoICE. NET & A-WEB India Center. The issue covered international experiences on 'Innovative Methods of Voter Registration'. In addition to that, a web portal on Association of World Election Bodies (A-WEB) was also unveiled. India International Institute of Democracy & Election Management (IIIDEM) would host documentation, research and training as well as shared best practices and capacity building of officials of A-WEB members.

Deliberations were held on various topics related to election management and delegates from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Kyrgyz Republic, Maldives, Mauritius, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Tunisia, IFES and International IDEA

India International Institute of Democracy & Election Management (IIIDEM) will host the India A-WEB Centre documentation, research and training as well as sharing best practices and capacity building of officials of A-WEB members.

made presentations. The representatives shared their experiences, challenges, best practices and initiatives. The delegates analysed barriers, policy interventions, strategies, programs, good practices and technological innovations adopted by different EMBs for strengthening Institutional Capacity. Following is the summary of the major takeaways:

Linking Technology and Electoral Governance: Experience Shared by India

Use of Information and Communications technologies (ICT) is indispensable to improve Electoral Process. Sunil Arora, Chief Election Commissioner of India, said, "The engagement of technologies in all aspects of polling processes have become one of the distinct feature of elections in

India". He added that in India fresh challenges are being faced which confronts the electoral system with new demands of effective electoral governance and mechanism. Election Commission of India has to consolidate the electoral system by enduring institutional structure as well as constantly re-invent, invent and innovate to strengthen and reinforce the machinery, as also the electoral practices in order to deliver ultimate fundamental goal of the democracy i.e. conduct of free, fair, participative and collective elections. The Election Commission of India released, 'ICT 2020: a compendium of 20 Apps for Election' in the conference.

Election Results Now Just In Time: Experience Shared by Kyrgyz Republic

EC of Kyrgyz Republic, Dzhurabaeva Gulnar shared about the use of Precinct Counting Optical Scanner (PCOS) is an automated device for scan and count of votes. PCOS was used throughout the Republic of Kyrgyz for voting and counting, the results were sent to National Election Information System via a wireless security network and were published on the public disclosure website. The process that used to take weeks earlier, was remarkably reduced to two hours.

She also highlighted the issues of duplication, multiple voting, false votes and use of technology for verification of voters by collecting biometric data (fingerprints, digital photograph and digital signature).

Use of technology to deduplicate Voters List and automation of other Electoral Operations: Experience shared by Bangladesh

Brig Gen. Shahadat Hossain Chowdhury (Retd), Election Commissioner of Bangladesh shared that the power of innovation lies in its simplicity, feasibility, affordability and its sustainability.

For administrative and electoral innovation, different types of software such as CIMS (Candidate Information Management System), RMS (Result Management System), EMS (Election Management System) were introduced.

De-duplication method used by Bangladesh holds promise for other member countries facing a similar challenge.

An Independent EMB - A Credible Institution: Experience shared by Mauritius

“An Independent Electoral Management Body is the base for credible election in a democracy as the quality of an election depends on the credibility and integrity of an EMB,” shared Mohammad Irfan Rahman, EC of Mauritius and Dharmajai Mulloo, Dy Chief Electoral Officer, EC of Mauritius in simultaneous sessions. The ongoing efforts towards institutional capacity building was discussed during the presentation. Mohammad Irfan Rahman acknowledged the role played by Election Commission of India and said, “ECI has been playing the role of the path maker, path finder and path breaker in the region. EMBs needs supportive members, result oriented framework, training and human resource development.”

efforts towards mitigating the challenges of electoral process in the country.

Wafula Chebukuti, Chairperson, IEBC Kenya emphasised on staff training in the institutional and legal framework as well to empowering the electoral institutions.

Dinesh Kumar Thapalia, CEC, Nepal said that institutional capacity building, institutional strengthening through organizational reforms, human resource and infrastructural development is an ongoing process. He emphasised on strategic five-year-plan followed in Nepal and also suggested the preparation of integrated election

ECI has been playing the role of the path maker, path finder and path breaker.



Strengthening Institutional Capacity Building: Experience Sharing By Kenya & Mauritius, Nepal, Maldives

The country faces the challenge of compilation of a comprehensive register of electors for which institutional capacity building and its strengthening is important in the electoral process in Mauritius. The continuous training program for personnel and development of human resources is of fundamental importance. Technical staff training, workshops and courses in relation to the various stages of the electoral cycle organized by IIIDEM, A-Web, CEN, UNISA and BRIDGE project are some continuous

laws for institutional capacity building.

Surya Prasad Gautam, Under Secretary EC of Nepal said that there are always new challenges faced by the countries and EMBs need to focus on their institutional capacity building in order to combat these emerging challenges. He further shared that the Commission has already institutionalized the biometric voter registration, media centre, issuance of voters identity card with QR code, and joint election operation centre for better coordination with security and other stakeholders and prompt action particularly during the election times. Along with its permanent offices, officials, infrastructure

and equipment the Joint Election Operation Centre establishes itself as a competent institution to conduct elections in free and fair environment. He also emphasised on managing stakeholder relations.

Ahmed Shareef, Chairman, Election Commission of Maldives mentioned that Maldives does not have many facilities for their institutional capacity building and they conduct Personnel training of election officials with the help of other institutions. He shared that the Head of Departments meet almost once a week to share experiences and chalk out strategies to deal with the political pressure and other challenges. He highlighted the role of advisory committee played in electoral process.



Skill Development – Conducting Electoral Process Efficiently and Effectively: Experience Sharing by Maldives

Ahmed Shareef, Chairperson, EC of Maldives said that all member countries deal with similar issues but in different manners. What matters the most is efficient conduct of the electoral processes. Capacity building of the electoral officials, polling personnel and other stakeholders is very important for successful conduct of electoral process. Maldives has signed and ratified UDHR (The Universal Declaration of Human Rights), ICCPR (The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights) and CEDAW (The Convention

on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women) which inspired the constitution of Maldives to affirm electoral rights to its people.

Electoral Awareness through Civic Education: Experience Sharing by Maldives

In collaboration with UNDP, the Election Commission of Maldives worked on developing a curriculum for civic education in 2015. Four activity-based modules were designed to engage the participants. UNDP imparted trainings for the efficient implementation.

Security Challenges Poses Threat To Electoral Processes: Experience Sharing by Afghanistan

Mohammad Shafiq Basharyaar, Sr. Advisor of External Relations IEC, Afghanistan highlighted crucial challenges faced by Election Commission of Afghanistan due to internal and external conflicts in the country. He stated that Afghanistan Parliamentary Elections (2018) were conducted in an environment where the country was struggling with internal security threats. The situation lead to certain disadvantages like: last minute implementation of bio-metric technology (supply chain management issues), lack of proper training/preparedness of polling staff with the bio-metric devices, flaws in the voters list due to insufficient time before execution of electoral process. In addition to that, security threats and no electoral culturalization ultimately resulted in inadequate availability of polling staff at PCs and lower participation of people.

Strict Legal Framework to Curb the Political Influences: Experience Sharing by Afghanistan

Hawa Alam Nooristani, Chairperson, IEC of Afghanistan said that to cast vote is one of the most important right of the citizens in a democracy as elections are the essence of democracy. She expressed her concern over such situation and highlighted the role of strict legal framework to safeguard the people's rights and interest.

Solution Findings from Knowledge Sharing Mechanism: Knowledge Sharing By Bhutan

Harnessing the benefit of knowledge management platform, which also identifies untapped sources of knowledge to mitigate problems, Bhutan brought a

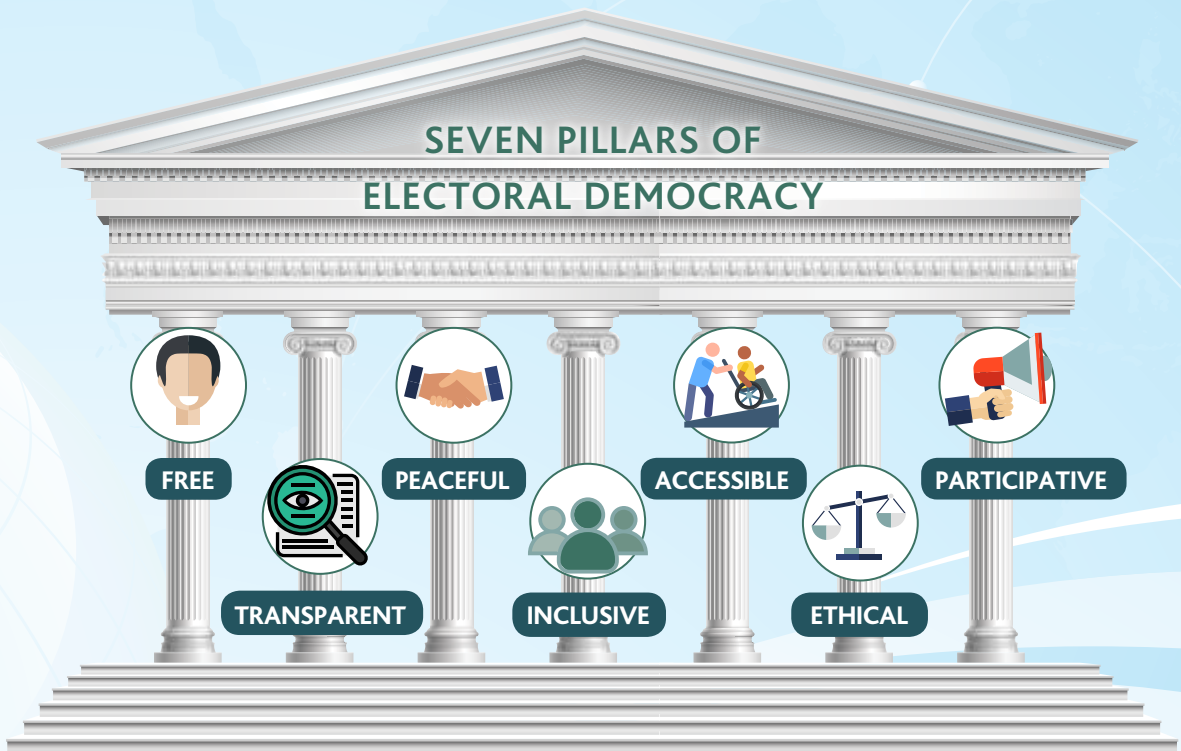
unique and interesting structural de-briefing system, 'Lessons Learned from Experience Programme (LEP)'. LEP is a self - assessment program to asses and evaluate their own elections. It is a useful mechanism of feedback from the stakeholders at all the levels as an exclusive exercise is carried out for learning from stakeholders for improving future election processes.

De-brief is a simple, yet powerful tool that enables a team to self-correct, get as a team and enhance their performance. During de-briefs, a

and changing after the emergence of social media, needs interventions from EMBs on do's and don'ts and other guidelines.

Indian Election Experience

Umesh Sinha, Secretary General, ECI laid down seven pillars of democracy i.e. free, transparent, peaceful, inclusive, accessible, ethical, and participative elections and three core obstacles faced-muscle power, money power and paid news. He said that the prime function of Commission



team member reflects upon a recent experience, discusses what went well and identifies opportunities for improvement. Mani Kumar Ghalay, Chief Planning Officer, EC of Bhutan, said that elections are one of the high-pressure events in any country, which require highly skilled officers, sound legal system, concrete planning and effective execution.

Guidelines regarding social media campaigns of candidates: Experience Sharing By Bhutan

Ugyen Chewang, Election Commissioner of Bhutan, said that the nature of campaigns of political parties, which are continuously evolving

is to prepare electoral roll, to conduct the election of the office of the President, Vice President, two houses of the Parliament, the State Assemblies and Legislative Councils and the National election. He highlighted some of the major achievements of Indian National Election 2019, in terms of historic voter turnout and reduced gender gap to 0.1%.

Further in simultaneous sessions, Sushil Chandra, Election Commissioner of India said that an autonomous body is important to maintain independence of electoral process. He further said that conduct of elections is a serious business and it demands continuous evolvement at all the levels.

Building Synergies among Stakeholders of Electoral Machinery: Experience shared by Sri Lanka

Mahinda Deshapriya, Chairman EC of Sri Lanka talked about building synergies among all election stakeholders. He emphasised on the strategies to be adopted to overcome the challenges like inclusive elections, ensuring public trust and integrity of elections and to make necessary amendments in the legislature. The session was concluded with Q&A session. Moreover, the issues such as catering to its population, limited institutionalized capacity, and voter education outreach along with different planning and coordination mechanisms were discussed.

EMBs Need to Demonstrate Strong and Ethical Leadership: Experience Sharing by IFES

Anthony Banbury, President & CEO, IFES discussed the role of EMBs. He said that there are continuous changes in electoral processes and new challenges are emerging. These challenges need to be addressed with strong

REACHING OUT GLOBALLY

For 70 Years, along with successful conduct of Elections, the Election Commission of India has also been strongly associated with various international election organisations to **Promote Democracy and Strengthen Election Administration** worldwide.

Associations

International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA)

1995 - Founding Member

Commonwealth Electoral Network (CEN)

2010-14 Steering Committee Member

Forum of Election Management Bodies of South Asia (FEMBOSA)

2020 - 21 Chair

Association of Asian Election Authorities (AAEA)

2014-16 Chair

Association of World Election Bodies (A-WEB)

2019 - 21 Chair

Endeavours

VoicE.NET

Knowledge Sharing

INDEM

Capacity Building

INDIA A-WEB CENTER

Research & Development

and ethical leadership by EMBs. He ended with, "More ethical the EMBs higher the confidence of the stakeholders in the elections".

International Perspective to Strengthening Institutions: Experience Sharing by International IDEA

Parvinder Singh, Sr. Program Manager, International IDEA, presented the international perspective on strengthening of the Training & Capacity Building Institutions. He stressed on the need to understand the stakeholders and other beneficiaries and design capacity building programs in sync with them.

In the concluding session, the highlights of the conference were recapitulated. The conference majorly emphasized on institutional capacity building with the help of EMBs.



Dr. Aarti Aggarwal
Sr. Consultant
Election Commission of India

THE ECOSYSTEM OF 11 MOBILE APPS FOR CONDUCT OF ELECTIONS

ECI Mobile apps provide better personalisation and ease of sending the notifications. The mobile specific features like camera, contact list, GPS, phone calls, accelerometer & compass can be used meaningfully for election purpose. As the mobile allows working in offline mode, it works as the best work medium in shadow areas.

Election Commission of India deploys mobile apps for Conduct of Elections

From Voters to Voting ↔ From Candidates to Counting

BOOTH APP

This app provides a digital platform for booth level management and reporting. It allows booth level officials to manage booth level activities, report booth level issues, and receive notifications from the ECI.

VOTER HELPLINE

This app provides a digital platform for voter helpline management and reporting. It allows voter helpline officials to manage helpline activities, report helpline issues, and receive notifications from the ECI.

PMS APP

This app provides a digital platform for PMS management and reporting. It allows PMS officials to manage PMS activities, report PMS issues, and receive notifications from the ECI.

INVESTIGATOR APP

This app provides a digital platform for investigator management and reporting. It allows investigator officials to manage investigator activities, report investigator issues, and receive notifications from the ECI.

EMS APP

This app provides a digital platform for EMS management and reporting. It allows EMS officials to manage EMS activities, report EMS issues, and receive notifications from the ECI.

VOTER TURNOUT APP

This app provides a digital platform for voter turnout management and reporting. It allows voter turnout officials to manage voter turnout activities, report voter turnout issues, and receive notifications from the ECI.

INCITE MODAL APP

This app provides a digital platform for INCITE MODAL management and reporting. It allows INCITE MODAL officials to manage INCITE MODAL activities, report INCITE MODAL issues, and receive notifications from the ECI.

SIVANA CANDIDATE APP

This app provides a digital platform for SIVANA CANDIDATE management and reporting. It allows SIVANA CANDIDATE officials to manage SIVANA CANDIDATE activities, report SIVANA CANDIDATE issues, and receive notifications from the ECI.

OBSERVER APP

This app provides a digital platform for OBSERVER management and reporting. It allows OBSERVER officials to manage OBSERVER activities, report OBSERVER issues, and receive notifications from the ECI.

INCITE APP

This app provides a digital platform for INCITE management and reporting. It allows INCITE officials to manage INCITE activities, report INCITE issues, and receive notifications from the ECI.

CVMS APP

This app provides a digital platform for CVMS management and reporting. It allows CVMS officials to manage CVMS activities, report CVMS issues, and receive notifications from the ECI.

Showcasing ECI's Outreach Initiatives at International Conference

As the largest democracy in the world and with 70 years' record of holding fair, transparent and credible elections, the Election Commission of India (ECI) has merited a leading role in promoting participatory democracy and efficient election administration worldwide. There are enormous opportunities for democracy promotion and electoral support in many developing countries, which have still not established themselves as robust democracies. Further, ECI has also felt the need to continuously engage itself and others in generating innovative ideas and practices to respond to the emerging challenges in election management. This calls for bilateral and multilateral cooperation in promoting participatory democracy and best practices in election administration.

In view of this, ECI organised the 10th Annual Meeting of The Forum of the Election Management Bodies of South Asia (FEMBoSA) and an International Conference on 'Strengthening Institutional Capacity' on 24th January 2020. The day-long conference included delegates from participating FEMBoSA members and participants from EMBs of Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kyrgyzstan, Mauritius, Tunisia and three International Organisations viz. the A-WEB, IFES and International IDEA.

Carrying forward the legacy of conducting elections at the most massive scale, ECI successfully conducted the 17th Lok Sabha election last year,

which was recognised as the largest ever human exercise. With the motive of sharing experiences, best practices and innovations from that election, an exhibition gallery was set up at the conference venue.

The 17th Lok Sabha election was the first time **EVM-VVPAT** devices were used nationwide in a general election. The first exhibit showcased extensive nationwide sensitization drives on the usage of EVM-VVPAT that were conducted before the election, as well as the facts and figures about the technical and administrative safeguards related to the polling device.

The flagship programme of the Commission - **Systematic Voters' Education and Electoral Participation (SVEEP)** was launched in 2010. The objectives and components of the programme, and its evolution over a decade, were showcased in the second exhibit. Photographs of different kinds of SVEEP interventions and the impact of the programme in terms of increased registration, turnout and women participation were also exhibited on the occasion.

For the first time, a nationally coordinated multimedia outreach campaign was designed for a general election before the 17th Lok Sabha election, titled "**Desh ka Mahatyohar**" translating to "Grand festival of the nation". This exhibit displayed short films on the Desh Ka Mahatyohar campaign along with various photographs, figures and key highlights from the general election.





Targeted initiatives for increasing participation of women in the electoral process over the years resulted in the lowest ever **Gender Gap** among voters in the 17th Lok Sabha election. The initiatives that were taken for increasing women participation, photographs of targeted advertisements and events, and facts and figures related to women voters were showcased in the fourth exhibit.

With over 1.8 Million **service electors** in the 17th Lok Sabha elections, a separate outreach campaign was developed for reaching out to this sizeable and significant category of voters. The procedure of voting through **Electronically Transmitted Postal Ballot System (ETPBS)**, dedicated web portal, short films, and images of outreach events for service electors were showcased in the fifth exhibit.

The next exhibit explained the ambitious **Electoral Literacy Clubs (ELCs)** programme of the Commission. There are four different kinds of interventions under this programme, and different activity-based resource guides and games have been developed for all of them. This exhibit displayed a short film on how to conduct different educational activities designed for these clubs.

The Commission's focus has been on making elections more and more inclusive, and especially maximising accessibility for **PwDs and Senior Citizens**. This exhibit showcased different initiatives taken for making electoral participation easier for PwDs and senior citizens, such as Assured Minimum Facilities, Postal Ballot etc.

To counter prevailing apathy among young voters, the Commission has taken various measures such as Competitions, National Elections Quiz, Social Media Outreach, Digital Games etc. The eighth exhibit listed some of the major recent initiatives of the Commission targeted at **motivating young electors** to get themselves registered and cast their vote in elections.

The Commission has endeavoured to play a pioneering role in imparting knowledge, sharing skills and best practices with other EMBs through its robust international cooperation programme. During this conference, ECI assumed Chairmanship of FEMBoSA for 2020. Earlier in September 2019, ECI took over as Chair of the 115 member Association of World Election Bodies for 2019-21 term. The ninth exhibit showcased various **international associations that ECI is a part of**, and some of its domestic programmes that strengthen its cooperation and interaction with fellow EMBs to spread the march of democracy globally.

The last panel of this exhibition featured the **IT-enabled ecosystem** of the Commission that facilitates the conduct of elections through advanced online applications at all steps, ie. From Voter Registration to Voting and from Candidate Nomination to Counting. The specifications and functioning of eleven of these modern apps were on display.

As an added attraction, an **educational spin-the-wheel** game for testing awareness related to EVM-VVPAT device was placed at the exhibition. Several delegates and participants of the conference were seen playing the game and taking notes from the various kinds of initiatives and best practices showcased in the exhibition.



Apoorv Tiwary

Communication Consultant
Election Commission of India

A-WEB | The A-WEB Secretariat Joins International Election Observation Mission

At the invitation of the National Court of Elections (JNE) of Peru, the A-WEB Secretariat had an opportunity to join international observers for the 2020 Peruvian Parliamentary elections held on January 26, 2020.

The elections, which were scheduled to take place in 2021, were called after President Martin Vizcarra dissolved the Congress in September 2019. The JNE of Peru invited a total of 230 international observers from A-WEB Secretariat, the European Union (EU), the organizations of American States (OAS), the inter-American Union of Electoral Organizations (UNIORE), the Latin American Council of Electoral Experts (CEELA), etc. The newly elected 130 legislators will hold office only until scheduled presidential and congressional election in 2021. While observing the election, the



delegation of A-WEB Secretariat had a chance to exchange information, discuss ideas for improving election management and explore ways to promote partnership with regional associations of election bodies.

Source: <http://www.aweb.org>

A-WEB | A Webinar on 'Election Management during COVID-19'

The Secretariat of the Association of World Election Bodies (A-WEB, headquartered in the Republic of Korea) hosted a webinar on Election Management during COVID-19 on June 3 with an audience of its member organizations and partners in Latin America.

The webinar started with an opening speech of Jonghyun Choe, Secretary General of A-WEB. Choe, in his remarks, stressed the importance of A-WEB as a network among EMBs to support and cooperate with each other, especially in times of challenge.

During the webinar, Dr. Daniel Zovatto, Regional Director for Latin America and the Caribbean of International IDEA, delivered a presentation on democracy and elections in times of pandemic in the region.

Three officials of the National Election Commission of the Republic of Korea (NEC ROK)

shared their experiences in managing the 21st National Assembly Elections in April when South Korea struggled to contain the Corona virus. They explained the COVID-19 related measures taken in the elections in South Korea and answered the pre-gathered questions from EMBs in Latin America. They pointed out that it is important to make both voters and polling station workers feel safe in polling stations.

The challenges facing EMBs in Latin America and the Caribbean were delivered by Salvador Romero, President of TSE Bolivia and Alexander Vega Rocha, National Registrar of RNEC Colombia, and Carlos Pimentel, Director of the Dominican Republic Chapter of Transparency International.

About five thousand attendees worldwide joined this webinar to get ideas on Election Management during COVID-19.

GEORGIA | 9th Annual Meeting of 19 EMBs held in Georgia

The Central Election Commission of Georgia (CEC) hosted the 9th Annual Meeting of Election Management Bodies (EMBs).

The main theme of the meeting was “Electoral Integrity: Cyber Security and the Reliability of Information in Digital Era”.

Representatives of 19 EMBs, eight international organizations working on election issues, the U.S. Embassy in Georgia and British Embassy in Georgia participated in the conference.

Tamar Zhvania, CEC Chairperson, Matt Gokhool, Chief Executive of the International Centre for Parliamentary Studies (ICPS), and Peter Wiebler, Mission Director of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) made the opening remarks at the event.

“Cyber security and disinformation issues are of critical significance in our digital era which may influence electoral integrity and credibility. Subsequently, this topic became extremely important during recent presidential elections. Despite the fact that the Election Administration (EA) of Georgia was not subject to very

important and serious cases of cybercrime, yet, disinformation issues have been considerably raised and I think this international conference will help us to share the experience of different countries in cyber security and disinformation; it will also support us to combat cybercrime and disinformation and find ways to address them to prevent risks related to credibility and other types of the risks in the electoral process”, told Tamar Zhvania, the Chairperson of Election Administration of Georgia. while speaking to journalists.

The conference was conducted on March 26-27 in Batumi and participants discussed important topics such as technological risks in the electoral process and its solutions, system of data collecting, processing and security of elections, Inter-agency cooperation on cyber security in elections and so forth. Around 100 participants shared their experience and discussed future goals.

Source: <http://cesko.geleng/>

INTERNATIONAL IDEA

Discussions held
on ‘Global Attitude
toward Democracy’

Brookings Foreign Policy program’s Democracy Working Group (DWG) and the Pew Research Centre held a roundtable discussion as part of collaboration between them that brought Pew researchers in conversation with Brookings scholars and the broader policy community.

The roundtable discussion focused on Pew Research Centre’s report on ‘Global Attitudes toward Democracy’ which was published on February 27, 2020.

The Director of the Global Attitudes Research

team at Pew, Richard Wike, presented the report and led the discussion on the survey’s findings based on polling conducted in 34 countries

Annika Silva-Leander, the head of the Democracy Assessment and Political Analysis (DAPA) Unit at International IDEA, also took part in the roundtable discussion brought her insights from International IDEA’s latest report on the Global State of Democracy.

Source: <https://www.idea.int/>

Election Commission of India Institutes Sukumar Sen Memorial Lecture Series



To mark its 70th foundation day Election Commission of India organised the First Sukumar Sen Memorial Lecture instituted as a tribute to Sukumar Sen (1898-1963), the first Chief Election Commissioner of India, who commendably conducted the first two general elections to the Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assemblies, thereby putting India into the terra firma of democracy.

The rationale behind instituting the Lecture Series was to make a positive and constructive intervention in the democratic discourse of the nation within the constitutional mandate of the Election Commission of India. To give it a fitting start, Pranab Mukherjee, Former President of India who served as the 13th President of India between July 25, 2012 and July 25, 2017 was invited to deliver the first lecture.

Welcoming the chief guest and the august gathering, Chief Election Commissioner Sunil Arora said "Election Commission of India is indebted to Mr. Pranab Mukherjee for kindly agreeing to deliver the First Sukumar Sen Memorial Lecture. There could not be a harmonious

combination of theme and the speaker for this evening - a *savant* and a *rajrishi*". Mukherjee is considered a living encyclopedia of political, constitutional and historical matters. He was honoured with Bharat Ratna, India's highest civilian award, in 2019 for his distinguished contribution to public affairs.

"Mr. Mukherjee, as President of the republic, had addressed ECI's National Voters Day event twice in 2016 and 2017. We are delighted to have him back to deliver the inaugural Sukumar Sen Memorial Lecture", Arora added. The ECI intends to involve a wide cross-section of people including political parties, leading constitutionalists, legal luminaries, academicians, civil society activists in this lecture series.

A reprint of the Report on India's First Election was released by the former president, Pranab Mukherjee as also a postal stamp in memory of Sukumar Sen was unveiled.

Ashok Lavasa, Election Commissioner expressing his gratitude to Former President of India, said, "Mr. Pranab Mukherjee's very presence is a tribute

to another remarkable son of India Sukumar Sen, the man who transformed the dream of a democracy into an enduring model electoral system that few could have dreamt of at the dawn of freedom."

Speaking on the occasion, Mukherjee described Sukumar Sen as "chosen to play obstetrician and to deliver Indian democracy's first crop of nearly three thousand elected representative." "The Constituent Assembly of India, which prepared the Constitution, had intensely debated the issue of universal adult franchise. It had unhesitatingly adopted the principle of adult suffrage with the full knowledge of the difficulties involved," he recalled Sukumar Sen, by seamlessly conducting the first two general elections, aided India's transition from a Crown colony to a sovereign Democratic Republic in practical terms, he continued.

The Former President of India further said, "The foremost achievement of the First General Election lies in the fact that it cemented and painstakingly brought about unification of India". "Indian democracy and its inherent power of assimilation have successfully thwarted insurgency and separate movements and elections have successfully co-opted varied groups into the electoral mainstream. "Indian Democracy has been tested time and again. Consensus is the lifeblood of Democracy. Democracy thrives on listening, deliberating, discussing, arguing and even dissent. Enthusiastic participation of people in the electoral process is the key to healthy democracy", he emphasized.

Speaking about the role of Election Commission, Pranab Mukherjee said, "In my opinion, the Election Commission of India, respected and revered by the people and feared by the participants of elections, has mostly stood the test of time. The role of the Election Commission in the practical play of democracy in India

has been simply outstanding. The challenges it has had to face have been daunting. The management of an electorate of over 900 million in 2019 that is nearly the combined population of third, fourth and fifth largest nations in the world, and ensuring fair polling is not an easy job. I compliment the Election Commission for this laudable achievement."

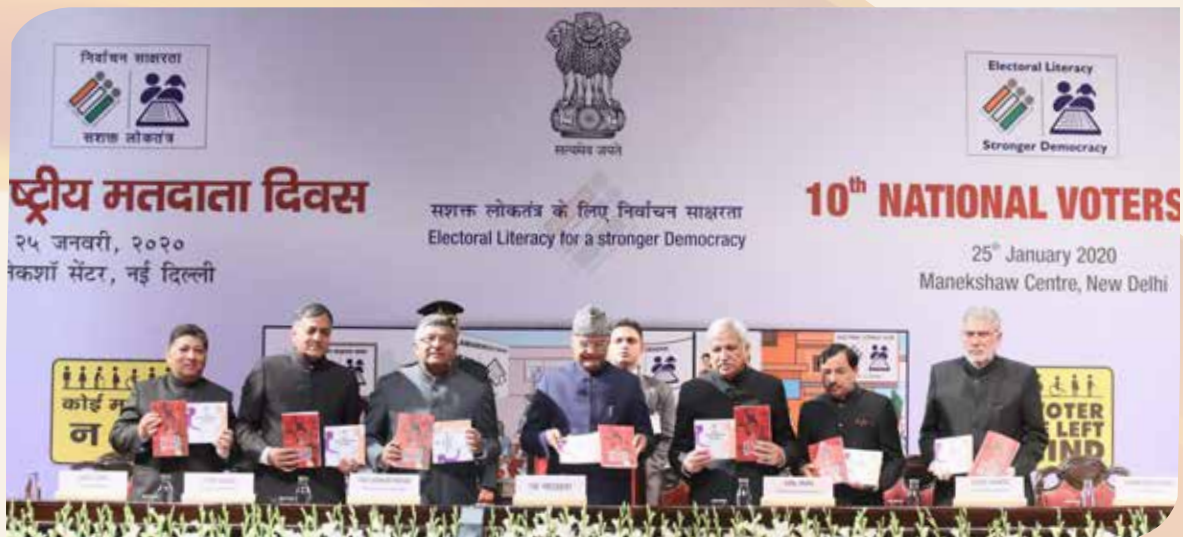
Taking note of some of the challenges that our electoral system faces, Mukherjee spoke of embargo on the sanctioning and implementation of developmental projects; disproportionately large size of the electorate vis-à-vis the number of public representatives as also adequate representation of women in Parliament and the Assemblies as a major area of concern. Highlighting the importance of institutions, Mukherjee complemented "If democracy has succeeded, it's largely due to the perfect conduct of elections by all Election Commissioners starting from Sukumar Sen to the present Election Commissioners". "There can be no room for speculation that challenges the very basis of our democracy. People's mandate is sacrosanct and has to be above any iota of reasonable doubt", he emphasized.

The lecture was attended by Sen's family members as also a wide cross section of invitees from National Political Parties, Members of the Academia, Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), senior civil servants, media persons as also the international delegates who had gathered in New Delhi to attend the 10th Annual Meeting of The Forum of the Election Management Bodies of South Asia (FEMBoSA) & an International Conference on 'Strengthening Institutional Capacity' being hosted by ECI on January 24, 2020.

The lecture ended with a vote of thanks by Election Commissioner Sushil Chandra expressed his heartfelt gratitude to the Former President of India, the eminent guests and the attendees.

"Today we marvel at the vision of framers of our constitution who reposed faith in we, the people of India, a vast and disparate multitude of millions who were knitted together into a republic by their wisdom and foresight."

Election Commission of India celebrates 10th National Voters' Day



The Election Commission of India observed its 10th National Voters Day on January 25, 2020. This year also marks an important milestone in the history of Indian democracy as Election Commission of India (ECI) completes 70 years of its journey. Ram Nath Kovind, President of India, presided over the national level event held at New Delhi. Ravi Shankar Prasad, Union Minister for Law & Justice and Communications and Electronics & Information Technology also graced the event as the Guest of Honour.

To set the tone for year-long activities which focuses towards voters education and renewal of citizens' faith as a unit of democracy and its electoral process, NVD celebration also includes an annual theme to guide ECI's activities for the year. Theme of National Voters' Day 2020 is - 'Electoral Literacy for Stronger Democracy'.

Ram Nath Kovind, President of India, hailed the varied interventions taken up by ECI for the successful conduct of the 17th Lok Sabha Election in a free, fair and transparent manner. The President particularly appreciated the initiatives for reaching out to voters in the remotest corner to include their names in the electoral roll and to encourage them to exercise the Right to Vote. He congratulated the six new voters who were given the Electoral Photo Identity Cards (EPICs) on the occasion.

The President also mentioned the Universal Adult Suffrage principle which helped all Indian eligible citizens to vote from the very beginning of the journey of Indian republic. Kovind also took note of the special efforts undertaken by Election Commission of India to ensure that the gender gap was reduced to less than 0.1% in the last Lok Sabha General Election.

The President emphasized on important role being played by Electoral Literacy Clubs, which is a platform to engage school students through interesting activities and hands-on experience to sensitise them on their electoral rights and familiarise them with the electoral process of registration and voting. ELCs are also present in colleges and PSUs as Voters Awareness Forum (VAF), and at rural communities' level as 'Chunav Pathshala'. He further suggested that ELC could be even more instrumental in achieving the youth awareness for participating in electoral process of the country if it uses vernacular language as medium in reaching out to even the remotest areas for massive impact on population.

NVD celebration was marked by National Awards given away by the President for best electoral practices to officers for their outstanding performance in the conduct of election in different phases. The district administrative and Security

Officers were lauded for their efforts to ensure the enrolment of new and eligible voters with sustained efforts, launch of SVEEP apps in order to facilitate polling experience of voters, conduct of elections with innovative means, facilitating Persons with Disabilities at polling booths, working amidst in challenging circumstances such as severe cyclonic storm or coordinating the security grid mechanisms. In addition, awards were also conferred to CSOs, government departments and media houses for their outstanding contribution towards voter awareness and outreach.

On occasion of National Voters' Day, two books were launched by Union Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad and presented to the President. The first book was **Belief in the Ballot-II**, which is an anthology of 101 human interest stories about Indian elections from across the nation. An amalgamation of daring, interesting and inspiring stories of both election officers and voters, this anthology presents experiences of courage, sacrifice and dedication of the election personnel as well as the enthusiasm and commitment of the voters.

The second book launched was **'The Centenarian Voters: Sentinels of Our Democracy'**. This collection includes the experiences of centenarian voters across the states and UTs in India who braved difficult terrain, poor health and other challenges to come out and vote. Their commitment contributed in achieving the highest voter turnout in history.

Chief Election Commissioners and senior officials from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, Maldives, Mauritius,

Nepal, Sri Lanka and Tunisia graced the occasion. Reputed international organizations working in elections such as A-WEB, IFES and International IDEA were also a part of the occasion. Members of Political Parties, Members of Parliament besides diplomats from various countries and representatives from national and international organizations working in the area of democracy and elections also attended the national function.

The National Voters' Day (NVD) is celebrated all over the country on January 25 every year since 2011 to mark the Foundation day of Election Commission of India, which was established on this day in the year 1950. This year, the celebrations were spread over three days to mark the 70 illustrious years of ECI establishment. On 23rd January, the Commission organized the first ever annual Lecture Series in memory of the first Chief Election Commissioner of India, Sukumar Sen. Former President of India Pranab Mukherjee, delivered the keynote lecture. On January 24, an International Conference on 'Strengthening Institutional Capacity' was organised.

The main purpose of the NVD celebration is to encourage, facilitate and maximize the enrollment, especially for the new voters. Dedicated to the voters of the country, the Day is utilized to spread awareness among voters for informed participation in the electoral process.



President of India and Election Officials with the Winners of National Awards during National Voter's Day Celebration

IIIDEM conducts International Trainings for Election Officials

India International Institute of Democracy & Election Management (IIIDEM), training and resources wing of Election Commission of India (ECI) organises international trainings for capacity building and exchange of research and innovative excellence in the field of election management. Following are a few of programs:

Capacity Building Programme on Voter Education for ITEC Partner Countries

ECI organized a six-day Capacity Building program on Voter Education for the Election officials of ITEC Partner Countries at IIIDEM Campus, Delhi from February 2 to 7, 2020. The following 13 countries participated in the program: Afghanistan, Antigua & Barbuda, Bangladesh, Guyana, Honduras, Kenya, Maldives, Myanmar, Somalia, Tanzania, Trinidad & Tobago, Vietnam and Zambia.



The topics covered as a part of the programme were - Stakeholders needs, Targeted Voter Education Approaches, Use of Social Media, Electoral Literacy Clubs, SVEEP – Indian experience, Monitoring and Evaluation of a Voter Education program, Engaging with stakeholders for Voter education and Targeted Voter Education.

Programme on 'Election Management' for Officials of National Election Committee, Kingdom of Cambodia

ECI conducted a Capacity Building Programme on Election Management for the officials of National Election Committee, Kingdom of Cambodia from February 3 to 28, 2020.

This was the first 4 weeks programme ever conducted by IIIDEM. The program included Introduction to Electoral Systems, Constituency Boundary Demarcation, Strategic Planning, Challenges of Voter Registration around the world, Online registration – Indian experience & ETPBS, including Demo/ Hand-on on online registration, Demarcation of Polling Station areas, Challenges in Biometric Voter Registration, Preparation of operational plan, Strategies for Voter education, District Election Management Plans – Indian Experience, Electoral Dispute Resolution (EDR) Mechanisms, Complaints management, Political Finance, Voting Methods – Paper ballot, Electronic Voting Machines and Internet voting, Nomination



of candidates, Allotment of symbols to contesting candidates/ political parties, Codes of Conduct for stakeholders, Election Day Monitoring, Election and Media, Electoral Technologies, Counting of votes and Transmission of results.

The participants also experienced real time election practices of prepoll, poll day and counting days during Assembly Elections in Delhi, 2020.

Visit of a 7-member delegation from Union Election Commission, Myanmar



ECI hosted a 7-member delegation from UEC Myanmar on February 8, 2020 led by Hla Thein, Chairman, UEC Myanmar. The delegation also witnessed the Delhi Assembly Election 2020.

Programme on 'Poll preparedness and conduct of Poll' for officials of Central Election Commission, Kyrgyzstan

ECI organized a five-day Capacity Building Program on 'Poll preparedness and conduct of Poll' for officials of Central Election Commission, Kyrgyzstan from February 10 to 14, 2020.



Election Commissioner of India, Ashok Lavasa addressed the visiting officers during the inaugural session. During the program, participants got an opportunity to witness counting process of the then ongoing Delhi Assembly Elections on February 11, 2020. The key topics covered during the program were - Expenditure Monitoring, Postal voting and ETBPS, Election Observation, Planning for electoral operations and DEMP, Electoral Security Plan – vulnerability mapping, preventive action, deployment of security forces, Electronic Voting and EVM/ VVPAT demo, Monitoring of Poll Day Operations, IT Applications and Code of conduct for political parties and candidates.

Visit of delegation from Maldives



The IIIDEM hosted a 30-member delegation of Civil Servants of Maldives as a part of Training Programme in Field Observation conducted by National Centre for Good Governance (NCGG), Mussoorie on February 13, 2020. A session was conducted on electoral reforms undertaken over the years in India, the innovations in the field of Elections, best governance practices adopted & the role of Civil servants in organizing Free and Fair Elections.

Opening Minds and Hearts at IIIDEM Trainings

Training provides opportunity for employees to expand their knowledge base and improve on their existing skills. Training and capacity development acquire special dimension in the field of elections as lack of adequate training to officials could adversely impact the credibility of elections. In some countries, lack of training was one of the primary reasons for failure of adhering to procedures by officials leading to a lack of trust in the electoral process and physical violence during election and after election.

Since its inception in 2011, IIIDEM has strived hard to foster professional competence in election management both nationally and internationally. Over the years, it has developed exemplary global leadership in the fields of democracy and election management. It has supported enrichment of democratic systems, values and practices while supplementing the outreach efforts of Election Commission of India. In a short span of nine years, IIIDEM has conducted 79 international training programmes for over 100 countries and trained over 1600 election officials globally.

As a trainer for election officials on various topics, one cannot stress enough the importance of a systematic and step by step training that covers all aspects of elections. At IIIDEM, various international training programmes are held catering to the specific needs of the Election

Management Bodies (EMBs) of various countries. These include subject-specific trainings (like ITEC training for various EMBs on voter education) or country specific trainings (like for IEBC, Kenya or more recently one-month-long training for NEC, Cambodia on all aspects of elections). Through these trainings I have witnessed a gradual change in the development of trainees as well as in me as a trainer. Being a trainer, one is also enriched by the feedback and insight from various participants.

As a BRIDGE international election training recommends, andragogy requires one to engage participants at all times during a training. Unlike children and teenagers, adults have responsibilities that they must balance against demands of learning. Because of these responsibilities, adults have barriers against participating in learning, says the BRIDGE facilitation manual. Concurrently, the training curriculum at IIIDEM involves a lot of exercises and activities which ensure that the participants fully understand a concept and learn it by practice. While there are many barriers that are key to andragogy including lack of motivation, lack of role models to change, scepticism to reform, identification with old ways among many others; there are three elements that help bolster efforts towards andragogy. First acknowledging the difference in culture and electoral environment, Secondly is engaging the participants and

challenging them to reach collaborative learning, and third is learning through doing.

At a session titled “Need for Regulation of Political Finance” for election officials of Union Election Commission of (UEC) Myanmar, there was a lively discussion on the importance of understanding all stakeholders in the political finance framework. Having worked in Myanmar for International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA) supporting the work of UEC, Myanmar, I was aware of the difference in the way political finance is approached in the two countries. Towards the end of the session, participants were asked to list the things they would like to improve upon the existing framework of political finance in Myanmar. It was surprising to note that the participants listed all the regulatory approaches of India that were discussed during the session that would be suitable to the political milieu of Myanmar despite language barrier. These included creation of separate bank accounts for candidates, maintaining separate registers for daily accounts by candidates during the period of campaigning among others. This is possible only when trainers are not only aware of the political finance framework in Myanmar but also acknowledged the difference and similarity in the cultural and political environment of Myanmar and India.

During a session on importance of “Operational Planning in Elections” for election officials of National Election Committee of Cambodia, participants were learning the difference between a strategic and an operational plan. Since it was a post lunch session, as an exercise, the participants were challenged to identify what would qualify as a strategic plan and an operational plan from a list of plans to help them identify the difference. They were asked to stand in the middle and

pick one side if they thought this was a strategic plan and the other side of the room if it was an operational plan. It was amazing to find that all participants were able to clearly identify what constituted either of the plans and were also able to question if there was some overlap. This session not only but clarified the doubts of all participants but also reinforced the concept of andragogy that engaging participants by challenging them can lead to collaborative learning.

Similarly, a while back, I delivered a session on “Electoral Risk Management”. As a part of demonstration of risk management exercise, the Electoral Risk Management Tool (ERMT) – a software tool developed by IDEA to identify, analyse and mitigate risks during elections by using colour coded heat maps was installed on participant’s computers. Since, this was a session for participants of 15 different countries as a part of ITEC Training of Ministry of External Affairs of India, we had to install 15 different maps for the exercise. But the joy on the participants’ faces on being able to identify, analyse and plot the risks on their country maps and colour coding them based on increase and decrease in risk during elections was overwhelming! They were beaming with happiness on being able to accurately identify

what risks plagued their electoral process and being able to map them.

There are many such experiences to share but the important factor is collaborative and participative learning techniques for andragogy.

It was amazing to find that all participants were able to clearly identify what constituted either of the plans and were also able to question if there was some overlap.



Saket Ambarkhane

Programme Manager
IIIDEM

Sharing Experience with the World

With rich experience of conducting 17 General Elections to the Lok Sabha and numerous Elections to the State Legislatures, the Election Commission of India has always believed in sharing its knowledge, experience and best practices with the world. Sukumar Sen, the first Chief Election Commissioner of India, while documenting the experience of carrying out the daunting task of conducting the First General Elections in India in the year 1951-52, wrote in his narrative report of First General Election:

“The carrying out of this unprecedented experiment attracted world-wide attention and journalists, politicians and other observers came from numerous foreign countries to study its working at first hand.....In fact, every country desiring to adopt parliamentary elections on adult franchise but is faced with difficulties in the shape of illiteracy, ignorance and undeveloped communications evinced the utmost interest in the Indian elections and numerous enquiries have been received from such countries in the Middle East, Africa and South America for detailed information regarding these elections. It appears probable that the main features of our system of elections will be adopted in future years by many of these countries.”

Election Commission of India has since been actively involved in the world electoral community as a key contributor in sharing knowledge. VoICE Net, being an offspring of this philosophy and now with Sunil Arora, Chief Election Commissioner of India assuming the chair of A-WEB and FEMBoSA, India shall lead the sharing of experiences, skills and knowledge and taking steps to enhance international cooperation on the issue.

About IIIDEM

Since its inception in 2011, India International Institute of Democracy and Election Management (IIIDEM), the training arm of Election Commission of India, has been extensively involved in this practice of knowledge sharing.

In addition to its training program conducted for various officials involved during the different stages of the Indian Electoral Process, IIIDEM has conducted 79 training program for other Election Management Bodies of the world. These training program touch upon various aspects of the Electoral process and facilitate experience sharing and learning in a cohesive and intellectually stimulating environment.

The topics range from Capacity Development in Management of the Electoral Cycle, Voter Registration, IT and Electoral Process among





others. Country specific program have also been conducted by the institute to cater to specific needs of the EMB.

A Unique and Exclusive Capacity Building Program for Election Managers from National Election Committee, Kingdom of Cambodia

Recently, IIIDEM conducted a Capacity Building Program on Election management for Election Managers from National Election Committee, Kingdom of Cambodia from February 3-28, 2020. This program was a unique one for many reasons.

Firstly, it was for the first time IIIDEM scheduled such a long training program, the duration being almost a month. Before this, the number of training days in previous training program had not exceeded 15 days. The training program, hence, was a great opportunity to give an immersive experience to the participants with ample of time to delve deep into the various themes associated with Election Management.

Also, officials from Cambodia had participated in previous ITEC training program of IIIDEM. This was for the first time that a training program was conducted exclusively for the participants from Cambodia.

The program schedule fortunately coincided with the Delhi Legislative Assembly election, 2020 which gave a valuable opportunity to

the participants to get real-life experience from the field.

Further, the 26 training days of this particular training program allowed the liberty to include various hands-on sessions and demo exercises to the participants which enhanced the overall encapsulation of the learning for the participation by seeing, doing and retaining.

About the Training Program

Being a comprehensive course, the program took the participants through many interesting and emerging aspects of the electoral processes.

The training program commenced on 3rd February 2020 with the arrival and registration of 22 Election Managers. The first day on the training program served as an interactive platform for setting the course of the program. The participants shared the challenges faced by NEC and their learning expectations from the program. The IIIDEM team extended a warm welcome to the delegation and shared a snapshot of the program.

Contents of the Training

The program not only shared the conventional subjects related to electoral processes, but also gave them an opportunity to learn about recent technology-driven initiatives to face unconventional challenges which are faced by Election Management Bodies today with the changing times.



polling and counting processes. It gave them the occasion to see the Electoral Machinery in action on the field.

The last day of the program was a memorable one. A session was held in which a reform proposal for Cambodia was prepared and presented by the participants which was followed by an open house discussion on the last day.

The valedictory session filled the participants and the IIIDEM team with nostalgia and a confidence that the participants and NEC will be benefitted immensely from the key learnings delivered during the training program.

Participants Speak

The participants shared their experiences with IIIDEM Team during the last two closure days.

Kong Bun Hour, Bureau Deputy Chief, Information and Public Relations Department, NEC while thanking IIIDEM and ECI for the hospitality, skilful resources and adequate training material felt that the visit to the Counting Center and Polling Stations was a memorable experience for him.

A study tour was also organised to Jaipur City for the participants where they witnessed Poll Day operations

organised by the Office of Chief Electoral Officer, Rajasthan. The participants were also exposed to the Indian history and culture during visits to monuments around the city. Tham Bandol, Deputy Director of Voter Database Management and Voter List in NEC was thrilled to visit Jaipur city and the study tour makes to his list of cherished memories of the training program.

IIIDEM is all set to conduct 15 international training program in 2020-2021 and is firm on the resolve of becoming a knowledge centre on electoral processes around the world.



The Indian experience related to various stages of the entire electoral cycle was discussed with the participants. Keeping in view the emerging importance of Electoral Integrity, dedicated sessions on topics like Free and Fair elections & International Standards, Integrity in elections Electoral Dispute Resolution (EDR) Mechanisms, Political Finance etc

Weightage was given to subjects like Use of IT and emerging Electoral Technologies, Biometrics, Social Media Monitoring, Electoral Security etc. Demo sessions were held for topics ranging from online registration, Demarcation of Polling Station areas, Electoral Literacy Clubs, EVMs and VVPATs, IT Applications etc.

In coordination with Office of Chief Electoral Officer, Delhi, a visit for the participants to polling stations was arranged where they witnessed the



Mahima Mathur

Program Officer
IIIDEM

EARLY POLLS IN **Azerbaijan**

On February 9, Azerbaijan went for early elections to its 125-Member Parliament viz. Milli Majlis. On December 5, 2019 President Ilham Aliyev, following an appeal of the Majlis, and consent of the Constitutional Court, had called for early elections to be held nine months ahead of regular time.

Approximate 5.2 million voters were registered for voting, including 340,689 people displaced internally due to hostilities with neighbouring Armenia. A total number of 1314 candidates contested the elections, out of which 80 were members of outgoing Parliament. The ruling party Yeni Azerbaijan (New Azerbaijan) clinched the polls by winning 72 seats. The party is led by Aliyev, who is serving as the President of

the republic since 2003. While no other party could win more than three seats, the independent candidates notched up 43 seats in total.

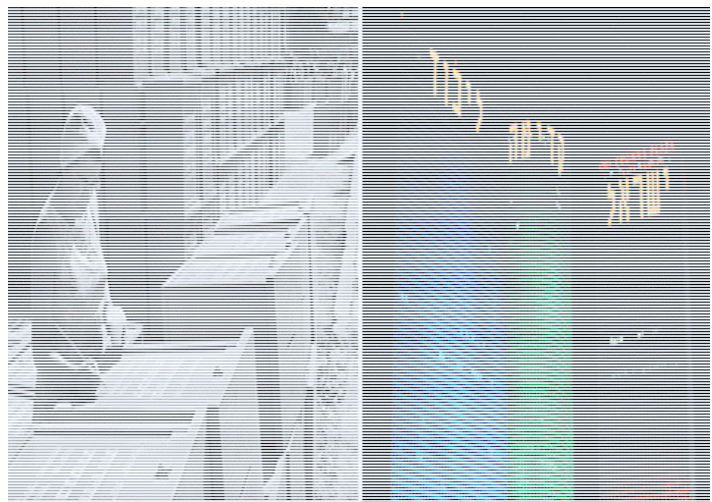
Azerbaijan, located in the South Caucasus region at the crossroads of East Europe and Central Asia, was a constituent of the erstwhile USSR. The country proclaimed its independence on August 30, 1991 adopted its constitution on November 12, 1995 through popular referendum. Article 2. It makes elections based on universal, equal and direct suffrage by way of free, secret and personal ballot.

Source:

OSCE-PA Statement of Preliminary Findings and Conclusions Republic of Azerbaijan-Early Parliamentary Elections, 9 February, 2020

Israel CONDUCTS THIRD CONSECUTIVE NATIONAL ELECTIONS

Legislative Elections were held in Israel on March 02, 2020 to elect the members of 23rd Knesset. This is the third consecutive national election held in 11 months. Due to coronavirus pandemic, special arrangements were made under which the voters under quarantine from the COVID-19 voted at separate, tented-off polling stations. Paramedics dressed in head-to-toe protective gear stood guard at these designated polling stations, where election officials were seated behind sheeted plastic to ensure voting operations went smoothly while staying protected.



Voters wearing face masks and gloves, all those who have been isolated at home after exposure to the corona virus carriers exercised their franchise through tented polling stations across the country to fill in their ballot slips in a close contest in which candidates are fighting for every last vote. About 5500 voters were linked to COVID impact at different stages.

Elections in Israel are based on nationwide proportional representation. The electoral threshold



is currently set at 3.25%, with the number of seats a party receives in the Knesset being proportional to the number of votes it receives.

In accordance with the Knesset Elections Law – 1969, a Central Elections Committee (CEC) is established within 60 days of the inauguration of each new Knesset and serves until the next Knesset takes office. It oversees the elections for the Knesset as well as local authority elections during its tenure.

Masked and gloved: Israelis in quarantine from COVID-19: vote in election

Elections to the Knesset (March 2, 2020)

Number of Eligible Voters	6,453,255
Valid votes	4,553,161
Qualifying threshold (3.25%)	147,978
Votes per seat	37,943

Name of list	Number of valid votes	% of total votes	Number of seats
Likud	1,352,449	29.46	36
Blue and White	1,220,381	26.59	33
Joint List (Hadash, Ra'am, Ta'al, Balad)	581,507	12.67	15
Shas	352,853	7.69	9
United Torah Judaism	274,437	5.98	7
Labor-Gesher-Meretz	267,480	5.83	7
Yisrael Beitenu	263,365	5.74	7
Yemina	240,689	5.24	6

Sources:

- <https://main.knesset.gov.il/en/mk/pages/elections.aspx>
- <https://bechiro21.bechirot.gov.il/election/English/pages/default.aspx>
- IFES: *Global Impact of COVID-19 on Elections; Elections Held and Mitigating Measures Taken During COVID-19*

Peru GOES FOR SNAP POLLS

Peru went for snap polls on January 26 to elect its new legislature viz. Congress (*Congreso de la Republica del Peru*) after President Martin Vizcarra Cornejo had dissolved that unicameral body on September 30, 2019. His decision resulted in the legislative election being held separately from the Presidential elections for the first time in Peru's history. However, the new Congress will enjoy a stint of a little over one year. The regular election to the Congress simultaneously with that of the President is scheduled for April 21, 2021.

President Vizcarra took the extra-ordinary decision after Prime Minister Salvador del Solar tried to link the issue of selection of judges for the Constitutional Court (or Constitutional Tribunal) to a vote of confidence on his cabinet. Since this was the second time during the tenure of a single Congress (2016-2021) when no-confidence motion had been requested, President Vizcarra felt that he was within his authority granted by the Peruvian Constitution of 1993 to dissolve the Congress and call for a new poll. His decision, challenged by the opponents, was upheld by the Constitutional Court.

The Congress comprises 130 seats for which members are directly elected in multi-seat constituencies by closed party-list proportional representation vote to serve single 5-term. The elections were conducted by ONPE or National Office of Electoral Process, which is one of three autonomous bodies involved in electioneering. The other two are National Jury of Elections and National Registry of Identification and Civil Status. After scrutiny of applications of 3,101 candidates who had applied to stand in the polls, those of 2,331 candidates were found in order and registered as *bona fide*.

The January 26 election has resulted in fractured Congress. No party has been able to secure more than 11 percent votes. Accion Popular (Popular Action) leads with 25 seats. Keiko Fujimori Higuchi's Fuerza Popular

(Popular Force), which earlier dominated Congress before its dissolution, saw its vote share crash from 36.3 percent to 7.31 percent and seats drop from 73 to 15. An interesting feature of the elections was new parties notching up a number of seats- Podemos Peru (11), Agricultural People's Front (15), Union for Peru (13) and Purple Party (9) etc.

Voting is compulsory in Peru for citizens between 18 and 70 years old. A new legislation enabled those turning 18 years till the voting day to participate in the elections. The electorate comprised 24,799,384 voters including 974,230 overseas voters. Whereas the voting was done through ballots, E-voting with voter verifiable paper trail audit was implemented in 5,620 polling stations across Peru benefitting 7.13 percent of the electorate.

Sources:

1. *Well Conducted and Credible elections, influenced by excessive rigorous requirements for registration of the Candidates (European Election Observation Mission, Peru, Early Legislative Elections- 26 January, 2020) Preliminary Statement 28 January, 2020*
2. *Peru opposition suffers crushing blow in the legislative elections* <https://www.france24.com/en/20200127-peruvians-elect-fractured-congress-to-replace-opposition-led-legislature>
3. *Peru Elections: Crushing blow for president's opponents Popular Force* <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-51208274>
4. <https://resultados.eleccionescongresales2020.pe/PRECE2020/EleccionesCongresales/GenRI>
5. <https://www.onpe.gob.pe/>



SLOVAKIA VOTES IN

Parliamentary Elections

Slovakia went in for elections to its unicameral National Council called *Narodna Rada* on February 29, 2020. At stake were 150 seats, for which 25 registered parties and 2,736 registered candidates were in the fray. A total of 5,598 polling stations were set up to accommodate 4.42 million registered electors. The voters' turnout figure was 65.8 percent, the highest since 2002.

The elections led to the unseating of the longtime governing party Direction-Social Democracy (SMER-SD) led by former Prime Minister Robert Fico. While SMER-SD could secure 18.3 percent of the votes, the Ordinary People and Independent Personalities (OLaNo-NOVA) led by Igor Matovic emerged the frontrunner with 25 percent.

Translated into seats OLaNo-NOVA got 53 seats as against 38 of its rival. The halfway mark in the Council is 76 seats, which meant that the winner was critically dependent on post-poll alliances to form the government. Matovic (46), formerly a successful entrepreneur, has the image of an anti-corruption crusader. He founded Ordinary People as a civic initiative in 2010.

The electoral system in Slovakia is based on proportional representation. The entire Slovak republic is considered a single constituency for the elections. The Parliamentary elections have a preferential component, which implies that apart from voting for a specific party, a voter can choose up to four specific candidates from the preferred party's candidates list.

A total of 5,598 polling stations were set up to accommodate 4.42 million registered electors.



Source:

1. IFES Elections in Slovakia -2020 Parliamentary Elections FAQs.
2. Slovakia Elections: Seismic Shift as Public anger ousts dominant Smer-SD Party (*The Guardian* March 1, 2020) retrieved at - <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/mar/01/slovakia-election-centre-right-olano-wins-poll-on-anti-graft-platform>

South Korea

ELECTION AMIDST CORONA VIRUS PANDEMIC

On April 15, the East Asian nation held quadrennial election to its unicameral National Assembly called Kuk Hoe comprising 300 seats. In the assembly, 253 members are directly elected in single seat constituencies, whereas the rest 47 are elected in a single national constituency by proportional representation using closed list. The term of office of the elected members, under Article 42 of the Constitution, is four years. The electorate comprises citizens of 18 years and above, and anyone aged 25 years and above is eligible to stand in the elections.

As per the National Election Commission (NEC), a total of 43,994,247 voters were eligible to cast in the 21st national assembly elections constituting nearly 85 percent of the South Korea's population. The elections were managed by 150,000 polling station staff and 70,000 counting stations staff.

Ahead of elections, the NEC had put in place a series of special measures regarding Coronavirus (COVID-19) ahead of the 21st National Assembly elections. Mentioned below measures are mainly focused on ensuring the safety of voters and polling station staff.

- Making the wearing of masks at polling stations mandatory, taking temperature checks and providing gloves on entrance to polling stations and regularly disinfecting all voting equipment.
- Eight special early voting polling stations were set up persons with confirmed cases of COVID-19 who were diagnosed after the deadline for applying for home voting.



- The NEC also introduced measures to allow those in quarantine to vote safely. Voters in quarantine were escorted by government officials to the polling station just before the close of voting. They were allowed to vote after the close of polling at 6pm at temporary polling booths separate from other voters.
- Counting stations were also disinfected and a number of rules have been put in place considering counting requires a large number of people to be in a space for a long period. Hand sanitizer was provided at the counting place and the door handle, counting equipment and other items were also disinfected regularly.
- The NEC also informed political parties and related persons that anybody who had recently been abroad would be excluded from registering as either counting staff or observers. Anybody entering a counting station would have their temperature checked and anybody with fever or respiratory symptoms was prohibited from entering.

The overseas voting for the 21st National Assembly elections took place from April 1 to April 6 at 96 polling stations in 66 countries around the world. The number of overseas voters in the relevant regions is 86,040, which amounts to around 50.0 percent of the total 171,959 overseas voters. Similar measures to voting within Korea had been put in place including regular disinfecting and asking voters to wear masks on entry.

The NEC decided to suspend overseas election operations at 86 overseas missions (as of April 1) until April 6, including the Embassy to the United States, where it was difficult to conduct a normal overseas voting. After the overseas voter period, it was decided that 18 diplomatic missions would count ballots on site. Usually the ballots are sent back to Korea for counting, but due to transport issues caused by the spread of COVID-19, these



Republic of Korea (Parliamentary election on Apr. 15, 2020)

The National Election Commission of the Republic of Korea conducted a parliamentary election amid the coronavirus-pandemic with strict safety measures. The A-WEB Secretariat has tracked the procedures and safety measures adopted in the parliamentary election.

Registration
Registration of candidates for election was done with a partition to prevent the spread of coronavirus.

DISINFECTION of Polling Stations
 • Polling stations were disinfected before and after the voting.
 • Disinfection was immediately carried out after the installation of polling and counting stations. The facilities and equipments were sanitized at least 6 hours before they were used.
 • Facilities such as schools and senior citizen centers were disinfected with priority since they needed to be used right after the election.

ONE METER APART
Voters were kept at least one meter apart from each other to prevent the contact with other voters.

NON-CONTACT THERMOMETERS
At the entrance of polling stations, non-contact thermometers were used to make temperature checks.
 • Any voter with a temperature over 37.5 degrees Celsius or having the symptoms followed the instructions of the polling station staff.

HAND SANITIZERS and VINYL GLOVES
Voters washed their hands with hand sanitizers and wore the vinyl gloves provided.

VENTILATION SYSTEMS
Counting stations were disinfected and ventilation systems were installed. Counting staff or observers wore masks and gloves to prevent the spread of coronavirus.

* For more information, please refer to the link: https://www.nec.go.kr/eng/vote_2019/04_news/01_02.php?num=21346&13col=4&sr=

18 missions could not return the ballots. This is the first time ballots have been counted at diplomatic missions.

The turnout stood at 66.2 percent, next only to 71.9 percent in 1992. President Moon Jae-in's Democratic Party and its allies emerged clear winners by bagging 180 seats, while the opposition United Future's Party won 103.

Source:
 Republic of Korea National Election Commission
<https://www.nec.go.kr>



ECUADOR

CNE and INE Mexico establishes cooperation agreements

With the aim of promoting electoral actions aimed at the 2021 Elections and strengthening inter-institutional participation through the exchange of experiences, Diana Atamaint, head of the National Electoral Council (CNE) and Lorenzo Córdova president of the National Electoral Institute of the United Mexican States (INE), signed a technical cooperation agreement on February 14, 2020

Through this signature, the entities will develop specific projects and actions on topics such as electoral geography, use of technological tools for the administration of elections, control and control of the electoral expenditure of the parties and candidates, political communication, monitoring of electoral campaigns,

cooperation instruments and international exchange, among others.

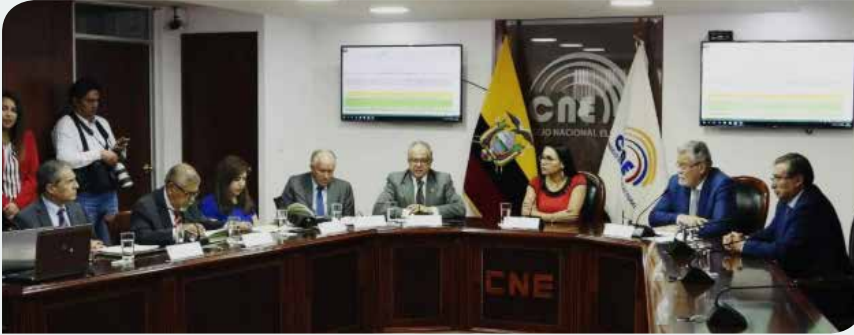
To achieve this initiative, the CNE and INE will design training and training seminars for election officials. The agreement mentions that there will be exchange of information, documentation, materials, assistance and specialized technical visits.

The agreement signed by the electoral entities of Mexico and Ecuador, contemplates the formation of an Operating Committee that will arrange the planning, implementation, execution and monitoring of specific projects to measure the results of the objectives set by the CNE and the INE.

Upon signing the agreement, on February 14 and 15, 2020, election officials, representatives of the media

and civil society organizations, will receive workshops on crisis management with "Fake News" and misinformation problems. This as part of the training in political communication and the exchange of experiences of representatives of the National Democratic Institute, of Ecuador, Colombia and the INE of Mexico.

As witnesses of the subscription, Francisco Herrero, director of the National Democratic Institute of Colombia, judges and Arturo Cabrea, President of the Contentious Court participated.



ECUADOR

CNE & TCE define dates for 2021 Elections

After a detailed analysis, the technical teams of the National Electoral Council (CNE) and the Contentious Electoral Tribunal (TCE), recommended as the date for the first electoral round of the general elections next year on Sunday, February 7 and keep the second round election on April 11 in Ecuador.

This was announced during a working meeting between the Judges and Counselors of both bodies that make up the Electoral Function. The argument to fix this new date is based on the need to meet the times for the resolution of resources by the ECT that establishes the recently reformed Organic Electoral Law and

Political Organizations, Code of Democracy.

This proposed calendar and electoral budget - recommended by the technical teams - will be considered by the CNE Plenary and - once approved - will be effective when it is published in the Official Gazette.

Source: <http://cne.gob.ec/es/institucion/>

INDIA

Indian Election Commission to contribute 30% of their salaries voluntarily for one year in COVID 19 funding

In the current state of the pandemic, as the rest of the world, India is also grappling with COVID-19 pandemic. In these times of distress, Commission has come forward to contribute in the form of voluntary reduction of thirty per cent in the basic salary paid by the Election Commission of India to Chief Election Commissioner Sunil Arora and Election Commissioners Ashok Lavasa and Sushil Chandra for a period of one year commencing April 1, 2020.

In addition that, Commission is making sure that the salaries of all the

employees are paid on time including the contractual staff.

Government along with other agencies is engaged in the mammoth task of controlling the spread of this pandemic and taking various measures to manage and minimize its impact on public health and the national economy. The numerous steps being taken by the Government and Civil Society organizations require vast resources for which contribution from all sources, including reducing the burden of salaries on the exchequer might be helpful.

POLAND

Polish Government pushes through bill allowing Presidential Elections to be held entirely by post

Amid the coronavirus lockdown the pandemic, legislators eventually pushed through a bill that would allow May's presidential elections to be held exclusively by postal vote.

The proposed legislation also empowers the speaker of the lower-house Sejm, from the ruling Law and Justice (PiS) party, to postpone the elections by a week, giving postal services more time to organise the vote.

Under the new legislation, the Sejm speaker is empowered to postpone the election if Poland remains under its current official

"epidemic state". However, they still must be held by 23 May, due to a constitutional requirement that elections take place between 75 and 100 days before the sitting president's term ends.

In practice, because elections take place on Sundays, this would mean a potential delay until 17 May, a week after the current date. Commentators believe the measure was introduced to give the authorities additional time to organise an unprecedented postal vote.

The new postal voting system, which would apply to both the first and (potential) second

rounds, would mean that voters will be mailed voting cards to the address they are registered as voters in. They would then be required to place the votes in special voting postal boxes between 6 a.m. and 8 p.m. on the day of the election.

The legislation also removes the requirement for the postal provider, Poczta Polska, to provide other postal services during the period between a week and a day prior to the election when it would be required to deliver postal ballots to Poland's roughly 30 million eligible voters.

TAIWAN

Prevention measures on the Corona virus disease during local by - elections

In response to the Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) outbreak, the Central Election Commission (CEC) implemented various prevention measures in local by-elections to ease voters' mind to vote.

To prevent spread of the disease, the CEC adopted various prevention measures in the local by-elections, such as disinfection of polling sites, and polling workers pre-health assessment, only staffs who

have no fever or illness case are allowed to execute their duties. Polling workers were required to wear surgical masks throughout the polling day. Quarantine stations were set up outside stations to take voters' temperature, and hand sanitizers were provided at the entrance and the exit for voters' use. In accordance with Taiwan Communicable Disease Control Act, people who are under home isolation

and home quarantine are prohibited to go out to vote. Voters who have a fever are required to wear masks to enter the polling stations. Masks were also provided for expectant mothers and individuals with fever or respiratory symptoms in polling stations. Also, the CEC promoted the concepts of prevention to voters to against the disease.

COVID-19 has been wild spread around the world. The

USA

Michigan Voters Encouraged to Vote Absentee

Upcoming local elections to be held in Michigan on May 5. Due to COVID-19 (coronavirus), the Michigan Governor encourages all voters to vote absentee for the upcoming May 5 election. Local jurisdictions will be mailing absentee ballot applications to every registered voter, and will provide absentee ballots directly to new registrants. To ensure that the voters get their absentee ballot application.

Source: <https://www.vote411.org/michigan>



CEC Chairperson Lee was outside the polling station inspected prevention measures on the COVID-19 during by-elections.



Polling workers were required to wear masks.

CEC has been maintaining a high level of vigilance and taken strict prevention measures while conducting elections. The CEC has successfully accomplished the local by-election and made

considerable efforts to prevent the spread of the virus to better ensure the health and safety of voters and the polling workers.

The CEC's prevention measures in local by-elections were

provided to the Association of World Election Bodies (A-WEB), and the article was published in the Newsletter February 2020 for the A-WEB 115 member election management bodies' reference.

IFES

U.S. Election Program to be held in November 2020

Since 1992, the U.S. Election Program has brought together election officials, parliamentarians and decision makers from all over the world to observe American elections and discuss voting and democracy from comparative perspectives. Witness the 2020 elections alongside hundreds of global democracy experts, from November 1-4, 2020.

Source: <https://www.ifes.org/usep>



IFES

COVID-19: A Survival Guide for Democracies

The COVID-19 pandemic threatens public health, economies and democracies. International

Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) experts are working around the globe to deliver critical analysis and innovative

solutions for our partners during this time of uncertainty. This page (<https://www.ifes.org/covid-19>) serves as a hub for

essential information to safeguard democratic rights, elections and rule of law along with transparent, accountable and effective governance while also protecting the health of our families and communities. IFES encourages all people who desire free, democratic societies to stay vigilant, informed and compassionate during this crisis.



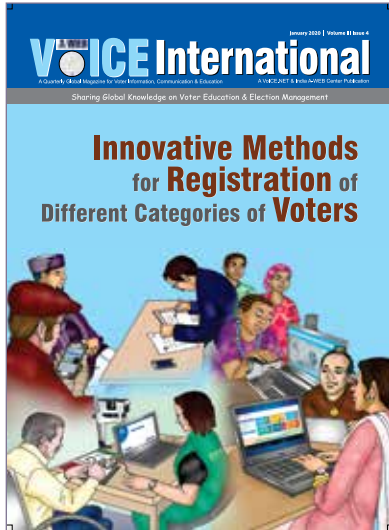
Election Calendar

Country	Electoral Events	Scheduled Date Of Elections	New Date Of Elections
AUSTRIA	Municipal And Mayoral Elections in Vorarlberg	March 15, 2020	Unknown
ARGENTINA	Municipal Elections	March 29, 2020	September 27, 2020
ARMENIA	Referendum on Changes to the Constitutional Court	April 5, 2020	Unknown
AUSTRALIA	Local Government Elections in New South Wales	September 2020	In 12 Months
BRAZIL	Supplementary Elections for the Position of Senator in Matogrosso	April 26, 2020	Unknown
BOLIVIA	General Elections	May 3, 2020	Unknown
BOLIVIA	Sub-National Elections	March 2020	Unknown
COLOMBIA	Election for the Community Action Board	April 26, 2020	Unknown
CANADA	By-Elections in Victoria And Rossland	April 4, 2020	Postponed Indefinitely
CANADA	By-Elections in Lytton	April 25, 2020	Postponed Indefinitely (The Council's term Is Now Extended On An Emergency Basis Until April 30.)
CHILE	Constitutional Referendum	April 26, 2020	Unknown
CZECH REPUBLIC	Senate By-Elections, Teplice	March 27-28, 2020 & April 3-4, 2020	Unknown
CYPRUS	Turkishcyriot Leadership Elections	April 26, 2020	October 11, 2020
CAMEROON	Local By-Elections	March 26, 2020	Postponed Indefinitely
DOMINICAN REPUBLIC	Presidential And Legislative Elections	May 17, 2020	Unknown
ETHIOPIA	Parliamentary Elections	August 29, 2020	Postponed Indefinitely
ENGLAND	Local Elections in 118 English Councils, The London Assembly And For Seven English Regional Mayors As Well As Police And Crime Commissioners	First Week Of May, 2020	May 2021
FALKLAND ISLANDS	Single Constituency Referendum	March 26, 2020	September 26, 2020
FRANCE	Second Round of Local Elections	March 22, 2020	June 21, 2020

ELECTION CALENDAR

Country	Electoral Events	Scheduled Date Of Elections	New Date Of Elections
GAMBIA	Niamina West Constituency By – Elections	April 16, 2020	Postponed Indefinitely
GHANA	NPP Primary Elections	April 25, 2020	Unknown
GERMANY	Local Elections In Hessen and Saxony	April-October 2020	November (Earliest)
GIBRALTAR (BRITISH OVERSEAS TERRITORY)	Referendum On Abortion	March 19, 2020	Postponed Indefinitely
GHANA	NPP Primary Elections	April 25, 2020	Unknown
IRAN	Second Round Of Parliamentary Elections	April 17, 2020	September 11, 2020
INDIA	Rajyasabha Elections	March 26, 2020	Postponed Indefinitely
INDONESIA	Regional (Local) Elections	September 23, 2020	Postponed Indefinitely
ISLE OF MAN (SELF-GOVERNING BRITISH CROWN DEPENDENCY)	Local Authority Elections	April 23, 2020	Postponed Indefinitely
ITALY	Referendum in Italy to Reduce the Number of Seats in Parliament	March 29, 2020	Postponed Indefinitely
KYRGYZSTAN	Local Elections	April 12, 2020	Postponed Indefinitely
KENYA	By Elections	June-July, 2020	Postponed Indefinitely
KIRIBATI	Parliamentary Elections	April 7, 2020	April 14, 2020
LATVIA	Local Snap Elections for City Council in Riga	April 25, 2020	September 5, 2020
MEXICO	Local Elections in Coahuila And Hidalgo	June 7, 2020	Postponed Indefinitely
MALDIVES	Local Council Elections	April 4, 2020	April 18, 2020 (Possibly Further)
NIGERIA	By – Elections For Senatorial District In Bayelsa, Imo And Plateau	March, 2020	Postponed Indefinitely
NORTH MACEDONIA	Parliamentary Elections	April 12, 2020	Unknown
PERU	Local Municipal Election in Chipao, Ayacucho District	March 29, 2020	Unknown
PARAGUAY	Primary Elections	July 12, 2020	August 8, 2020
PARAGUAY	Local (Municipal) Elections	November 8, 2020	2021

Country	Electoral Events	Scheduled Date Of Elections	New Date Of Elections
PAKISTAN	By-Elections	March 2020	Unknown
PAPUA NEW GUINEA	Government General Elections, Autonomous Bougainville	June 2020	Postponed Indefinitely
RUSSIA	Constitutional Referendum	April 22, 2020	June 23, 2020
ROMANIA	Regional And Local Elections Local Elections	June, 2020	December 31, 2020
SOUTH AFRICA	Municipal By-Elections and Voter Registration Activities	March-May, 2020	Unknown
SYRIA	Parliamentary Elections	April 13, 2020	May 20, 2020
SRI LANKA	Parliamentary Elections	April 25, 2020	June 20, 2020
SPAIN	Regional Elections in Euskadi And Galicia	April 5, 2020	Unknown
SERBIA	General Elections	April 26, 2020	Unknown
SCOTLAND	Local Government By-Elections in Kincorth/Nigg/Cove and Craigentiny/Duddingston	May 14 And 21, 2020	Unknown
SWITZERLAND	Federal Vote and Several Local (Municipal) Elections In The Cantons Of Neuchâtel, Ticino, And Luzern	April-June, 2020	Unknown
SWITZERLAND	Federal Vote and Several Local (Municipal) Elections In The Cantons Of Neuchâtel, Ticino, And Luzern	April-June, 2020	Unknown
SOLOMON ISLANDS	By Elections for Central Honiara and North East Guadalcanal Constituencies	June, 2020	Postponed Indefinitely
TUNISIA	Local Elections in Hassi El Ferid, Jbeniana	March 28-29, 2020	Unknown
TASMANIA	Legislative Council Elections For The Divisions Of Rosevears And Huon	May 2, 2020	May 30, 2020
UGANDA	Special Interest Groups Elections	April- May, 2020	Postponed Indefinitely
USA	Primary Elections in 15 States across the USA and Several Local Elections around the Country	March – May 2020	Postponed Indefinitely
URUGUAY	Local (Departmental and Municipal) Elections	May 10, 2020	October 4, 2020
ZIMBABWE	By Election in Ward 16 of Chiredzi Rural District Council	April 4, 2020	Postponed Indefinitely



VOLUME III, ISSUE 4 OF VOICE INTERNATIONAL RELEASED

This issue of VoICE International marks the completion of third year of its successful journey. The quarterly issues of the magazine, starting with the theme ‘Empowering Young & Future Voters’ was launched during the International conference in January 2017.

The issue highlighted the experiences of different EMBs on ‘Innovative Methods for Registration of Different categories of Voters’. It also mark the first Issue of the magazine after it has announced as the Magazine of the entire A- WEB Community.

The issue shared the innovation in removal of barriers in voter registration, improving the efficiency and health of Electoral Roll through integration of technology with ultimate goal of enhancing participation for democratic consolidation.

The issue brings a very rich experience on the subject from different countries such as Australia, Cambodia, Kazakhstan, Malawi, Lesotho, Sri Lanka and other countries. It also shares with the interesting articles from Kazakhstan on Pilot Projects in School, Sri Lanka on Persons with Disabilities, Malawi on Impact of Climate Change on Elections along with the information on global events, trainings, conferences and global lection updates from across the world.

Readers would gain from this experience and knowledge sharing and find them relevant for addressing the issues and challenges in fulfilment of their mandate for free and fair elections.

THE CENTENARIAN VOTERS- SENTINELS OF OUR DEMOCRACY

Time and again, the Commission’s commitment to make elections more inclusive and accessible for all strata of voters through targeted interventions has resulted in monumental changes. The 17th Lok Sabha Election witnessed some major achievements in terms of overall voter’s turnout and special attention to participation of centenarians.

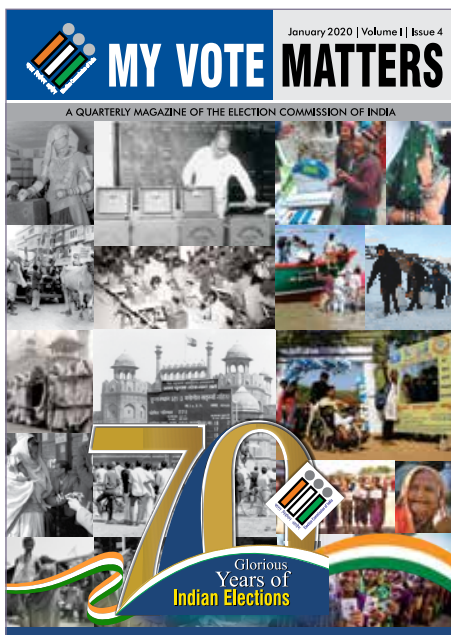
This collection of 51 stories includes the experiences of centenarian voters who braved difficult terrain, poor health and other challenges to come out and vote. Their commitment contributed to achieving the highest voter turnout in history – a feat that encouraged the Commission to extend the facility of Postal Ballot for service voters to senior citizens of 80 years and above in the Jharkhand Assembly Election 2019 to make our elections even more inclusive and accessible.



MY VOTE MATTERS- ISSUE 4

The Election Commission of India completed seven glorious decades of conducting elections across the nation. During these 70 years, ECI has successfully delivered 17 General Elections to the Lok Sabha, 15 elections to the office of President and Vice President of India and 377 state legislative assembly elections, in fulfilment of its constitutional mandate.

In this context, the fourth issue of My Vote Matters brings you a timeline of these 70 illustrious years, including a variety of interesting and inspiring articles from senior officers of the Commission about the evolution of the institution and its role in consolidating the democratic polity of our nation. Furthermore, the issue also includes a collection of vibrant stories from the field which speaks volume about the dedication and passion of the election officials and voters of the nation alike.



Source: eci.gov.in

CONSTITUTIONS AND INTERNATIONAL LAW

International law is an increasingly relevant consideration in constitution-building.

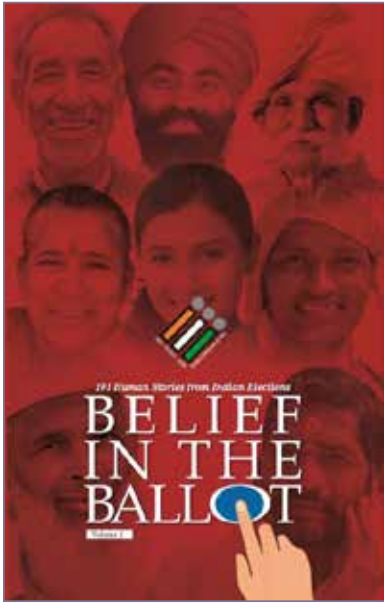
It is therefore helpful for a constitution to prescribe the effect of international law in domestic sphere. If all or some international law has automatic effect, it is helpful for the constitution to describe its position in the hierarchy of domestic law.

This Constitution Brief was written initially for use in Myanmar, and it explains the nature of international law and explores how it relates to constitution-making. It then addresses four questions about international law that are raised when a constitution is being drafted or substantially changed:

- Should a constitution mention the relationship between international law and domestic law in the domestic legal system? If so, what are the options?
- Should a constitution specify how the state enters into binding commitments under international law?
- What are the implications, if any, of international law for the substance of a constitution?
- What are the implications, if any, of international law for the process of constitution-making?

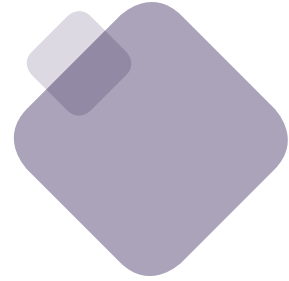


Source: <https://www.ifes.org>



BELIEF IN THE BALLOT- 2

The second volume of Belief in the Ballot is an anthology of 101 human interest stories from across the nation about Indian elections. An assortment of daring, interesting and inspiring stories of election officers and voters, this collection presents stories of courage, sacrifice and dedication of the election personnel as well as the enthusiasm and commitment of the voters.



THE COST OF REPRESENTATION: A STUDY OF WOMEN'S REPRESENTATION AND POLITICAL FINANCE IN NEPAL

The full participation of women in political and decision-making processes as candidates and elected representatives is crucial to democratic development. Ongoing debates about political finance rarely consider the impact of money on women's representation. Money is an essential and unavoidable part of elections but creates an additional barrier for women and other marginalized groups, given their limited access to and control of financial resources. In Nepal and many other emerging democracies, female candidates may need to raise more funds than their male counterparts to run competitively.

The International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) conducted a study of women's political representation and political finance in Nepal's House of Representatives elections in 2017. The study incorporated a literature review and interviews with 23 electoral stakeholders. It found that unequal access to funds for female candidates, reinforced by patriarchal attitudes of political stakeholders, adversely affects their political representation.

The Cost of Representation: A Study of Women's Representation and Political Finance in Nepal then provides recommendations on how Parliament, the Election Commission of Nepal, political parties, the media, civil society and the international community

can improve women's meaningful representation in Nepali politics. IFES hopes the report sparks discussions on the critical need for reforms and capacity building ahead of the next general elections in Nepal in 2022.



Source: <https://www.ifes.org>



Glossary

Bipartisan

A cooperative effort by two political parties.

A meeting held by members of a party to decide an issue. Most often, caucuses are statewide meetings held in presidential election years. Members of a party choose a candidate to support or they elect members to a state nominating committee.

Caucus

Spin

A politician's attempt to shape the way the public looks at an issue or event, much the way a tennis player uses spin to direct the ball. Political advisers who spin are known as 'spin doctors.'

The votes cast during an election for a candidate or about an issue. Whichever candidate or decision about an issue gets the most votes has won the popular vote. (U.S. president and vice president are determined by an Electoral College vote.)

Popular Vote

Whistle Stopping

The practice of making speeches in many towns in a short time, often during a single day. When politicians travelled by train, small towns were called whistle-stops. Politicians would use the stop to deliver a quick campaign speech, often from the back of the train, before heading to the next stop.

Source: <https://www.scholastic.com/>
<https://www.usa.gov/>



1 Which renowned Physics Nobel Laureate was offered to become the President of Israel in 1952?

2 In which 'sweet' place were the first votes of the first general elections of independent India cast in 1951?

3 This word comes from Greek words for "double" and "ruled". Historically, this referred to the system of shared rule in British India, established by the Government of India Acts of 1919 and 1935 which devolved some powers to local councils. Name the Word.

4 The last western country to give women the right to vote in federal elections did so through a referendum in 1971. Which country was this?

5 The Voting Rights Act of 1965 overturned Jim Crow laws in the United States to guarantee which group of people the right to vote freely and openly?

1. Albert Einstein 2. Chini village in Solan district Himachal Pradesh 3. Dyrarchy 4. Switzerland 5. African-Americans

Election Commission of India

Biennial Elections to Rajya Sabha, Meghalaya



VOTING GUIDE WITH COVID-19 PROTOCOLS



ENTIRE VOTING AREA & ITS PERIPHERY IS DISINFECTED

1

ENTER POLLING STATION → THERMAL SCANNING → SANITISE YOUR HANDS

2

INTEGRATED VIOLET SKETCH PEN TO BE OBTAINED FROM PEN MAN

KEEP PHYSICAL DISTANCING & STAGGERED ENTRY INTO POLLING STATION

SHOW YOUR ID

3

ENTER VOTING COMPARTMENT

CHOICE OF CANDIDATE TO BE MARKED BY NUMERICAL '1'

CAST MARKED BALLOT PAPER TO VOTE IN BALLOT BOX

OTHER PROTECTION MEASURES

- WEARING MASK**: Illustration of four people wearing face masks.
- NO HANDSHAKE**: Illustration of two hands shaking with a red prohibition sign over it.
- DIFFERENT WAYS OF GREETINGS**: Illustration of hands in a prayer-like gesture.
- COUGHING & SNEEZING ETIQUETTE**: Illustration of a person coughing or sneezing into their elbow.

STRICT PHYSICAL DISTANCING PROTOCOL OF 6ft to 20ft TO BE FOLLOWED BY POLL PERSONNEL

- Returning Officer
- Asst. Returning Officer
- Polling Officers
- Observer
- Representatives of Political Parties
- Camera Person

EXIT

ELECTORAL LITERACY CLUB



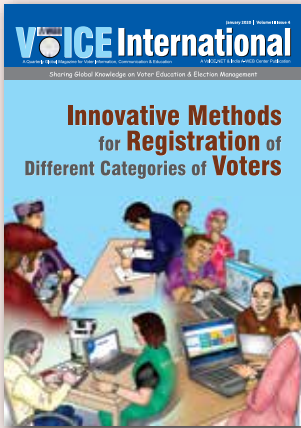
"No Voter to be Left Behind"
ELECTION COMMISSION OF INDIA

What a novel idea!
Preventive masks
spreading a message
on the importance
of voting!



Varsha Sheth.

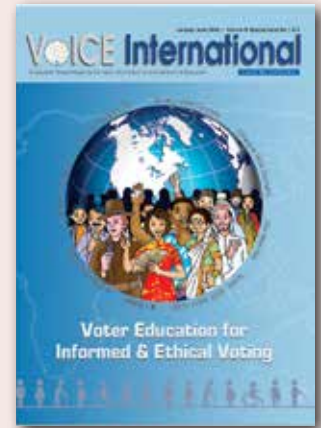
PREVIOUS ISSUES OF VoICE INTERNATIONAL



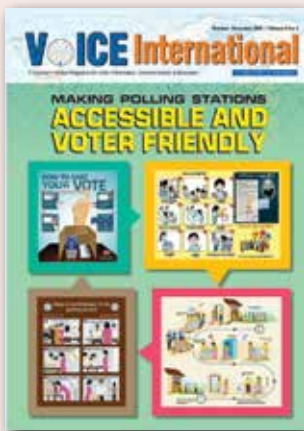
OCT-DEC 2019



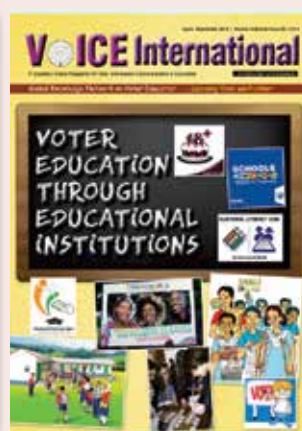
JULY-SEPT 2019



JAN-JUN 2019



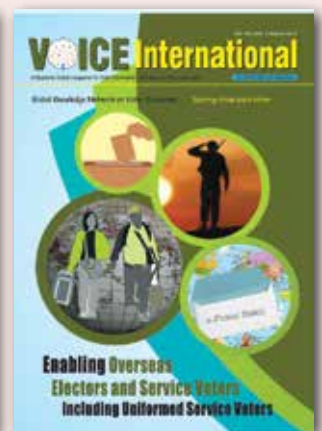
OCT-DEC 2018



APR-SEPT 2018



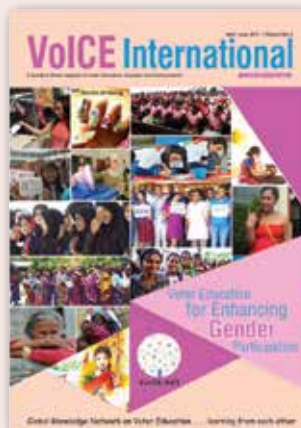
JAN-MAR 2018



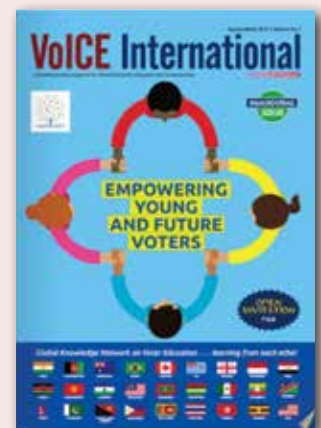
OCT-DEC 2017



JUL-SEP 2017



APR-JUN 2017



JAN-MAR 2017

Members & Associates: EMBs and International Organisations



Voter Information, Communication & Education Network

Voter Information, Communication & Education Network (VoICE.NET) is a Global Knowledge Network for sharing knowledge, resources and expertise on Voter Education.

VOICE.NET was launched on October 20, 2016 at the International Conference on Voter Education for Inclusive, Informed and Ethical participation held at New Delhi. The Global Knowledge Network is a part of the New Delhi Declaration adopted at the Conference by the 25 Election Management Bodies (EMBs) and representatives from UNDP, International IDEA, IFES and Malaysian Commonwealth Studies Centre. **VoICE.NET** contents are provided by the member EMBs/Organizations and the portal is maintained by Election Commission of India.