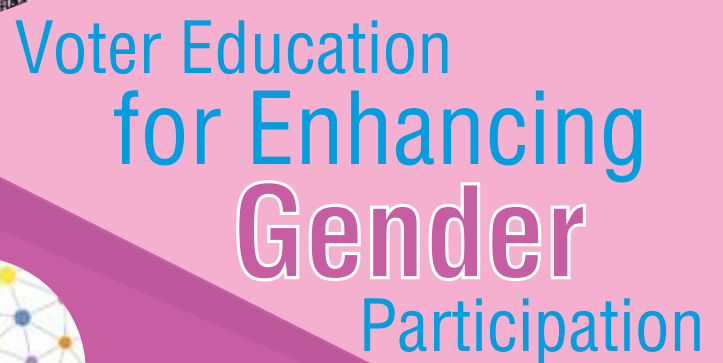


April - June, 2017 | Volume I No. 2

VoICE International

A VoICE.NET e-Publication



VOICE.NET

Global Knowledge Network on Voter Education ... learning from each other



* महिला होती है परिवार की
चुनाव में हो उनकी भागीदारी

चलो सब महिलाएं मिलकर; विकास में हिस्सेदार बनें मतदाता बनकर।

अधिक जानकारी के लिए कृपया नीचे दिए संकेत स्थल पर संपर्क करें।

<https://ceo.maharashtra.gov.in>

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* *Women - the pivot of a family;
Elections to involve them totally.*

'WOMEN ON THE MOVE'
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Maharashtra, India.

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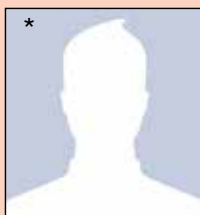
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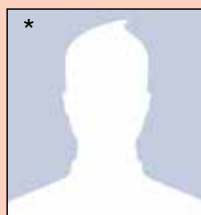
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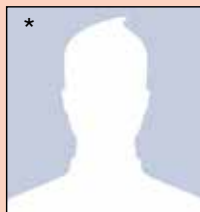
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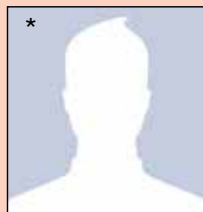
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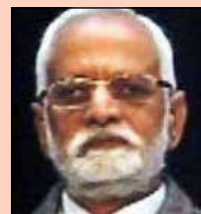
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Editorial



Dear Reader,

I am very contented to write the editorial of the second quarterly issue of the VOICE International with the central theme 'Gender: Voter Education for Enhancing Women's Participation'. This issue of the VOICE International seeks to present the experiences of different countries for knowledge sharing and learn from each for enhancing women's electoral participation. I am also very happy to share with the readers that the response from EMBs and International Organizations towards the magazine from across the world has been very encouraging and we received a number of impressive articles and other contributory write ups for the magazine.

The launch of VOICE International by the Chief Election Commissioner of India on 24th January, 2017 was witnessed by the Heads of the EMBs, International Electoral Organizations, Experts and other dignitaries from over a dozen prominent democracies of the world. The launch was an impressive and memorable event. Impressive because it carried goodwill messages and high grade contributory articles from heads of many EMBs and International Organizations; and memorable because it coincided with the International Seminar on 'Strategies for Empowering Young and Future Voters', signing of MOUs for International Cooperation in Electoral Management and the National Voters' Day of India on the very next day. We celebrate the value that was created and keep up the tradition for the cause of voters of democracies of the world.

I take this opportunity to welcome EMBs of Mexico, Myanmar, Bhutan, Bangladesh, South Africa who have joined the VOICE.NET Initiative and their representatives who have joined as Member Secretaries on VOICE International in the meantime. It is both, my pleasure and privilege to inform that the membership of VOICE.NET has gone up to 23 (with Canada supporting from outside). Seven of the Member Secretaries have accepted our offer to be on the Editorial Board. The VOICE.NET Initiative grows and the voters in the world of democracies gain. This gain comes in the form of enrichment of accessible voter education resources through knowledge exchange and resource sharing by the members and other stakeholders.

We picked up this theme 'Gender: Voter Education for Enhancing Women's Participation' as there could not have been a better occasion to connect with the International Women's Day which fell in the interregnum on 8th March, 2017.

Suffrage came to the women voters after much struggle. Amongst the present day democracies New Zealand was the first one to accept women's right to vote in 1893 followed by Cook Islands (1893), South Australia (1895), Australia (1901), Finland (1906) followed by

other democracies with the passage of time. Major thrust for equal and universal suffrage emanates from the UN Treaties and related instruments namely Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, 1966 (ICCPR) and Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, 1979 (CEDAW) and The United Nations Centre for Human Rights in its Handbook on Human Rights and Elections (1994) that has spelt out the guiding principles for voter education. Democracies across the world have integrated these covenants in their legislative and political framework to empower women in political participation. Gender sensitive voter education for enhancing women's electoral participation is imperative for achieving the desired objectives of equal and universal adult suffrage. EMB's along with International Organizations and the Civil Society Organizations have to play a central role in this process.

It must be stated that the EMBs across the world are seized of the problem and lot of good work has been done for enhancing women's participation. Yet lot more needs to be done and lot more needs to be shared. Consolidation of policy interventions, measures for special facilitation, and the laudable initiatives of different EMBs is essential for experience sharing with the objective of larger learning from the knowledge exchange at VOICE International.

I would like to express my gratitude to all the EMBs, International Organizations, the Advisory Board and the Editorial Board for making their valuable contribution to the magazine.

I dedicate this issue to the Women Voters of the world for their larger electoral participation.

Lastly, through this issue, I would also like to announce that the next issue to be launched in the month of July, 2017 would focus on the topic 'Participation of Persons with Disability (PWDs) in Elections'. You are invited to contribute your country experiences and best practices on this topic for the next issue.

Best Wishes,



Umesh Sinha,

Executive Secretary, VOICE.NET and
Editor-in-Chief, VOICE International



Inaugural Issue VOICE International

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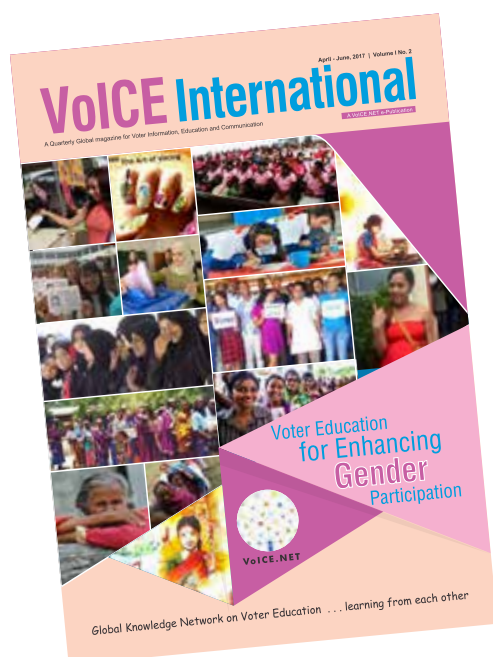
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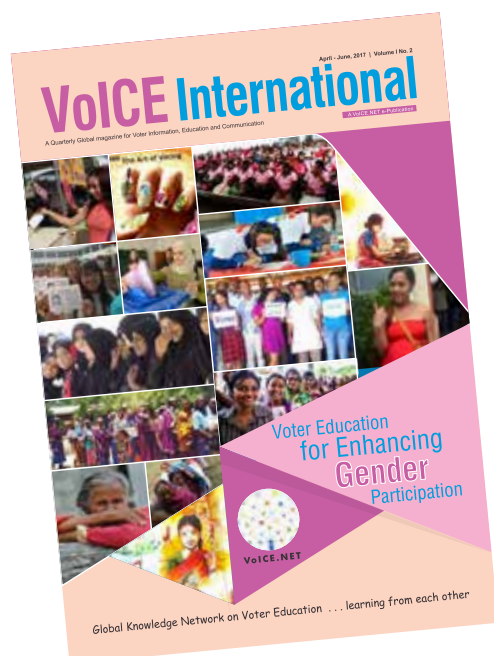
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A Comprehensive and Coordinated Public Outreach Strategy is a Pre-requisite for Enhancing Women's Participation in Elections

Women constitute almost half of the Afghan population. However, low literacy rate among women, strong patriarchal culture and the absence of proper electoral infrastructure, women's participation in election remains low. On the other hand, women's participation in elections is considered pivotal in empowering women in all sectors. The international community and the Afghan government strived hard to enhance women's participation in election. Women were given a quota of 64 members in the national assembly and the president was legally bound to commit half of the selected seats (17) commitment to empowering women. Despite top down policies, women's participation in the election is significantly low.

The current electoral trend in Afghanistan belies the criteria set by the Afghan constitutions for elections, yet significant inroads have been made in terms of women's participation in elections in the nascent democratic order. The Afghan constitution mandates that the election ought to be general, secret and free. Since majority of the women all over the country cannot participate in elections by their free will, it will take them a long time to fully participate in elections.

The statistics of the Election Commission show that around 38% women voted in 2014 presidential and parliamentary elections. The election commission utilized traditional as well as modern methods of public outreach to spread the message around the country. The election commission developed a comprehensive and unprecedented public outreach program. The program had clear vision, goal, objectives, messages and conduits

for spreading messages of the commission. Through its public outreach program, the commission targeted women through specifically designed messages intended to motivate women to vote and enhance their know-how of the voting process. Additionally, the commission developed targeted men to encourage them to allow their women for voting. The messages were spread through radio channels, TV stations, religious scholars, posters, banners, theatres and tribal chiefs. More importantly, the commission hired around 1400 civic educators, both men and women, to educate citizens in voting and motivate them to vote in the elections.

A call center was specifically operational for 12 hours on daily basis for 6 months prior to the elections. Women and men from all parts of the country could contact the call center and address their questions to the operators, who would provide timely response to the callers about different dynamics of election. The current security dynamics beg for greater attention to public outreach for all strata of the society, for women.

The current situation in no way is friendly towards women's participation in election. Only a well-coordinated public outreach strategy focused on women has the potential to trigger greater women participation in the next elections. ■



*Abdul Khabir Momand
Acting Head of Information and Public
Outreach Department at
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Afghanistan*



Women

Participation In Politics

There are more men than women in the world. The global average proportion is 101.8 men for every 100 women and the number of male persons has grown since 1960. In Brazil, the opposite applies: 96,7 men for every 100 women. In politics, however, the rate is completely different: in our parliament 88% of representatives are men; only 12% are women.

Only recently has it become possible to talk about women's participation in politics.

Although our Constitution of 1824 has enshrined the right to vote to "Brazilian citizens", and the Constitution of 1891 to "citizens", the electoral enlistment remained forbidden for women. Only in 1932, along with the first Brazilian electoral code, was women's vote expressly enshrined.

There exist some historical records of women electoral enlistment prior to 1932, such as the state law of Rio Grande do Norte that already in 1926 ensured the right to vote to every citizen "regardless of gender".

Obstacles for women electoral enlistment represented also a late enshrinement of women's passive electoral capacity (the capacity to be voted), in other words a late debut of women as representatives. Only in 1933 the first woman was elected by popular vote for a federal office: Carlota Pereira de Queiroz, a medical doctor from São Paulo, was elected deputy for the National Constituent Assembly that would take place the next year.

At the constitutional stage, the Constitution of 1934 enshrined women's right to vote. However, feminine enlistment and vote were mandatory just for women that held a public paid office. That facultative rule for feminine participation remained in 1937, when the constitutional reform imposed the electoral enlistment "in accordance with the law". That law (Decree-Law nº 7.586/1945) established

that the electoral enlistment and the vote were mandatory but put some exceptions, including women that were not engaged in lucrative occupations. But if the enlistment and vote were mandatory just for women that engaged in lucrative occupations, considering the cultural and social Brazilian structure at that time, the exception (facultativity) was far more recurrent than the rule (obligation).

Full obligation came with the Constitution of 1946: "enlistment and vote are mandatory for Brazilians of both genders, with the exceptions provided by law". Those exceptions had nothing to do with gender, but with cases of suspension or loss of political rights.

Today politics are dominated by men, although women political rights are formally ensured. In the whole world there are few countries that reach a balanced gender proportion in their parliaments. That framework has awoken the international community to the necessity to take further steps to increase women's participation in politics, mainly as representatives. Since 1997 Brazil embraces candidacy shares for each gender, according to art. 10, §3º of the Elections Law (Law n. 9.504/1997): "the parties have to submit at least 30% and at most 70% of the number of candidacies with each gender". However, the shares of feminine candidacies don't revert into representation as few women are elected, not to mention that many parties cheat the law by presenting fictitious candidacies that deliver just a formal fulfillment of the legal imposition¹. This kind of apparent candidacies became a recurrent reality since 1997, as not even the candidates vote for themselves.

In Brazil, a reform that aims to improve a set of aspects of current electoral and political system is under discussion. In relation to women's participation there are many proposals, including: adopting a pre-ordinate list with gender alternation; percentage of seats to be actually occupied by women (not percentage

¹BBC Brasil. "Lei abre brecha para desrespeito à cota de candidatas mulheres".

of candidacies, such as we have today); distribution of the party's funds according to the number of elected women by each party etc.

That lack of political feminine representation is just one of the symptoms of a much more serious and complex sociocultural framework, and not just in Brazil. There are at least two other aspects that confirm that panorama: the indices of violence against women and women's situation in the labor market.

About violence, the indices remain alarming although we can see public policies in Brazil to reduce violence against women, mainly when it has a gender motivation. In this field we can point out the Secretaria Especial de Políticas para as Mulheres (Especial Secretary for Policies for Women) linked to Ministério da Justiça e Cidadania (Justice and Citizenship Ministry) which has initiatives to fight the violence against women and promote gender equality. At the legislative stage Brazil became a benchmark due to Law n. 11.340/2006 (known as "Maria da Penha Law" in reference to a woman that suffered all kinds of violence from her husband for years), which creates mechanisms to hinder domestic and familiar violence against women. Even so, according to Mapa da Violência 2015 (Violence Map 2015), homicides against women increased significantly: "between 2003 and 2013 the number of female victims increased from 3.937 to 4.762, which means a 21% increase in one decade. Those 4.762 deaths in 2013 represents 13 female homicides every day".

As an attempt to revert such framework Law n. 13.104/2015 typified feminicídio ("femicide"), a type of homicide qualified by the fact that it was practiced against a woman because of the gender condition.

In reference to women situation on labor market, just to mention the wage aspect, the International Labor Organization (ILO) estimates that according to the tendencies observed in 2016 "it will take 70 years to close the gender wage gap". In accordance with the report Women at Work Trends 2016 "globally, the gender wage gap is estimated to be 23 per cent; in other words, women earn 77 per cent of what men earn".

Back to politics it is necessary to understand women's low participation as a result from that sociocultural background, which was consolidated through history, and that is why it is so hard to overcome. According to Luana Simões Pinheiro, "it is exactly based on social constructions built up from notions such as habitus, gender and male domination that our society has structured – and subsequently reshaped – specific places for each gender". Politics, whether on an institutional level or not, is one of those places in which male domination is established, requiring reflections by the entire society and, most importantly, governmental or civil initiatives to revert the panorama into a substantial gender equality landscape. ■



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²Mapa da Violência 2015: Homicídio de mulheres no Brasil, p. 13.

³International Labour Organization, Women at Work Trends 2016, p. 16.

⁴Luana Simões Pinheiro, Vozes Femininas na Política: uma análise sobre mulheres parlamentares no pós-Constituinte, p. 56.



Facilitating women's electoral participation – SVEEP in India



As per the Census of India 2011, the sex ratio stands at 933 females per thousand males. The sex ratio in rural India stands at 946 considerable higher than the sex ratio in urban areas at 900. Over the past decades, the adverse sex ratio of the population has been reflected in the electoral roll and further pronounced in the voter turnout.

The Election Commission of India identified the gender gap in electoral participation as the major challenge after the national elections in 2009, when the women turnout at 55.8% lagged behind by more than 4 points to the male turnout of 60.36%.

The voter education and outreach programme of ECI termed SVEEP (Systematic Voters' Education & Electoral Participation) launched post 2009 national elections thus included **removal of gender gap** in electoral participation as one of its primary focus besides addressing issues of **youth disconnect** and **urban apathy**.

Under SVEEP, every Indian is seen as a voter, if too young to be a current voter then a prospective one. Every Indian is also seen as a partner in the exercise of voter education. A targeted approach is adopted towards meeting the various gaps in registration and voting besides spreading awareness about informed, un-intimidated and inducement free voting under the broader framework of civic education.

Planning Interventions

Gaps are identified at the level of assembly constituencies and also at polling station level

and election officials of these constituencies are given the task to identify and analyse the reason for poor women turnout. Knowledge, Attitude and Practices survey are also carried out ahead of elections to get an independent assessment about the reasons of gaps, wherever they exist.

Targeted interventions are designed based on the findings and SVEEP plans are thus chalked out for the provinces (districts). The State SVEEP Plan incorporates the plans of the districts and chalks out a comprehensive road map for the interventions in the state.

Information, Motivation & Facilitation

The SVEEP interventions have three main components for increasing the voter participation and for encouraging quality participation. Disseminating **information** about the 'how', 'where' and 'when' of registration and voting, **motivating** the people on 'why' of elections and **facilitating** the people so as to make the registration and voting process accessible, convenient and pleasant experience are the main components of the SVEEP interventions.

National Elections for Lok Sabha 2014

For maximization of women registration, women-specific campaign was a substantive part of the SVEEP Plan at state and district level. Cultural interventions were planned out to address the issue of lack of voters' education among women. As a component of BLOs' training, sensitization to issues regarding women's registration as electors was done.

Vignettes

Marching On: All Women's Rallies in Sabarkantha, Gujarat

All women rallies, locally called 'Mahila Matdaar Rallies' were organised in district Sabarkantha of Gujarat which is predominantly a tribal district. The low female voter turn-out polling stations were already identified in the district, but it was a revelation for the election administration when they found out that women in these PS areas were not even aware that they had a right to vote.

Every week, Wednesday is the day fixed to immunize young children by health workers all over the State. This is known as Mamta Divas. The District Election Officer (DEO) decided to hold these

rallies on Wednesdays in the low female turnout areas. The rally would consist of the Health Workers, Anganwadi workers, Self Help Group members, and since it was strategically decided to start the rally from the Health Center (Mamta Kendra), the female beneficiaries present for immunization would join in the rally. These women would then go into the streets of the Polling Station area shouting innovative slogans and carrying informative banners about the right of women to vote, the time and date of polls, separate queues for woman etc. In the district, 80,000 women participated in 826 such rallies, ahead of LS 2014.

Vignettes

Mothers take the lead in Reasi, Jammu & Kashmir

In District Reasi of Jammu & Kashmir, "Mother India" campaign was launched through 942 volunteers targeting women voters and prospective female voters ahead of LS 2014. Under the campaign electoral literacy material was distributed, voter lists were circulated at household level in villages and electoral participation pledge in Urdu, Gojri and Kashmiri languages was got signed from women voters. All 301 Polling Stations in the district were declared as "No Women Queue" with seating arrangements with 200+ chairs made at these polling booths. Women were given a warm welcome, offered token and place to sit. After every male voter two female voters were allowed to enter the polling booth to facilitate greater number of women and their timely return to homes. At the Polling Stations a special "Women Help Desk" was established to help the female voters and facilitate their voting. Drinking water facility, facilitation counter, were made available and these facilities were widely publicized before poll date to encourage women to come and vote.

Vignettes

Mother Daughter Conversation

Communication material are developed which specifically targeted women. Following is an example from Uttar Pradesh, the most populated state of India

Dear mother, don't stop me, I will go to vote
Listen daughter, I will not send you outside
Stay at home and work, I will not send you outside
Dear mother, your aunts would go to vote
Your old grandmother will go to vote
Listen daughter, I will not send you outside
Stay at home and work, I will not send you outside
Dear mother,
Listen to me, pay attention; I have got my voter slip
My name is in the rolls and I am a voter
Dear daughter, how can you be a voter without being married?
Dear mother, I am eighteen years old, my name is in the voter list, the Tehsildar came to school and showed us the voter list
I will take everyone with me to vote
I will perform my duty
Dear daughter, thanks for enlightening me, I will vote and make sure you vote too

Vignettes

Shouldering New Responsibilities: Targeting young married women – Bharuch, Gujarat

Young married women were assisted in Bharuch for obtaining supporting documents for voters' registration with the help of ASHA and Anganwadi workers, in an organized campaign to enroll young women who are generally not enrolled after marriage. Gujarat state has a history of high gender gap, both at the level of enrolment and in voting. Special motivational and information campaign

was taken up particularly targeting women through folk art and competitions. As a result of these sustained efforts, the female voter turnout in Bharuch was 73.91%, an increase of 11% in 2012 Assembly Election over last Assembly election.

The DEO Bharuch won the Best Electoral Practices Award for the year 2012.

Engagement of women icons for promotional messages at national level was done.

Women groups such as Self Help Groups and Women cooperatives were also engaged with for voter education. Street plays, folk songs, drama, Cinema slides, posters at places frequented by women such as religious places, ration shops, markets and hospitals were used.

Specific activities to attract female voters to register, including activities informing them how married women can register, were taken up as a part of the Plan. Grassroots level workers under the Mid-Day Meal Scheme, ASHA and Aanganwadi workers of the Integrated Child Development Scheme (ICDS) were trained to facilitate registration of young female voters.

Women election icons, Women BLOs and all women polling staff were some of the other strategies to bring in more women in the electoral process.

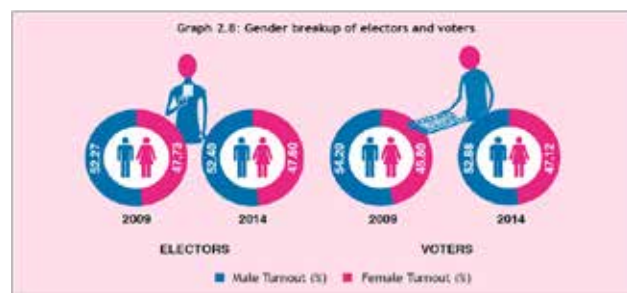
0.0035% of the total electorate. Among the 28 States and 7 union territories, in 8 States/UTs² the number of female electors exceeded that of male electors.

Nearly 65.63% of the total women electors in the country voted in 2014 election, as compared to 55.82% in 2009 poll. In comparison, 67.09% of the male electorate turned up at the polling stations, as compared to 60.24% in the last general election. The gap between male and female turnout was narrowest in the 2014 election.

Thus women had a greater share in the credit for highest ever turnout ever recorded in Lok Sabha election 2014, as the surge in female voter turnout has been higher than the corresponding rise in male turnout. While in 2009 gender composition of voters was adverse to the gender composition in total electorate, in 2014 the gender composition in voter and electors was similar.

Outcome

As per the electoral data¹ of the final publication of Summary Revision 2014, male electors constituted 52.4%, female electors 47.6% and electors belonging to the "Others" category constituted

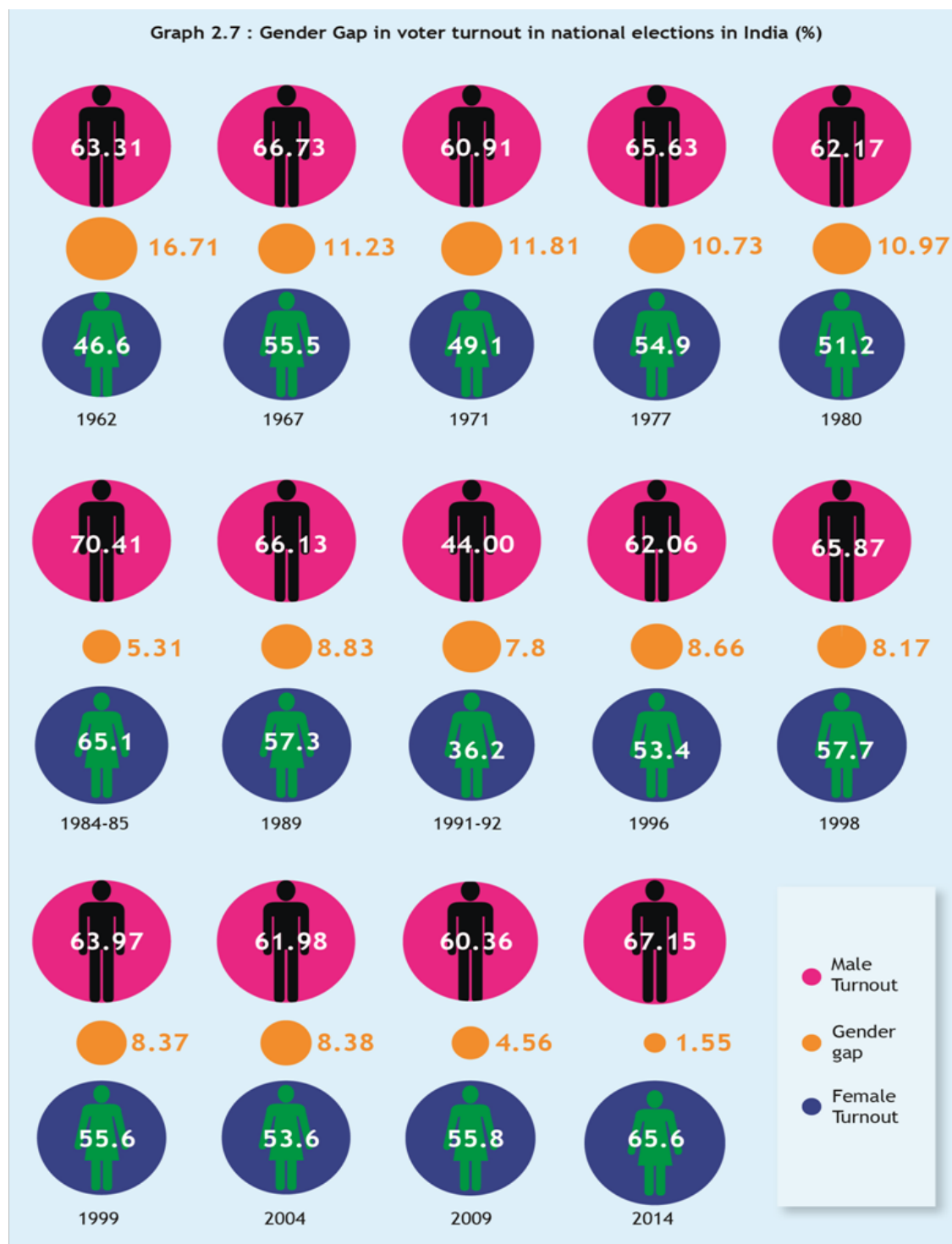


¹The Electoral Roll with which the country went to polls had 834,209,839* of which 396,650,344 were women electors. (* includes Service electors who are generally not identified separately as Male/Female.).

²Arunachal Pradesh, Goa, Kerala, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Tripura and Puduchery.

As many as 16 States/UTs³ recorded higher women turnout in 2014, as against six States/UTs in 2009 polls. Of these, 9 States/UTs⁴ - saw higher women turnout percentage than men for the first time in Lok Sabha election history. Also LS 2014 saw higher women voter increase than women electorate increase over 2009. While

women electors increased from 342.2 million in 2009 to 397 million, women voters increased from 191 to 260 million in 2014. The trend was seen across the States/UTs with most recording higher increase in women voters against increase in women electors.



³Arunachal Pradesh, Chandigarh, Dadra & Nagar Haveli, Daman & Diu, Goa, Himachal Pradesh, Lakshadweep, Meghalaya, Manipur, Odisha, Puducherry, Punjab, Sikkim, Tamil Nadu, Uttarakhand and Bihar

⁴Bihar, Punjab, Uttarakhand, Odisha, Goa, Sikkim, Arunachal Pradesh, Chandigarh and Puducherry

In subsequent provincial elections from 2015-2017, the increase in women's turnout continued and the gender gap in electoral participation has further narrowed down.

Recent Initiatives

All Women managed Polling Stations

Started as an innovative idea in West Bengal in the 2014 Lok Sabha election, women managed polling booths have now become a major highlight in elections. These polling stations have generated a lot of curiosity and buzz among people as well as media.

Vignettes

Red zone turned Pink for election: Women managed Polling Booth in Gaya, Bihar

During the provincial election in Bihar in 2015, all women managed booth 'Mahila Booth', also termed 'Pink Booth' were set up with all women polling personnel donning pink attires! This was followed up by an all women model counting centre where the counting was also totally managed by women personnel and security provided by women police. The polling agents too were women as the contesting candidates appointed female polling agents, another first ever in history of Bihar. Indeed, the terror affected red Gaya district turned pink with festivities of elections!

The polling stations specifically set up in identified constituencies are managed by team of all women officials, right from security personnel to polling officials to micro-observers. This, besides symbolically sending out a message, also encourages women voters to turn up and vote.

Women Mascots

Use of mascots in elections for spreading the message of electoral participation has been seen as an effective communication strategy in recent elections. The mascots are region specific, and communicate with the populace in local language, delivering the important message in an easy and relatable manner. Many



province in recent elections experimented with female mascots e.g. Titabar in Assam had their mascot 'Bhoni' meaning younger sister while West Bengal used the state mascot 'Ananya'.

Reaching out to Third Gender

Following the landmark decision of the Supreme Court of India, recognizing transgender as the 'Third Gender', outreach campaigns have been taken up to educate and facilitate transgenders to register themselves as 'Third Gender' if they choose to do so, and encourage them to exercise their democratic right of voting.

One of the prominent transgender activist has been roped in as the Icon or ambassador to motivate the community for their electoral participation. Educational and motivational content has been created specifically targeting the transgenders.

This outreach campaign was taken up rigorously in Maharashtra, in districts with significant population of the third gender. Osmanabad district in Maharashtra recorded 93.75% transgender turnout in LS 2014. Third genders in Kalyan, Thane, Mumbai, Pune Solapur, Palghar and Nashik came out in large numbers to vote.

The Road Ahead

The gender gap has been distinctly reducing over the years and that is a significant achievement. But continued efforts are still required to completely eliminate this gap and bring complete gender parity in participation.

SVEEP has harvested the relatively easier crop and the next earning in terms of participation is not coming easy. This is the latest experience from states which registered high increase in



Spreading awareness through SVEEP, Uttar Pradesh State Assembly Elections, 2017

women's turnout immediately after SVEEP was launched in 2009-2010, but where SVEEP is struggling to increase the women turnout percentage further and from States where SVEEP programme is being called to work harder for retaining the spurt in participation that they achieved in last election.

Engaging with future voters through electoral literacy in curricula and extra-curricula has

now emerged as one of the focus areas and Election Commission of India now aspires for complete and enlightened participation in coming years.

The principle, philosophy, spirit and vision of SVEEP lie in empowerment of the citizen to voluntarily register and ethically vote in each and every election and also to inculcate a perpetual and responsible democratic awareness. This participation leads to larger and wider engagement within and with the system of democracy, governance and development with a win-win situation for the citizen and the nation. ■



*Padma Angmo
Director, Election Commission of India*



All Women Personnel Model Polling Station, Bihar State Assembly Elections, 2015



Manipur State Assembly Elections, 2017



All Women Polling Station, West Bengal State Assembly Elections, 2016



Women's Participation in 11th General Election to Manipur Legislative Assembly 2017

In almost all the elections, Parliamentary as well as State Legislative Assembly, women voters outnumber male voters in the State of Manipur.

Despite the high involvement of women as voters, the representation of women in the Legislative Assembly as elected member is abysmal though women have been contesting the election through different political parties and as independent candidates. In the recently held 11th General Election to Manipur Legislative Assembly, out of total 266 candidates, 11 were women candidates and only 2 got elected. It may be noted that in 10th General Election to Manipur Legislative Assembly held in 2012 there were a total of 264 candidates including 15 women candidates and 3 women got elected.

The participation of women in the electoral process is higher than that of men. According to



A newly registered (18+) voter gets EPIC on National Voters' Day 2017

2011 Census, literacy rate (female literacy inferior to male literacy) and sex ratio (987 females per 1,000 males) are not favourable to females. But the gender ratio of female electors is quite high i.e. 1046 per 1000 male elector as per Electoral Rolls of 2017.

Number of female electors in Manipur just before 11th GE to MLA 2017

District	No. of Elector			% of Female in total elector
	Male	Female	Total	
Imphal East	144047	154335	298382	51.7
Imphal West	186474	201473	387947	51.9
Bishnupur	67379	70331	137710	51.1
Thoubal	145028	154094	299122	51.5
Jiribam	14443	13695	28138	48.7
Chandel	44865	47385	92250	51.4
Ukhrul	55207	56859	112066	50.7
Senapati	130335	129245	259580	49.8
Tamenglong	45808	47667	93475	51.0
Churachandpur	94987	98905	193892	51.0
State Total	928573	973989	1902562	51.2



Painting on 1.5 km long canvas, Manipur State Legislative Elections 2017

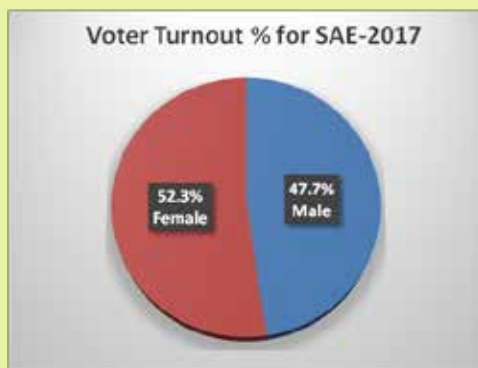
For the first time in the election history of Manipur State, women officials were deployed for polling duties during the recently concluded Legislative Assembly Election (LAE), 2017. “All women” polling personnel were deployed at 33 polling stations – 2 in Ukhrul, 15 in Churachandpur, 10 in Imphal West and 6 in Bishnupur districts. These 33 “Pink polling stations” set a new benchmark of efficient performance and smooth conduct of elections and it is expected that in future elections number of “Pink Polling stations” will grow. Women officials were also involved in material preparations, reception of polling teams and in counting halls. Out of 38 Returning Officers 5 were women officers.

It is interesting to note that 51.2% of total registered voters in Manipur are female but

when we compare the Voter Turn out, women Voters turned up in higher number averaging about 52.3% of total voters. Keeping in view ongoing Economic Blockade in Manipur since 1st Nov, 2016 there were serious apprehension about successful conduct of elections. However, the sustained Systematic Voters Education & Electoral Participation (SVEEP) campaign carried out in Manipur with the help of Election Commission of India under the guidance of their esteemed Consultants, had a very positive effect. As compared to previous Parliamentary & Legislative Assembly Elections in Manipur the Voter turn out figure jumped up from about 80% to 86.4% in 2017 surpassing the records of all other poll going States of Goa, Punjab, Uttarakhand and Uttar Pradesh.

Total female voter turnout in 11th GE to Manipur Legislative Assembly, 2017

District	Voter Turnout			Voter Turnout %			% of female voters in total voter turn out
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	
Imphal East	124937	142293	267230	86.7	92.2	89.6	53.25
Imphal West	162667	185280	347947	87.2	92.0	89.7	53.25
Bishnupur	59420	65540	124960	88.2	93.2	90.7	52.45
Thoubal	128196	144869	273065	88.4	94.0	91.3	53.05
Jiribam	11415	11524	22939	79.0	84.1	81.5	50.24
Chandel	40461	43476	83937	90.2	91.8	91.0	51.80
Ukhrul	43955	44517	88472	79.6	78.3	78.9	50.32
Senapati	112286	113377	225663	86.2	87.7	86.9	50.24
Tamenglong	36538	38836	75374	79.8	81.5	80.6	51.52
Churachandpur	64364	70011	134375	67.8	70.8	69.3	52.10
State Total	784239	859723	1643962	84.5	88.3	86.4	52.30



Challenges: One important issue that challenges the existing understanding of empowered Manipuri women comes from the fact that women continue to be either silenced or deprived in terms of political representation. While historical legacies promise a fertile environment for women's participation in the modern representative form of politics, women's role is negligible other than exercising their periodic franchise. Present prevailing patriarchal social structure do not encourage women to be active in electoral politics.

Constitutionally and legally, no barrier exists in women having equality with men, special laws to protect women from most of the socially degrading customs have been enacted and enforced. In spite of all these, the long established belief and notion about female inferiority and social prescription and prohibitions built around them have proved a hard nut to crack and as result, women find it difficult to use the existing facilities to remove the hindrances of equality in terms of

contesting elections- out of 266 Candidates in LAE 2017 only 11 were women candidates.

Positive Legacy: From time immemorial the womenfolk in the Manipur are always taking an active part in the political front too despite their hectic involvement in the home front. The women of all the ethnic groups of Manipur usually contributes a lot in the day to day living by working on the field, managing their homes, keeping the kitchen fires burning, ensuring the well-being of both the husband and children while continuing to earn for a living to augment the incomes brought by their husbands.

Despite these hectic schedules the women folk continue to take part in the governance of the State. They are much aware of the existing political developments in the State, the changing political scenario and the necessity of involving in the electoral process for choosing the representatives in the modern system of governance. They continue to involve in the social issues like, male drinking problem, drug menace, crime against women education of their children, price rise, urban living problems etc.

Contribution to Women Participation:

The unflinching efforts of the Election Commission to organize a successful election in the States during Assembly elections, paid off in the State of Manipur. Such a well-





informed group in the population when given the necessary awareness campaigns, trainings and guidelines by the Commissions in connection with the elections process they always tend to take part actively in the process of choosing their representatives.

Furthermore with the recent wide spread campaign relating to voter education (*SVEEP activities*) carried out in the State in which both young and old voters (*irrespective of gender*) fully participated, the maximum number of women electors turned up for poll participation resulting in the sizable increase in the voter turnout keeping an all-time high record of 86.4% voter turnout. With the active involvement of the women electors, the number of incidents of

violence in the polling stations have been drastically reduced compared to the last election. Let us hope that enhanced electoral participation by women shall also result in higher representation by Political Parties in nominating them for contesting elections in future and eventually outnumbering male counterparts in getting elected to the Legisltave Assembly. ■



Vivek Kumar Dewangan
Chief Electoral Officer,
Manipur, India





Voter education to promote the participation of **Women**

According to a study by the Inter-Parliamentary Union of 1992 on the subject of women and political power, women's rights and voting in elections has been enshrined in domestic legislation, without any discrimination on the men, in majority of the countries all over the world.

However, in most societies, women are still segregated and discriminated on social, economic and cultural front. Hence there exists a need for actions to reform the situation of women in various areas, including participation in national politics for articulating, reform and development of their contribution at all levels.

Thus the recommendation to embrace the concept of positive discrimination ('quota'); that women are given a kind of institutional support to compensate for the de-facto discrimination they suffer, on a temporary basis, until we achieve a fair balance between women and men. This concept has been presented in 1979 during the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. Beijing conference promulgated the goal of reaching the proportion of female representation in parliament of up to 30% to ensure meaningful female representation in the bodies, which will remain otherwise dominated by men.

Despite good measures taken with an aim to promote women's participation in elections, both in legislation or regulations in the Arab region, lack of updated data on statistics sometimes makes it difficult to identify the reality of level of participation of Arab women voters or candidates or the number of women working in the electoral administration. Data on electoral participation rate of women needs to be updated accurately and the challenges in



the participation of women should be identified and worked upon diligently.

It should be noted that recent statistics of the Organization for Arab electoral departments on the participation of Arab women in politics presented at the workshop devoted to support women's participation in the electoral process organized at Jordan during April 2016, has indicated remarkable progress with high turnout, both in the representation in Parliament or government or as a member of the department. Moreover, it points at the accession of Arab states to most of the international conventions and treaties related to support women's participation.

These results were achieved with numerous initiatives on development programs and dissemination of knowledge and awareness on the importance of women's participation. This has reflected positively with high participation of women in all areas of life, which is a cause for optimism in the stability of the political life in most Arab states in the future.

It is remarkable that in countries where there is a cultural or social impediments towards the

participation of women, it may be necessary to target men outreach efforts where community leaders are male. When the voter is domestic, we may need to educate men on the rights of women to take an independent political resolution and cast their votes in elections, according to their own wishes.

Governing bodies of 37 countries reported that they have adopted special kinds of activities on the gender perspective voter targeting men. These include Afghanistan, Armenia, Democratic Republic of Congo, Egypt, Palestine, Ethiopia, Madagascar, Pakistan, South Africa, Tanzania and Uganda.

The methods used for awareness are the basis of the effectiveness of reaching out to the target audience. Easy public understanding of the issue, serious efforts to spread the message, the literacy rate as well as access to media are important considerations for succeeding. Women in some parts of the world suffer serious difficulties in acquiring basic foals to read and write and that this must be taken into account when making plans for education women on their voting rights.

Voter education campaigns should concentrate on the following:

- Electoral administration should broadcast effective clear messages consistently across diverse mediums during the election period;
- Letters with information on elections should be sent to voters with an appeal to participate in the ballot;
- In the period between elections, the campaign should focus on educating



masses with messages on democracy and the importance of citizen participation as voters and candidates as also encouraging political participation for women.

It is very important to spread awareness on the following through different campaigns:

First: It is the right of the women to vote and stand in elections.

Second: The secret ballot, no one can know the content of the ballot cast by voters.

To promote the participation of women and all citizens is a very important issue. Participation rate in many established democracies has declined. Hence Electoral Management bodies should implement programs to educate and encourage voter participation. More recent democracies may need to send reminders and give encouragement for participation in elections. All messages on elections should be designed to attract the attention of women in particular to stimulate them to move forward with engagement.



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Voter Education for Enhancing Women Participation

Participation of women in political processes has been a long-standing agenda of many developing countries. In recent years, there has been a dramatic increase within a number of countries particularly, in Africa in adopting electoral models to increase female participation and representation in national parliament and local governments or municipalities alike. It is commonly claimed that increasing the



inclusiveness of elected bodies impacts their democratic legitimacy, largely because it provides a voice for previously under represented (women in this case) groups.

The demand for equality of men and women in democratic spheres has always been key to feminist discourses. This has been due to the understanding that equality is a universal value 'framed by an Enlightenment perspective that all human beings have the same rights by virtue of being human.

It has been construed around the ideas that legitimate democracy is that one that puts women on an equal footing with men, as such even patriarchal democracies must be transformed from the traditional understanding of the role of women and revisit constitutions and electoral laws to allow equal distribution of power.

Notwithstanding, the battle for political equality for women is far from over as even in most representative democracies women's participation still lags behind that of men. As a way to curb this problem, most countries especially in developing world have focused on increasing women representation in through effective voter education. This emphasis on voter education in promoting democracy has been emphasised by both national actors and

international community alike. Notably, there is an over-arching understanding that not only will women be able to address the needs of women at the community level, but also to change the traditional attitudes towards women leadership at the very level where resistance might be most prevalent.

Over the years, the Independent Electoral

Commission (IEC) of the Kingdom of Lesotho has been working in partnership with the Civil Society Organisations to engage Basotho citizenry particularly women into the Voting process ensuring that their political rights are being recognised.

This stems out of the IEC's understanding that Civil Society engagement forms a major part of democratic process and a desire to see that the people of are indeed governed well. This is also out of the realisation that battle for political equality for women in a patriarchal society like Lesotho, is far from over as attitudes and perceptions still avows men over women.

As a way to demonstrate the commitment towards women in Lesotho through Voter



Education, IEC in partnership with Campaign For Education Forum took a giant step in the National Assembly Elections 2015 to extend the voter education to women in the garment sector of Lesotho. This target group was particularly important because factory workers in clothing and textile industry are mainly women who suffer a number of indignities due to their position within communities. Not only that, but women in the garment industries have been identified as some of the main breadwinners for many families in the country, but their economic value has always been undermined. It is said that on average, these women from their meagre resources are able to feed the family of five people, yet our social constructions have placed them as victims of discrimination thereby violating both their democratic and human rights.

Accurate information on their human rights and freedoms is almost wanting and as a result, they fall prey to vicious politicians who make them promises that they never fulfil once they are elected. Quality voter education for these women (as factory workers are mostly women) was therefore provided in order to ensure their full participation in the elections.

Due to the nature of their work, the campaigns were organised through road-shows. This was an innovative strategy to target workers when they were on their lunch breaks since their employers would not afford them another time. Campaign for Education Forum procured the Public Address System with music to allow as many women as possible to gather around the readily available voter educators to unleash voter information to the audience. Over 35 factory garment industries were covered in major cities and towns meeting over 30000 women in a period of two months.

This was a mammoth yet fulfilling task. Both the IEC and CEF were confident that the said women were empowered to make informed decisions and choices when voting. At the end of the campaign, these women were motivated to go and make their poll decisions fully aware of the purpose of elections, of their voting rights and obligations, and of the range



of electoral procedures and options. They were able to understand several parts of the Electoral Law and extended that knowledge to their families and friends. This was indeed a critical invention in the elections process, the one that is believed to have influenced how the general public voted in the General Assembly Elections of 2015 in Lesotho.

To conclude, despite tremendous efforts that have been made to include women in the electoral processes in Lesotho, one fact remains; there are low polls from women on the elections day. This may be due to the fact that patriarchal societies by nature invest in the people's mindset. People are defined not only their culture and identity but also their perceptions and attitudes. It has therefore become very glaring that targeting numbers alone may not be an effective way of dealing with inequality, rather there is a need to tackle sources of repression, to challenge the deep seated gender repressions that are embedded in institutional norms and practices, including the society at large. When this is done, it is believed that the future health of Lesotho's democratic governance and that of the world at large will enjoy a large number of eligible voters that actively participate in the election processes. And that will be recognised victory in the campaign against gender inequalities. ■



*Kholu Tsumane
National Coordinator of Campaign for
Education Forum*



*Lydia Macheli
Civic Education Officer,
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Gender Mainstreaming Strategies

Gender Mainstreaming is a globally accepted strategy for promoting gender equality. Gender mainstreaming focus on equitable distribution of resources between women and men through equal opportunities policy at all levels of the organization along with engendering of knowledge, skills and attitudes. The strong focus on the advancement of women and gender equality has led to increased international recognition of the importance of gender perspectives, such as poverty reduction, human rights and good governance. These perspectives must be taken into account in data collection, analysis, policy making and planning, to ensure the achievement of gender equality, effective and sustainable development and peace and security. Gender mainstreaming strategies and gender equality strategies are important for reducing existing gaps, serving as a channel for promotion of gender equality and creating a constituency for changing the majority. The foremost gain of Gender mainstreaming is it frontrunners to formulate an empowering space for women.

At the end of 2014, Election Commission of Maldives adopted a more proactive role in promoting for women participation as a main factor to promote Gender Mainstreaming. As a fact the strategic plan of 2016-2020 was launched in the year 2016 with pillars exclusive for gender mainstreaming. To align with the strategic plan of 2016-2020, equal opportunities were given to women and men.

Firstly, to advance women's participation in internal and external operations, focal points were designated impartially by giving equal and fair opportunities for women working in ECM along with electing members for ECM committees. The main aim of determining the gender equality is bring out the most fruitful

results with both gender and to advocate women empowerment.

Secondly, to develop and adopt Gender policy the Election Commission of Maldives had meetings with NGOs at regular intervals along with the brainstorming sessions. As a result, this tabulated feedbacks and recommendations of the NGOs and drafted the policy in collaboration with NGOs to promote women contribution while, boosting their empowerment.

At present only 05 of 85 parliamentarians are women, less than 6% of the 302 candidates who stood for election in the 2014 Parliamentary elections, only 23 were women. A survey conducted by Transparency Maldives found that 62% of those surveyed believe men make better leaders than women. This signifies a major challenge for women who wish to enter politics in Maldives. Certain women are ready to believe their gender is a handicap. The ability to excel in things still makes some people awe. The biggest hindrances faced to Maldivian women are the cultural barriers, stereotyping; societal expectation for women to be vulnerable regard to the lack of independence and opportunities in political field. As a fact is nearly impossible to seek and contest for the party seats since for the society, it can be threatening to break into industries that males dominate, but women have so much value to take that leap.

Today, even after all these challenges the Election Commission of Maldives is one of the few organizations in Maldives, where skilled labor; women contributes in the technical level decision making. Through the internal statics, it is identified that 62% of staffs are women aged 20 to 35 in average. However, women working in ECM continue to be under represented at



Current Parliament Members of Maldives

policy making level as the members in the commission contributes only the male gender.

Nevertheless, the Electoral processes and policies are pro-actively promoted with in the ECM. The participation of women in the electoral process has increased gender balance at all levels of the ECM. As a result of numerous awareness and campaign held by Election Commission of Maldives there is improved political participation of women, both at the local and national level, as voters, observers, election staff, candidates and elected representatives.

Gender equality and the right to equal participation in all sectors of society are fundamental Human Rights. Gender mainstreaming is a process for ensuring equity, equality and gender justice in all of

the critical areas of the lives of women and men thus; it increases the effectiveness and efficiency at the work and enables to balance the economy as a whole. Even though the circumstances lead to the majority of gender equality arguments to focus on women, we shouldn't forget that the goal is to achieve similar outcomes for everyone. It is known that men are more rational and women are more emotional, let's undertake the assumption, then the brainstorming and decisions made will be better if they are taken by both sexes. ■



*Nazma Nizam
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Election Commission of Maldives*



Part of a training program conducted



Voter Education for Enhancing Women Participation

Background: UEC has been trying to expand its engagement with women, persons with disabilities and ethnic minorities through UEC recruitment, electoral procedures and voter education. UEC started its collaboration through gender and disability inclusion workshops. UEC worked to develop a Gender and Inclusion Working Group to lead inclusion initiatives in support of the UEC's Five-Year Strategic Plan (2014-2018). UEC sought to address the lack of women's leadership in political and decision-making processes at all levels of State/ Regions.

Brief Description of Best Practice: UEC has recruited 223 staff officers including (177) women for 14 States and Regions in Myanmar and they were trained on gender equality principles in induction training in September 2016. Currently there are 56.5% of women staff at UEC. Recently more than 1500 UEC ward/ village tracts Sub-commission staff in by-elections were trained and given the gender awareness and women participation in elections.

Area of Coverage: Nationwide with a focus on women

Period of Implementation: January 2015 to March 2017

Challenges: UEC tried to give civic and voter education to women and all citizens through partner INGOs and CSOs. UEC produced and translated the materials into 16 different ethnic languages to educate women, youths and people in ethnic areas. Developing materials in such a diverse set of languages was an important step towards encouraging the inclusion of ethnic women in remote areas.

Outcome: To institutionalize these improvements, UEC collaborated with 17 CSOs to develop the UEC's first Gender Policy. This policy champions gender equality and outlines methods to integrate gender inclusion through all 12 pillars of the UEC's Five-Year Strategic Plan. Currently 67 are women out of 657 parliamentarians at National Parliaments and it is 10.2 %. In 2010, there were 3067 candidates and 127 were women (4.13%). It increased into 13.2 % in 2015 where there were 6038 candidates and 800 were women. UEC is holding by-elections for 19 vacant seats in 2017, and there are 17 women out of 96 nominated candidates, 17.7% of women participation. ■

UEC Team





Women are going to work, even after work

Women from around the globe, celebrate their most important date of the calendar year, called women's day. International women's day is celebrated on March 8th every year. In most of the countries going for political & human rights themes, by various Organizations, Also most of the organizations run, political & social awareness of the struggles of women. The charter of the united nation, signed in 1945, was the first international agreement to affirm the principles of equality between women and men. Since from, the United Nations has helped in creating a historical legacy of internationally agreed, strategies, standards programs and goals to advance to status of women.

Women are still not present equal numbers in business or politics in Sri Lanka, Also it is not much difference comparing to world scenario, therefore election commission of Sri Lanka has announced two weeks from first of March to 14th of March as women's awareness fortnight on political participation, theme of this two weeks long program is "women are going to work even after work"

This campaign itself is a way of sharing respect and gratitude towards women, this also meant that, women are able to do almost everything that men are able to do such as being judges, executive officers, politicians even the top of countries governing body, This brought about the world's first elected female Prime

Minister, Mrs. Sirimavo Bandaranaike, from Sri Lanka (1960), World's first female President Mrs. Marma Estela Isabel Martinez Cartas de Peron from Argentina (1974). It is also show that, people across the globe understand the importance of equality in society & how they accepted, the fact that women are as skilled as men.

There are many factors, every, women could celebrate, those are right to vote, placement in politics and government, equality, independence career choices, Also, woman is a full circle within her, is the power to create, nature and transform. The ability to nurture life makes, women the most powerful and strongest being. She can play different roles with ease be it that, of a dutiful wife, obedient daughter, caring mothers or adoring sister. There is a belief in, the fastest way of change society is to mobilize women of the world. For that, the legislation should be made while empowering women on political participation.

Many of the barriers to women's empowerment and equality lie ingrained in cultural norms. Many women feel these pressures, while officers have become accustomed to being treated inferior to men.

As many countries the decisions in economical, political and cultural fields are made by the men in Sri Lanka while, a vast potential of decision making in women is idling and finally



wasted, they can be achieved only at political level. But in Sri Lanka, political representation of women is pathetically low.

There are only 13 women out of 225 in current Parliament. Some of them are not elected on the basis of their political capabilities, but for some other reasons. There are so many knowledgeable, capable talented women in many other fields, who can come and work hard for a better country, however their attitude towards politics have prevented them from entering politics.

Therefore it is the duty of Election management bodies, media and civil society to continue sought for the women's political representation and create awareness among the masses, especially women and urge them to come forward for active politics or for change.

According to the global gender gap Index in 2016, Sri Lanka was 100th but in 2006, that was 13th. Sri Lanka is one of the country which has lower women representation in elected office, around the globe. Therefore electing women through free & fair election is one of the utmost prioritized a task, Therefore 25%. Women's quota for local authorities elected office is a timely move. That should be spreader to provincial quota and national levels as well. But due to some political pressure, authorities are in a dilemma to implement this 25% quotas some are arguing that, 25% of women's quota win increase the number of

elected office in local authorities beyond the affordable level. Some are talking about the non-availability of qualified women candidates from some recognized political parties. To conduct, free & fair election, at least the basic of democracy should be practiced.

But, most of the time citizens don't understand the gravity of their rights.

According to the constitution of democratic socialist republic of Sri Lanka, sovereignty is can be exercised through, free and fair elections by secret ballot or some equivalent way.

Therefore Election Commission of Sri Lanka has organized a two weeks program to empower women on politics Islandwide. That includes public gatherings, demonstrations, road shows, and women parades. ■



*J.A.S.P. Jayasinghe
Election Commission of Sri Lanka*



Gender equality and **women's empowerment** is a pillar of the electoral process and democracy

To achieve a true democracy and representative governance, meaningful and equal participation of women and men in all spheres of political, economic and social life must be realized. Nowhere is this more important than in a country's electoral process, where active political engagement, from both women and men, strengthens a country's democratic development. IFES recognizes the important contribution that all women can make and aims to create pathways to meaningful participation for women with multiple marginalizations including women with disabilities, poor and rural women, transgender women and ethnic or religious minority women. IFES' innovative women's empowerment strategy is not zero-sum, but rather inclusive and explores opportunities to involve men and boys in all gender equality activities, both as allies to women's empowerment and to ensure their perspectives are included in the electoral process.

Today, deeply entrenched attitudes and practices perpetuate inequality and discrimination against women in both public and private life all over the world. Accordingly, action requires changes in values, attitudes, practices, and priorities at all levels. International treaties and obligations such as the Beijing Platform for Action, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), and UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace, and Security continue to signal a clear commitment by the international community to international norms and standards of equality between men and

women. Measures to protect and promote the human rights of women and girls as an integral part of universal human rights must underlie all action, and institutions at all levels must be reoriented to expedite implementation.

IFES works to ensure that women are actively engaged and in decision-making roles in political and electoral processes as candidates and elected leaders, technical experts, engaged activists, and informed voters. This participation is a human right, and it strengthens the electoral process while building a more inclusive and sustainable democracy.

Current IFES Approaches

IFES works to realize gender equality in the overall political and electoral process, ensuring that systems, policies, and procedures are sensitive to the needs of men and women, and that gender parity is achieved at all levels of the process. IFES can play a part in reducing barriers to participation by including women as leaders within all facets of our programming and building their capacity on international standards and best practices.

Gender Analysis: The key to increase gender equality and women's empowerment is to base implementing strategies on a thorough gender analysis. A gender analysis explores the gender dimensions of political and electoral processes, exposes the barriers to women's full participation in political and electoral processes, and identifies strategies to address the different needs and dynamics of men and

“In principle, would you vote for a woman as President if she was as qualified as male presidential candidates?”



IFES deployed its Status of Women Survey in Nigeria ahead of the 2015 elections to develop programs based on data about gender equality and women's empowerment

women. Specifically, a gender analysis informs IFES' understanding of the country context in which the program is being conducted by looking at who has access to and control over resources and services; who makes decisions in the community; how men, women, boys and girls are affected differently; and what the reasons are behind these differences. The analysis ensures IFES' programming takes into account the different factors surrounding gender equality and women's empowerment and leads to the promotion of gender equality through specifically articulated outcomes.

IFES' approach to gender equality and women's empowerment in the electoral and political process is twofold:

- I. **Mainstreaming Gender Equality in all Aspects of Elections** – As a cross cutting goal, IFES uses evidence and technical leadership to integrate gender equality and women's empowerment activities into our democracy and governance work by providing gender-sensitive technical assistance and analysis throughout the electoral cycle and in every aspect of programming.

In Nigeria, IFES mainstreams gender equality in elections by addressing a lack of information both for and about women's participation in the electoral

process. Many women are unable to access information about elections, and a lack of gender disaggregated data has stymied efforts to tackle this and other gender related problems. IFES' work on gender in Nigeria has focused on addressing these issues.

This work has included sensitization workshops for women, as well as voter education materials created specifically for women. IFES and partners conducted gender coordination meetings aimed at building the capacity of aspiring female candidates ahead of the 2015 elections. Most recently, IFES supported the gender division at the Independent National Election Commission (INEC) in Nigeria to implement their Gender Policy, which aims to mainstream gender considerations in the commission's activities. IFES is currently working with gender desk officers of the INEC in every state in Nigeria with voter education materials to address perceptions of women's political participation & leadership. These voter education materials are tailored for women, as well as for Traditional & Religious Leaders, Civil Society Organizations, the National Youth Service Corps and Secondary School Clubs on Elections.

II. Women's Empowerment Initiatives to increase leadership of women in political and electoral processes –

IFES implements innovative women's leadership and empowerment activities to increase women's political participation and decision-making in political and electoral processes.

IFES has developed the Violence Against Women in Elections (VAWIE) Framework to specifically identify and address the unique issues related to gender-based election violence. Through analysis and program implementation focused on increasing women's participation and leadership in democracy assistance, VAWIE Framework makes narratives of violence against women in elections in their homes, political arenas and public spaces more visible. In Haiti, the VAWIE assessment concluded that the windows of vulnerability are much broader than the windows of opportunity. Women's cultural status as bound to the home and subject to the decisions and desires of men in the family or community, systemic gender inequality, expectations of inevitable

election violence in general and violence against women in elections specifically, as well as general issues of violence, a dysfunctional justice system, and a history of electoral insecurity stemming from poor governance contribute to women's vulnerability to VAWIE in the next election.

Despite the challenges they face, women in Haiti are organizing, voting, running for office, and advocating for safety and respect while participating in the electoral process. However encouraging and impressive that may be, the number of women doing so is low, in large part because every one of them is in danger. The key opportunities for change are first to acknowledge the challenge of VAWIE and then to ensure a comprehensive response from all stakeholders. ■



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UNDP's Role in Voter Education for Enhanced Participation of Women

Women's participation in decision-making and leadership is one of the priorities of UNDP in its global Strategic Plan and the gender equality strategy 2014-17. UNDP works with women's networks and its sister agencies such as UN Women, UNICEF and other UN agencies and networks facilitating women's access to opportunities to exercise their political rights, participate in decision-making, exercise leadership, and contribute to political processes. Through its projects and partnerships across many countries, it promotes women's participation as voters and candidates in electoral processes and institutions through women's candidate training, awareness campaigns, building the capacities of electoral management bodies (EMB), including by promoting gender parity and encouraging gender equality in Election Management Bodies.

With the objective of promoting gender equality in electoral processes UNDP and UN Women have jointly produced a guide 'Inclusive Electoral Processes: A Guide for Electoral Management Bodies on Promoting Gender Equality and Women's Participation'. This guide focuses attention on the role of electoral management bodies in encouraging the participation of women across various points in the electoral cycle. The Guide highlights the important work being carried out by the UN and by EMBs, offering concrete examples of steps that can be taken to remove remaining barriers that continue to affect women's participation in electoral processes. The guide is available at http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/librarypage/democratic-governance/electoral_systemsandprocesses/guide-for-electoral-management-bodies-on-



promoting-gender-equali.html in Arabic, English, French, Romanian, Russian, Spanish and Vietnamese. It shares strategies to mainstream gender equality within the organizational structure of EMBs (to ensure women participate at all levels of decision-making; data collected is disaggregated by sex; that the organization formalizes its commitment to gender equality through a gender policy) and in the organization and administration of the election by the EMB (voter education and outreach; candidate and voter registration processes; ensuring all voters are able to securely access a polling station).

The following are some of the good practices on increased participation of women in the voting processes that UNDP is facilitating and are worth sharing:

In Kyrgyzstan UNDP is supporting a project "Women as Peaceful Voters; Women as Candidates" which aims at strengthening the capacities of women candidates and women voters. The "Follow your voice!" information campaign had been developed for the 2015

parliamentary elections in Kyrgyzstan and aimed at drawing attention to the issue of women's participation in the electoral process and increase awareness of the importance of women's political participation. The campaign had been conducted by a network of non-governmental organizations of Kyrgyzstan with support from the UNDP/UNICEF project "Women as Peaceful Voters and Women as Candidates." As a result, more than 250 women registered for local parliaments and around 100 women were nominated as candidates.

In Haiti the UNDP project "Support to the Electoral Cycle Project in Haiti" aims at strengthening the capacities of the institutions involved in the organization of elections, to contribute to the organization of presidential, legislative, municipal and local elections according to the electoral calendar and in a free, transparent, credible and inclusive manner. One important component of the project is the support to the participation of youth and women in the electoral process, which is reflected in its main lines of work: (i) support to civic and electoral education through empowering and strengthening the capacities of youth and women networks; (ii) support to the participation of women candidates; (iii) awareness-raising around violence against women and safety measures; (iv) an information/communication campaign about civic and electoral education by national media; (v) electoral data segregation by gender; (vi) training and capacity building to the EMB staff. As a result more than 1,000 people from civil society organizations have been trained on civic education techniques and 300 volunteers were trained to conduct civic education that reached around 35,000 people (UN Women);

around 106,000 people were reached through the civic education actions of 150 'Volunteer Replicators of Democracy and Citizenship.'

In Solomon Islands UNDP's

'Strengthening the Electoral Cycle in the Solomon Islands Project (SECSIP)' has forged a partnership with the Ministry of Education and Human Resource Development to encourage students and teachers to consider how equality, in terms of representation as elected leaders, might impact the lives of their communities and country.



UNDP recognizes the important role of the formal and informal organizations especially those who promote gender parity in the election processes and seeks to advance the capacities of partner organisations as varied as Election Management Bodies, civil society organisations, community-based organizations, as well as communities and citizens acting individually and collectively.

We hope the VoICENET.IN will benefit from UNDP good practices and resources and are glad to facilitate exchange of knowledge through our global networks, experts and practitioners on elections administration.



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Voter Education for Enhancing Women's Participation

General

Regular and periodic elections are one of the essential features of a democratic polity. It is the elections that shape up the political will of the people to form the base of legitimacy and authority of the democratic governments. Free and fair elections are critical to the legitimacy of the democratic governments.

Gender equality in political participation is one of the fundamental aspects of the present day democratic polity. International Standards prescribe that both, men and women should have equal rights and opportunities to participate in political processes. In practice, however, it is often more challenging for women to access and exercise these rights and attainment of the goal remains elusive.

In this context, gender sensitization in voter education is very important for enhancing women's participation. The paper intends to briefly visit the nature of electoral participation under universal adult suffrage, international standards and obligations, issues and challenges in gender sensitive electoral participation and how, strategic initiatives in voter education by EMB's In different countries have helped in enhancing women's electoral participation.

Women's participation imperative for free and fair elections

Free and fair elections envisage equal opportunity for women in electoral participation under universal adult suffrage. Free and fair elections fulfill their potential for contributing to empowerment of women. The expression 'Electoral Participation' and the rights associated with it, per se, would mean much more than simply the right to vote as a pro forma exercise. Extent of women's

participation in politics and decision-making in public sphere constitute vital indicators of gender equality in a society. Freedom of expression, assembly and association, and the freedom to take part in the conduct of public affairs, hold public office at different levels of governance, and participation in the formulation of public policy are implicitly included.

Equality of opportunity envisages women to have an equal opportunity to serve at different levels in EMB's, work as election observers, participate in political parties, media and all spheres of democratic polity. In this context, the 1995 Beijing Platform emphasizes equality in decision-making as integral to the advancement of women's rights in democratic polity.

The United Nations has provided due recognition to the cause of protecting and promoting the rights of women for electoral participation under the principle of universal adult suffrage. Different Human Rights instruments of the UN demonstrate and provide support to equality for women in electoral participation.

Women and electoral Participation: United Nations standards and obligations

International standards for elections stem from political rights and fundamental freedoms established by universal political commitments. The principal universal legal instruments are Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), which has the force of international customary law and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) signed and ratified by over 160 States and is legal binding on all the ratifying countries. Adoption of the Universal declaration marked the beginning of participation as a human right without any

discrimination and universal and equal adult suffrage. Let us look at some of the relevant covenants of these treaties.

Universal Declaration of Human Rights

Article 2

Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, color, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status.

Article 7

All are equal before the law and are entitled without any discrimination to equal protection of the law.

Article 21

(1) Everyone has the right to take part in the government of his country, directly or through freely chosen representatives;

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(3) The will of the people shall be 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.

Fundamental features of the Article include inter alia, right to participation by all in constituting the government in a country, will of the people to be to be basis of the authority of the government, will of the people to be expressed through periodic and genuine elections, elections to be conducted under universal and equal adult suffrage by secret vote or by equivalent free voting procedures. The mandate emanating from the UDHR spells out equality of opportunity for women in a democratic polity under universal and equal adult suffrage.

International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights: The Global Norm of Participation

Plan to create a global bill of Human Rights was completed with the adoption of inter alia the International Covenant on Civil and political Rights (ICCPR) in 1966.

Article 3

The States Parties to the present Covenant undertake to ensure the equal right of men and women to the enjoyment of all civil and political rights set forth in the present Covenant.

Article 25

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

- (α) To take part in the conduct of public affairs, directly or through freely chosen representatives;
- (β) 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;
- (χ) To have access, on general terms of equality, to public service in his country.”

Article 26

All persons are equal before the law and are entitled without any discrimination to the equal protection of the law.

The constitutional, legal and legislative framework of each country shapes up the respective electoral process subject to the international covenants discussed above. An elector or a voter is the central figure who elects representatives.

Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, 1979 (CEDAW)

Article 2

States Parties condemn discrimination against women in all its forms, agree to pursue by all appropriate means and without delay a policy of eliminating discrimination against women and, to this end, undertake:

- (a) To embody the principle of the equality of men and women in their national constitutions or other appropriate legislation if not yet incorporated therein and to ensure, through law and other appropriate means, the practical realization of this principle;

Article 7

States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in the political and public life of the country and, in particular, shall ensure to women, on equal terms with men, the right:

- (a) To vote in all elections and public referenda and to be eligible for election to all publicly elected bodies;
- (b) To participate in the formulation of government policy and the implementation thereof and to hold public office and perform all public functions at all levels of government;
- (c) To participate in non-governmental organizations and associations concerned with the public and political life of the country.

UN Center for Human Rights Guidance on Voter Education

The United Nations Centre for Human Rights in its Handbook on Human Rights and Elections (1994) has spelt out the following guiding principles for voter education:

“Public Information and Voter Education

124 Funding and administration should be provided for objective, non-partisan voter education and information campaigns. Such education is especially critical for populations with little or no experience with democratic elections. The public should be well informed as to where, when and how to vote, as well as why voting is important. They must be confident in the integrity of the process and their right to participate in it.

125. Literature should be widely available and should be published in the various national languages to help ensure the meaningful participation of all eligible voters. Multimedia methods should be employed to provide effective civic education to people with various levels of literacy. Voter education campaigns should extend throughout the territory of the country, including to rural and outlying areas.”

The UN instruments provide guidance and support for legislative and legal provisions

for equal and universal adult suffrage without any discrimination. Participating nations have suitably integrated these provisions in their legislative and socio political framework. The guiding principles on voter education provide support and strength in shaping up the voter education for electoral participation in different countries.

Voter Education

Freedom of citizens to choose their elected representatives is a critical feature of democratic governance. For this the electors need to be fully apprised of all relevant information required for comfortable, confident and ethical ballot decisions in the voting process. They need to be familiar with the requirements of registration, voting procedures and all other information such as candidates, their political parties and symbols etc to effectively participate in the electoral process.

In this background, voter education has to be aimed at the dissemination of requisite information, materials, electoral resources and programmes designed to inform all constituents effectively on specifics and mechanics of the registration or enrolment and voting process for an election. It involves inter alia information on eligibility to vote, where and how to register or enroll, how the electors can check voter lists to confirm their correct and appropriate inclusion in the voter's list, the type of elections that are being held; the details of the candidates, their political parties and symbols etc; where, when and how to vote; secrecy and sanctity of the vote; and how to file complaints, if any and dispute resolution mechanisms. Voter education must also address the emerging needs of voters from use of new technologies in the electoral process so that a voter feels confident and familiar with the entire registration and vote process.

Voter education in all forms should seek to achieve universal coverage of the electorate including women. The main objective of voter education is to make information accessible to all constituents to achieve the desired objectives of equal and universal suffrage including women. There are special groups including women, who need strategically

well designed and focused outreach for effective inclusion, specially focused campaigns to receive voter information and motivation to participate. Efficacy and efficiency of any voter education programme lies in addressing the challenges of inclusion effectively and efficiently.

Institutional Arrangements for Voter Education

National Election Management Bodies are primarily responsible for voter education; the institutional arrangements and strategies for connect with the Voter. However, the government, the public and private media, political parties, nonpartisans (civil society organizations) including international organizations may be involved and can play a vital supplementary role in spreading the message subject to overall guidelines of the EMB and the strict conditions of non partisan approach

Voter Education for Enhancing Women's Participation: Some Basic Features

Voter education plays a vital role in enhancing women's participation in elections, particularly in post-conflict countries in which women face larger challenges. Voter education should specifically target women and should be easily accessible. The information and its content should be gender-sensitive and designed to address the barriers, issues and challenges relevant to women's participation

Voter education campaigns should have a well defined component of gender sensitivity and specifically encourage women on an equal footing. EMB's should help create a culture in which women are motivated to participate and are in effect welcome into the electoral process. Universal suffrage and equal right of women to vote has to be the underlying philosophy of the voter educational campaigns aimed at women, highlighting the fact that they have equal right to electoral participation. Focused messages, posters and well designed outreach for women voters and the interactions geared to educating women voters may be helpful. Women's groups can be especially effective in developing material that will resonate with women voters.

Managing barriers to women's electoral participation is important. Any special issues and barriers such as legislative infirmities, high rates of illiteracy, language, generational issues, maternity care, secrecy, sanctity and privacy of vote and family voting should carefully identified and suitably addressed as per international standards and guidance. Targeted education campaigns for voters help alleviate possible 'double discrimination' against women from disadvantaged ethnic minorities. In post-conflict countries with security as a challenge, safe resource centers may be established for women.

Civil society and international organizations involvement can provide very valuable contribution in developing gender-sensitive voter education strategies and operations. This includes promoting a positive image of women as leaders and politicians in order to encourage women's participation in the political process. In post-conflict societies, such messages can highlight the importance of women's knowledge and expertise in the areas of reconstruction and national reconciliation. Women's groups can make a significant contribution through activities such as advocating for gender balance among candidates, election administrators, observers and other stakeholders. Emphasis should be placed on the right of women to be elected.

Civic education helps to enhance women's participation in elections particularly through the dissemination of positive image of women as voters, leaders, and participants in all aspects of the political process.

Women and the Right to Vote

This section visits in brief, the experiences of different countries in addressing the gender sensitive voter education for enhancing electoral participation by women. The paper also visits briefly the highlights of the robust support provided by international organizations, civil society, nonpartisans to VE campaigns of the EMB's for gender sensitive voter education in different countries.

The United States: League of Women Voters.

The **League of Women Voters (LWV)** is an American civic organization formed to help women take a larger role in public affairs as they won the right to vote. Founded in 1920 under an initiative of National American Woman Suffrage Association, the LWV began as a “mighty political experiment” aimed at helping the newly enfranchised women in electoral participation. Originally, only women could join the League. However, in 1973 the charter was amended to include men. The League has about 1,000 local and 50 state units in operation at the local, state, and national levels.

LWV extends its assistance to first-time voters, non-college youth, new citizens, minorities, and low-income citizens and traditionally underrepresented communities. Its local volunteer teams work to register, inform and mobilize voters during the pre election period. LWV also serves voters through their one-stop electoral information hub VOTE411.org and attaches high importance to voter education. Their voter education activities include the following:

- Educate voters about candidates in thousands of federal, state and local races every year.
- Distribution of educational materials on state and local elections rules.
- League members host a large number of candidate debates and forums across the country every year and provide detailed information on candidates and ballot issues.
- Through both print and online resources, including VOTE411.org, they empower a large number of voters with essential information on the election process in each state, including polling place hours and locations, ballot information, early or absentee voting rules, voter registration deadlines, ID requirements etc.
- League provides accurate and timely information to enable the voters to vote through direct outreach, local activities and working with the media across all 50 states.

South Africa: Women's Electoral participation in First Democratic Elections

In South Africa, the first democratic elections in 1994 faced challenges of a different nature emanating from hitherto policy of Apartheid. While the white people; men and women had been used to voting in elections right from early twentieth century in a constituency based ‘winner takes all’ system, a substantial portion of the population had little experience of voting. A minority of colored people besides Indians did have a limited exposure to voting for the Tricameral Parliament. However, the proportional representation (PR) system used in 1994, was new to the electorate. Therefore, managing voter education offered serious challenges.

In addition, there were many other critical factors which could not be ignored. These included:

- Majority of black voters, many of them illiterate, had had no previous experience in voting.
- South African liberation struggle had been characterized by cycles of violence and conflict that inevitably caused fears and skepticism about the electoral process.
- Establishing a new culture of non-violence and conflict resolution through the ballot box was pivotal to the process of democratic consolidation and nation building.
- The trust building measures as well as teaching the basics of democracy and electoral process during pre election voter education campaign was critical to success of the electoral process.
- Gender Challenges: Structures and institutions of apartheid had subjected women to serious inequality, a successful transformation to equality regime and electoral participation was a challenge. Ignorance of their political rights, lingering insecurity linked to struggle against apartheid and inadequacy of democratic trust, skepticism about secrecy of vote, lack of identity documents and fear of intimidation etc required to be addressed through effective and efficient voter education programme to consolidate

gains that the South African women had secured under the new constitutional dispensation.

Gender Sensitive Voter Education

Key areas in gender sensitive voter education for electoral participation that were addressed by the IEC, political parties and a coordinated network of voter education organizations are as follows:

- Status of women; women constituted more than half the voter population.
- Low levels of voter literacy.
- Fear of intimidation and political violence, political tolerance.
- Ignorance of the electoral process, lack of identity documents.
- Skepticism about the secrecy of the vote. Freedom to vote.
- Educating the electorate about the electoral process, motivating them to participate and convincing them about secrecy of the vote

Voter education programs for the 1994 elections were essentially conducted by the the IEC, the NGO's and political parties with strategic and well coordinated outreach for women voters including those in the rural areas. One woman one vote message helped in encouraging women in electoral participation. An Independent Forum for Electoral Education (IFEE) was founded in 1993 by integrating several NGO's with a view to derive synergy and obviate duplication. The Forum was guided by a code of conduct and the principle of non partisan electoral education. Democracy Education Broadcast Initiative (DEBI) was set up to coordinate voter education programmes on radio and television. The IEC also took up the work related to voter education especially for inclusion and training of trainers.

Goals of voter education programmes were as follows:

- Educate voters about democracy.
- Explain the secrecy of the ballot.
- Appeal for political tolerance.
- Motivating citizens to vote.
- Gender Sensitive Strategies and techniques used by different organizations included:



A poster from South Africa: Encouraging women to vote

(Source: Reproduced from the ACE Project web site at http://www.aceproject.org/main/samples/ve/vex_p008.pdf)

- Recruitment of women trainers
- Develop gender sensitive voter education materials including posters etc for encouraging women to vote.
- Organization of separate workshops with only women participants, so that women could voice their opinions and concerns without any interruption in a fearless manner.(Black Sash)
- Staging voting exercises and rehearsal of the voting process to reduce intimidation
- Use of documentary films disseminated by means of mobile video units in rural areas focusing on issues and problems related to women.(DEBI)
- Hiring theatre groups performing voter education play.
- Training of women from Rural Women's Movement and university students to run voter education programmes in their own communities (Black Sash)

Thus a massive voter education outreach was organized by coordinated efforts by the civil society organizations besides the IEC.

Nepal: Gender Sensitive Voter Education Initiatives.

The Election Commission of Nepal (ECN) took up a series of initiatives for voter education and outreach for inclusion of women and marginalized groups to strengthen their electoral participation in their run up to the

Constituent Assembly elections of 2013. The initiatives included

- Promotion and dissemination of information aimed at encouraging women's participation;
- Provision for 50 percent representation for women among voter education workers.
- Teams of "Nirwahan Siksha Karmachari", the voter education workers included health workers and primary school teachers to help adequate number of women to be on board.
- A women-to-women approach, with female voter education workers distributing voter education materials among the marginalized communities, proved effective in reaching out women.
- Radio announcements, street theater performances were organized during times and in places that women were likely to access. These events further provided an opportunity for illiterate women to access civic education and voter education materials.

New Zealand: 'Your Voice, Your Choice: Votes for Women'

'Your Voice, Your Choice' programme is a part of school educational resources of the EC NZ for students at level 4. The emphasis lies on the inclusion of women voters in its evolutionary and historical perspective as a major achievement in New Zealand

On 19 September 1893, after a long campaign led by Kate Sheppard and others, changes to the Electoral Act were signed into law and New Zealand became the first country in the world where all adults, including women, had the right to vote in parliamentary elections.

The *Your Voice, Your Choice: Votes for Women* teaching resource provides a range of activities designed to develop students' understanding of the suffragists' achievement 120 years ago and to encourage voter participation today. The focus of the resource is on the right to participate and engage in the democratic process.

Votes for Women are aligned with the values and key competencies of The New Zealand Curriculum. The resource is aimed at level 4 of the curriculum. However, the schools are encouraged to adapt the activities to meet the specific needs and experiences of your students.



Votes for Women is designed as a stand-alone resource, but it can also sit alongside EC NZ other educational resource Your Voice, Your Choice teaching units

Georgia: Central Election Commission: Gender Training and Outreach.

The Central Election Commission (CEC) of Georgia took up a number of initiatives under leadership trainings for women aimed at enhancing women's electoral participation. Some of these initiatives are as below:

- Training of women staff in collaboration with IFES: Organized training of women staff members in leadership and human rights issues with a view to enable them to take on leadership roles in conducting local self-government elections.
- The training programme included gender sensitization issues and challenges in Georgia, national legislation, and conflict resolution.
- Engaging civil society organizations through a competition to submit proposals to promote inter alia, women's participation in the local government elections.

Voter Education: Focus on women and elections in post conflict Countries.

In post-conflict countries, voter and civic education is important especially because electoral processes and the emerging structures and system of governance may be unfamiliar to voters. Per se the post-conflict countries are societies in transition, they provide a significant opportunity to educate citizens on gender sensitive electoral participation and equal, universal adult suffrage, the importance of including women in all aspects of the political process, and the significant contribution women can make to stabilizing and strengthening of democracy and peace.

Democratic elections lie at the core of peace process in post-conflict societies. Emphasis on elections reaffirms that legitimate institutions with popular support from all sections of the Society provide sustainable solutions to conflicts. Participation by women and men from sections of society helps achieve stable peace leading to prosperity.

The United Nations Security Council, in its resolution 1325 (2000) of October 2000, states the importance of integrating a gender perspective in agreements aimed at establishing stable peace.

Enhancing women's electoral participation in post-conflict countries is critical to building peace and democracy. Elections provide an important opportunity to ensure women's voices are heard, their concerns are addressed, and their potential contributions to peace and democracy are maximized.

This section discusses gender sensitive electoral participation and peacebuilding in some of the post conflict countries.

Afghanistan: Gender Sensitive Electoral Planning for Enhancing women's Participation

The Independent Election Commission (IEC) of Afghanistan has integrated gender sensitization

in its organizational functioning. In 2009, the IEC established a Gender Unit responsible for developing a gender strategy for elections in Afghanistan. The Unit works in an integrated way with different departments of the Commission. Public Outreach Department of the Commission has a gender focal point which also works in tandem with the Gender Unit. Interactions with the Ministry of Women's Affairs and the Ministry of Haj and Islamic Affairs also support the gender unit.

The mandate of the Unit includes voter education campaigns. Workshops on the voting rights of women and the importance of women's participation in the electoral processes were organized by the Gender Unit with the help of gender trainers from the concerned Ministries. Participation included the stakeholders including the ones with contradictory opinions.

The IEC has gradually increased its female staff engaged in voter registration with a view to encourage women to register as electors and participate in elections. With these initiatives women comprised 36 percent of the voters in the first lap of the Presidential elections in the year 2014. Some of the strategic initiatives for gender sensitive electoral participation include setting up of all women's polling stations, besides focus on inclusive voter registration. Special sessions were dedicated to inclusive voter registration at the special workshop organized at the IIIDEM in collaboration with the International Organizations (March 2017)

Bosnia and Herzegovina

Global Elections Day is observed by the BiH Central Election Commission since 2005.

In 2014 the Global Elections Day celebration was dedicated to enhancing of youth and women participation in democratic processes through the elections, aimed at increasing youth turnout at the elections, and in particular the turnout of the first time voters. Campaign leaflets were prepared and distributed promotion of this event.

Rwanda: Parallel women's elections

Rwanda embarked upon an innovative mechanism to demonstrate enhancement in women's electoral participation through creativity in electoral systems. Each voter in Rwanda receives three ballots at local level, one of which includes only women candidates. Indirect elections to the next higher levels are structured to ensure that at least 20 per cent of those elected are women. Through this procedure of multiple ballots and indirect elections to each higher level, 24 seats out of 80 in the lower house of parliament are reserved for women. In 2003, a total of 39 women were elected to serve in the legislature, making Rwanda a world leader with its National Assembly made up of 49 per cent women.

A visit to the vast literature presented by different countries of the world reaffirms the attention that is being paid to enhancing women's electoral participation through voter education and the importance that is attached to the enhancement of women's electoral



participation. The Universal treaties of UN and the Regional Instruments and have played a vital supportive role in shaping the legislative and political framework for gender sensitive voter education for enhancing women's electoral participation in different countries. Yet lot more needs to be done. ■



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Facing The Impediments To Register – Barriers For **Women In Voting** Registration Process

The participation of women and their engagement in electoral process is an important marker of the maturity and efficacy of democracy in any country. It can be defined not only in terms of the equality and freedom with which they share political power with men, but also in terms of the liberty and space provided for women in the democratic framework of electoral politics. Their right to vote is one such indicator highlighting the democratic uprightness of the nation. Despite women constituting more than one-third of the world's population (Nandal, 2010), their participation in the electoral process is low. One of the major reasons behind this is the challenging process of voter registration. While this cause has been widely accepted as a prime impediment to citizen's participation in elections all over the world, women in particular face huge obstacles in this regard.

Voter Registration is a fundamental process in realizing eligible voter rights. The Constitution of almost all democratic nations guarantees the Universal Adult Suffrage to its citizens. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) defines discrimination against women as any distinction, exclusion, or restriction made on the basis of sex, which of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil, or any other field. Despite such clear cut covenants, a large number of barriers have been witnessed by women during voter registration process in many parts of the world.

These barriers may be grouped into two major types:

- A. **Cultural Barriers**
- B. **Logistical or Structural Barriers**



A. Cultural Barriers

The stereotyping of women can be traced through history, with roots being in religious traditions and diverse cultural histories. The prevalence of patriarchal cultural beliefs has isolated women from public life from primordial times. Even many ancient texts contain references of women being subservient to men (Bovey, 2013). Above all, religious frameworks have had its repercussions on them. No wonder women from Islamic nations face a great deal of difficulty in getting themselves registered as voters. Their inhibitions largely pertain to those undergoing

finger printing or fear of removing their veils for the purpose of being photographed. In parts of Pakistan's NWFP regions and northern Nigeria, the reason for low registration and polling of women over the years, are highly attributed to the fact of women shying away from standing in queues with their male counterparts (UNDP, 2014).

The role of choosing or electing leaders in some traditional African communities was the preserve of men. This role has found its place in contemporary African communities as traditions are not easily written off. Women are expected by society to be home makers and those who find their way to the registration centers do so at the instructions of the men on where to register and more so who to vote for (Anti, 2010). Even among the western part of Kenya communities, expectant women are culturally not allowed to be seen in public as it may attract bad omen for the mother and the unborn child.

Media reports confirm that way back in 1998 in Burkina Faso, women were trained on how and what basis to vote, but when the time of the registration came, some of the husbands wanted their wives to stay at home because they believed that a male member being the head of the family represents the entire family and his voting is on behalf of all of them (NDI, 2016). Also in Uganda, one is required to remove headgear when taking photographs this scares away nuns, Muslims and older women. If taking photo is allowed in getting passport,

why it cannot be allowed for voter ID, I think a focused voter education will go a long way. Women photographers may be engaged as was done in Afghanistan recently.

B. Logistical or structural constraints:

Logical or structural constraints are another major impediment which women face in getting themselves registered as voters. These women are generally those who belong to remote regions of developing nations. One such major constraint is the long distance between women's homes and the registration centre which is exacerbated by the poor transport infrastructure. This was found true in the villages of Uganda where women confessed that they had to walk long distances to reach the registration centre. This not only took a toll on their health but also made them reluctant for getting registered (womenwatch.org).

Women are often bogged down by family needs and going for voter registration is seen as wastage of their already meager resources. A survey by USAID and National Democratic Institute in 2013 revealed that rural women in the remote villages of Kenya were often found to be pre-occupied by land, livestock and children. This had left the task of voter registration very low on their priority agenda.

Post election events and outcomes also discourage women from registering as voters. The post election violence of 2007-2008 in Kenya created voter apathy especially among

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the womenfolk (NDI, 2013). After the incident, women had felt discouraged to register as voters fearing the possible repetition of such violence. However, with continuous voter education and peace building initiatives, the confidence of the women in elections has been built once again.

Often, household power dynamics make men custodians of identification documents or National Identification cards. In some communities in Kenya, it is the head of the family (men/husbands) who are the custodians of the identification document or National Identification required for registration as a voter. Therefore the decision for women to register relies entirely on the head of the family who will release the document at will. This is mostly in the pastoral communities.

Women who relocate after marriage often find it cumbersome to get the details of their personal documents changed or transferred. This often leads to a situation where they are turned away when they go for getting themselves registered as voters.

Gender parity in voter registration is the first step towards a vibrant and inclusive democracy. All countries who are signatories of CEDAW need to create conditions for hundred percent registrations of women. The voter ID card may be made compulsory for many government benefits. For instance, scholarship schemes for girls in some Indian states have meant very large registration of girls in schools. This shows that gender based concessions have always helped. Village / municipal and district council elections in India have 30% to 50% reservation in states and that has changed the shape of things in women registration here. There can be many such interventions by facilitators and governments across the world if women voter registration is kept high on the priority agenda. ■



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Voting services provided to Australian citizens overseas and Defence personnel



Background: In Australia, it is compulsory for electors residing in Australia to vote. If an elector fails to vote without a valid and sufficient reason, a \$20 penalty must be paid. However, electors who are outside of Australia at the time of the election do not have to vote and are not penalised if they do not vote. Despite this, it is important that Australian citizens travelling or residing overseas, and defence force personnel serving overseas, are provided with the every opportunity to vote at a federal election. The AEC provides a range of services to enable this to occur.

Brief Description of Best Practice: Voting in Australia for federal elections is compulsory for all Australian citizens. Subsection 245 (1) of the Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918 (Electoral Act) provides that, it shall be the duty of every elector to vote at each election. An elector will be guilty of an offence under s. 245 of the Electoral Act if they fail to vote at the election without a valid and sufficient reason. Australians who will be temporarily absent from Australia, such as on an overseas holiday and are unable to vote while overseas, can complete an overseas notification form which informs the AEC of their exit from Australia and anticipated return date back into Australia. Completing this form notifies the AEC that they wish to remain on the electoral roll, but notes that they were overseas during an election and unable to vote. This is considered a valid and sufficient reason for not voting. Australians living or working overseas who are enrolled to vote and intend to return to Australia within six years can register as an overseas elector.



Overseas electors automatically receive a postal vote in the mail at their overseas address when a federal election is announced and in some cases for by-elections and referenda as well. Registered overseas electors who do not vote may claim that being overseas is a valid and sufficient reason for not voting. Australians living or working overseas who are not enrolled to vote can enrol if they have been overseas for less than three years and intend to return to Australia within six years. They cannot enrol at an overseas address, but rather where they were entitled to vote before they left Australia. AEC OVERSEAS VOTING SERVICES Australians who are overseas when a federal election occurs can vote: - using a postal vote, or - in-person at an Australian Embassy, Consulate or High Commission designated as an overseas voting centre for a particular electoral event. At the 2016 federal election, the AEC established 95 overseas voting centres at Australian Embassies, Consulates and High

Commissions run by the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) and the Australian Trade Commission (Austrade). There were approximately 71 000 votes cast at overseas voting centres. The DFAT and Austrade operate overseas voting centres on behalf of the AEC through Assistant Returning Officers appointed by the AEC. The AEC provides procedures manuals and training for overseas AROs and polling centre support staff, and manages the delivery of election materials and ballot papers. During the election, the AEC operates a dedicated overseas voting help desk which is available 24/7 to electoral staff at overseas posts. The AEC also deploys AEC officers to the largest and second largest overseas voting posts (London and Hong Kong) to provide additional training and support.

DEFENCE PERSONNEL OVERSEAS At the recent 2016 federal election, the AEC facilitated postal voting for Australian Defence Force (ADF) electors deployed overseas. The AEC encourages ADF electors who are going to be deployed overseas to register as General Postal Voters (GPVs). When an election occurs, those electors registered as GPVs will automatically receive a postal vote. ADF electors who are not registered as GPVs can apply online to receive a postal vote when an election is announced. The AEC works with the ADF to ensure that postal votes returned to Australia are on-forwarded to the elector's relevant division or state for counting. At previous electoral events, the AEC has provided a mobile polling service to ADF electors overseas. However due to a revised interpretation of the applicable legislation, the AEC is now unable to provide these services.

In 2007, the AEC trialled an electronic voting system using a computer terminal and the Department of "Defence secure Defence Restricted Network". On the recommendation of a parliamentary committee, the system was not used again due to the high average cost of each vote.

Area of Coverage: Outside Australia

Period of implementation: Every federal election

Challenges : With the rise of email and a reduction in service levels of postal systems, the AEC faces the increasing challenge in ensuring that postal votes are received by voters and are returned to Australia in time to be included in the election count. In the case of overseas polling centres, freight and logistics challenges can mean that ballot papers do not always arrive at the voting centres in time for them to offer the preferred two-week pre-poll voting period. The AEC has also observed that some Australian citizens resident overseas do not fully understand the requirements of voting overseas.

Outcome: The AEC seeks to provide voting services to enable all eligible Australians overseas to vote if they choose to, but will consider their absents from Australia as a valid and sufficient reason for not voting. ■

Submitted by Australian Election Commission as a 'Best Practice' during International Conference on 'Voter Education for Inclusive, Informed & Ethical Participation', 19th -21st October, 2016, N.Delhi, India



Title: Do you know about Electoral Observation?

Description: This cartoon highlights the roles and responsibilities of election observer for the 2017 By-Elections.

EMB/Organisation: International IDEA Myanmar

Country: Myanmar

<http://voicenet.in/vnAudioVideo.htm>

INNOVATIONS



BAIXE OS APPS DAS ELEIÇÕES 2016

Election Apps

The Superior Electoral Court provides various election applications to assist the population during this period. Through the applications it is possible to verify personal data, such as the polling place, to report irregularities, to access information about candidates, etc.

More information at: <http://www.tse.jus.br/eleicoes/eleicoes-2016/aplicativos-justica-eleitoral>

COMPUTERIZATION OF THE VOTE

The computerization of the Electoral Justice began in 1986, during the presidency of Minister Néri da Silveira, with the electronic re-registration of approximately 70 million voters.

All the process of informatization of electoral processes has been permeated by in-depth studies and rigid actions aimed at the

security and transparency of the process, allowing a reliable record of the will of the Brazilian voter, strengthening the country's democracy.

More information at: <http://www.tse.jus.br/eleicoes/biometria-e-urna-eletronica/eleicoes>



In some Brazilian states, access to polling places is precarious, so helicopters and boats are required to take ballot boxes to polling places.

Special Voting Rules in Canada for Expatriates



Background: In 1970, public servants, mainly diplomats, and their dependents posted outside Canada became eligible to use the Special Voting Rules. These rules were previously available only to military personnel and their dependents since their introduction during the First World War. Civilian employees of the military (usually teachers and administrative support staff at schools on Canadian Forces bases) gained this eligibility in 1977. On the other hand, ordinary Canadians who happened to be away from home and unable to vote, either on polling day or at advance polls, could not cast a ballot until 1993. It is now possible to do so in accordance with the Special Voting Rules of the Elections Act.

Brief Description of Best Practice: The special ballot is essentially a registration and voting system for Canadians away from their home ridings, people with disabilities, prison inmates and any other elector who cannot vote in person on Election Day or at an advance poll. All Canadians living or travelling outside the country are eligible to vote, provided that (1) they have not been absent from Canada for more than five years, (2) they intend to return home at some time and (3) they have applied for the special ballot prior to the deadline. A mail-in special ballot voting system is mainly used by expatriates and military personnel, while an inperson special ballot voting system is available according to the elector's circumstances, in a number of locations across the country. Elections Canada also maintains the International Register of Electors, a database containing the names of Canadian electors living outside Canada. Once an election or referendum is called, Elections Canada sends a personalized special ballot voting kit to every elector in the international register of electors to the mailing address on file for

them. Qualified electors may apply at any time to be added to the International Register. If an election has been called, applications for the International Register must reach Elections Canada in Ottawa by 6:00 p.m. Eastern Time on the Tuesday before election day in order to qualify the elector to vote by special ballot in that election. Furthermore, to facilitate registration and voting for Canadians living abroad, instructions are sent by Elections Canada to Canadian diplomatic missions to outline the role they must play during a federal general election period as agreed upon by the Office of the CEO (Elections Canada) and Global Affairs Canada. For examples, electors can choose to use the diplomatic bag to send back their mail-in ballot to Elections Canada - there is no polling station within Canadian diplomatic missions. In addition, for the first time for the 2015 general election, Elections Canada provided to electors living abroad the option of applying online for a special ballot. This reduced significantly the delays caused by postal mail.

Challenges: In May 2014, the "intent to return" and "five-year rule" provisions associated with the use of a special ballot by Canadians living abroad were invalidated by a provincial Superior Court of Justice ruling. As such, Elections Canada stopped applying those provisions across Canada and had been preparing for all Canadian citizens living abroad to be allowed to vote, based on the May 2014 decision. However, on July 20, 2015, the provincial Court of Appeal reversed the lower court decision, reinstating these criteria. The ruling meant reversing those procedures less than two weeks before the call of the election. This situation resulted in confusion among electors and hardships in managing the registration and voting processes for Canadians living abroad. Timing is also of the essence

in the use of special ballot by Canadian living abroad. For example, in the case of an election, the elector must wait to obtain the names of the candidates in his or her electoral district after the candidates have been confirmed, on the 19th day before polling day. The electors must then ensure to return his mail-in ballot in time to Elections Canada. The Canada Elections Act prohibits counting ballots received after the deadline on polling day at a specific time. For the 2015 general election, 1,285 ballots were received late from Canadians living abroad and members of the Canadian forces.

Outcome : The use of Special voting rules has enabled eligible Canadian electors to vote, who would be unable to otherwise. For the 2015 general election, 40,248 Canadians living abroad and members of the Canadian forces casted their votes by special ballots. In addition, as electors had immediate online access to the registration process to the International Register, many electors were better able to meet the deadline for document submission as they did not experience delays related to postal deliveries. In addition, the 2015 electoral campaign was the longest in the country's history, lasting 78 days, in comparison to the established minimum campaign length of 36 days. This extended amount of time also better enabled electors to receive and submit all documentation prior to the deadline, as it allowed for additional time for procedures and processes to be communicated and completed. Moving forward, the recent decision of the Supreme Court of Canada to hear the appeal and the media coverage of the case will undoubtedly bring attention over the voting right of Canadians expatriates. It is estimated that a million Canadians living abroad could be impacted by the decision.

Tools Used: All diplomatic missions receive an election poster and registration kits that should be displayed prominently in the reception area in both official languages (English and French) during the election period. Procedures for voting by special ballots are also now available online.

- 1) Voting by Special Ballot
<http://www.elections.ca/content.aspx?section=vot&dir=bkg&document=ec90540&lang=e>
- 2) Voting by Special Ballot for Canadian Forces Electors <http://www.elections.ca/content.aspx?section=vot&dir=bkg&document=ec90550&lang=e>

Once registered, a special ballot voting kit is sent to the electors abroad and includes: a blank ballot on which the elector writes the name of the candidate of his or her choice an unmarked inner envelope an outer envelope identifying the elector and his/her electoral district, and a declaration that the elector must sign and date, stating that his/her name is as shown on the envelope, and that he/she has not already voted and will not attempt to vote again in the current electoral event a return envelope an instruction flyer.

Area of Coverage: Across Canada and Internationally

Period of implementation: Special arrangements for electors unable to vote because of disability, occupation or assignment abroad were introduced gradually to improve access to the vote: the postal ballot (1915), advance polling (1920), proxy voting (1970) and level access at polling stations (1992). Note that in 1993 proxy voting was repealed when the use of special ballots under the Special Voting Rules was expanded.

Challenges : Court decisions reversed two weeks before the call of the election. Logistics and tight deadline for mail-in ballot.

Outcome: Special Voting Rules used by 11,001 international electors and 29,247 Canadian Forces Members. ■

Submitted by Elections Canada as a 'Best Practice' during International Conference on 'Voter Education for Inclusive, Informed & Ethical Participation', 19th-21st October, 2016, New Delhi, India



Youth Participation for a Representative Democracy

Election Commission of India



On 18th December 2009, the United Nations General Assembly adopted a Resolution (A-/Res/64/134) proclaiming the year 2010 – 2011 as the International Year of the Youth (IYY) for the second time in 25 years. The first IYY was in the year 1985 subsequent to which India had piloted its first National Youth Policy and created a separate Ministry dedicated to the youth. The country also had its youngest Prime Minister during this period, who had taken the first initiative for enacting a National Youth Policy.

While the banner theme of the first IYY was three dimensional, i.e., Participation, Development and Peace, the second IYY focus was two dimensional i.e. – Dialogue and Mutual understanding. The three key objectives of the second IYY were to:

- (i) Create awareness and commitment,
- (ii) Mobilize and engage in increasing youth participation and partnerships and
- (iii) Connect and build bridges among different sections of youth for social cohesion.

The agreed slogan on this 25th Anniversary year of the IYY was – “Our Year, Our Voice”. India’s National Youth Policy, 2003, recognizes the need for developing among youth “qualities of citizenship” (4.2) and “effective participation” of youth in “decision making processes (5.1). Thus the best and manifest indicator of their voice and choice is through effective participation, which implies that they turn up in large number at the polling booths and use this empowering instrument and medium to register and articulate their voice and views on public affairs.

The 21st century India of today is blessed with half a billion strong mega young generation

of hope and it is time for putting them at the top of democracy promotion and electoral participation. About 42 percent of youth in the country are in the age group of 13 to 35 and the number is growing. It is estimated that by 2025 India will be the youngest nation of the world as an average Indian will be only 29 years old by that time. Bulk of the increase in the country’s working age population will be in the relatively younger age group of 20-35 (Economic Survey, 2011-2012). The emerging demographic scenario would also influence the democratic profile of the country.

If elections and voting are connected by an umbilical cord the youth are its organic base and life line. Together they help in the emergence of a responsive moral society that avoids coercion and force in decision making, codifying values and norms into laws, reiterating the primacy and privacy of individual voters and building a strong linkage with human development. Elections are also the epicenter of the democracy universe. Yet election by itself cannot ensure democracy. Therefore, we need to strengthen the four basic pillars or principles on which democracy rests. These are: popular control, political equality of all citizens, constitutional government and individual freedom. Multi-party elections and Voting is the process guided by these principles that empowers the citizens and ensures lasting peace. This process enables citizens to choose their own leaders from time to time and determine their own destiny. Elections lose relevance without voters.

Soon after independence and since 1952, general elections in India, both at national and state level, continue to be the largest democratic exercise and experiment in the world, providing access to eligible voters to exercise their choice and voice in a free, fair,

peaceful environment facilitating peaceful change of power. Youth voters have been a major stakeholder in this process. Electoral democracy of various hues also continues to be the subject of political theory and science, the young students study, debate and discuss with their teachers in class rooms and campus. Voting is practicing this knowledge in the real field of action completing the KABP chain. It provides the first opportunity to the young people to break the long years of role moratorium which the family, school and the community together had imposed on them.

Of late, the Election Commission of India has been focusing on the relevance of voter education for promoting ethical and enlightened voting behavior. Since 1968, India has formulated national education policies several times and all of them have emphasized the role of education in promoting citizenship, participation and personality development. For instance, the National Policy on Education (NPE,1992) emphasizes the acculturating role of education in promoting independent mind and spirit towards furthering the goals of secularism and democracy as enshrined in our Constitution. (part 2: 2.2) It mentions how education in schools and colleges can improve the political and social life facing dangers of erosion.

The sections in this policy dealing with National Curricular Framework (NCF), divides the curriculum into core and flexible components and recommends values of democracy to be part of the core curriculum. Similarly, the National Youth Policy (NYP) focuses on the need for developing the quality of citizenship through effective participation in the decision making processes. The 2016 draft National Policy on Education, which is being formulated nearly two decades after the last Policy, recognizes the criticality of Education as the most important vehicle for social, economic and political transformation in order to strengthen a democratic culture in the country by empowering citizens as an integrative force in society.

According to the World Democracy Index, today, about two-third of the countries in the

world are democracies, precisely 123 countries out of 193. Significantly, 42 of the 48 high human development countries are democracies which shows the close relationship between democracy and development.

And yet, over the years the percentage of eligible voters who cast a ballot in an election has been decreasing in many countries. For instance, in the USA Presidential election 2008, the voter turnout was 63% but in 2016 Presidential elections, it fell further to 58%. Voting is an expression of human freedom and development, as people all over the world want to be free to determine their destiny. Consequently, political institutions and multiparty elections are the best guarantee to safeguard the freedom and dignity of citizens.

In India, the rates of voter turn-out used to hover between 55 to 60 percent. For instance, in 2004 General Election voter turn-out was not more than 56 percent. Yet when the latest general election to the 16thth Lok Sabha was held in 2014, the turnout stood at a record high of 66.4 %. During the subsequent State Assembly Elections, when new and young voters were enrolled in large number, this led to marked changes in the profile of electoral results.

Yet the scale of youth participation is not reflected in the age profile of Parliament and Legislatures. A report says with just 53% of its members under the age of 55, the 16th Lok Sabha has become India's oldest ever. India's parliament has been growing steadily older over time, as the data compiled by PRS Legislative Research and shared with The Hindu, shows. It says there are just 71 new MPs who are under the age of 40 and another 216 are under the age of 55. In comparison, 212 members are between 56 and 70, and another 41 are over 70. In comparison, the first two Lok Sabhas had the highest proportion of young MPs under the age of 40.

In order to reverse this trend, a historic attempt was made in 1988 when the 61st Constitutional Amendment Act, was passed in Parliament lowering the minimum age of voting from 21 to 18, which came into effect in March, 1989. This

important piece of legislation, since then, has been transforming millions of young Indians from passive subjects to active citizens but has not succeeded in influencing the corresponding age profile in the Parliament.

The attitude of this segment of the population towards democracy would determine the relevance of our adult franchise system. Now, demands are growing to further reduce the voting age down to 16 years in view of rapid maturing of the young people in a knowledge and information society fuelled by the impact of globalization.

The future of democracy in India would depend on the degree and extent of youth participation in the electoral process and youth representation in the decision making structures. And it is in the fitness of things that a demographically younger country should be represented by a younger leadership. For that to happen, the waiting queue of young voters at the polling booths has to be longer than other age groups. Proactive participation of youth always contributes to both social change sustainability of democracy. It also confirms legitimacy of electoral process and elected representatives. The 18 year old youth voters would not vote on their own unless and until

they are enabled to develop a positive attitude towards politics and a stake in public affairs and are made aware of and informed on the reasons behind why they should participate in elections and voting.

The concept of 'participation & representation' as a human right was first recognized in Universal Declaration without any reference to democracy. Exercising this right to participation – directly or through freely chosen representatives– is considered the basic norm and standard to which a number of other substantive human rights are related. The 'Mantra' of people's participation has five dimensions i.e. information, motivation, mobilization, organization and creative action leading to mass engagement in the decision making processes. It succeeds only when the actions and initiatives are youth-owned, youth-driven and youth-led. Green shoots of democracy and development can take roots only through this process.



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Title: Check Voter List 2017

Description: This video outlines the process and steps to be taken to ensure to be properly enrolled.

EMB/Organisation: International IDEA Myanmar

Country: Myanmar



Title: Do you know how election results are counted?

Description: This video outlines the process that implemented by the Union Election Commission to count the votes and announce the results.

EMB/Organisation: International IDEA Myanmar

Country: Myanmar

Interactive School Engagement - for Future Voters

Election Commission of India



Election Commission of India is reaching out to 'Future Voters' through its Voter Education programme. These are the young people falling within the 15-17 years age group and who are on the threshold of adulthood.

Under the third phase of the Systematic Voters' Education and Electoral Participation programme (SVEEP-III), ECI has conceived major interventions to inculcate electoral literacy among young people through curricula and co-curricula in Schools. Special interventions are planned for those in the same age-group and outside schools. The theme for 7th National Voters' Day (NVD) is 'Empowering Young and Future Voters' and the same shall be the focus of ECI in the year 2017.

'Interactive School Engagement' was conceived as one of the component under this initiative of outreach to future voters. Under the ISE, school students in the age-group of 15-17 years who are usually in Class IX-XII are targeted.

In its first leg, the following formed the core component of the ISE:

- I. All Electoral Registration Officers (EROs) covered at least one school within their constituency in January 2017 ahead of the 7th NVD and interacted with the students in 15-17 year age group (9th-12th standard). They took queries from the students on

various aspects of elections and electoral polity. The ERO were equipped with a 'Voter Education kit' for their interaction with the school students.

- II. Similarly District Election Officers (DEOs) and Chief Electoral Officers (CEOs) covered at least one school, within their district and State/UT respectively during the same period.
- III. Rural and urban schools were equally covered and suitable components were provided in the kit for students with various format/medium. The 'Voter Education' kit carries the following:
 - a. Presentation for students in language of instruction used in the school
 - b. Computer Game – Get Set Go
 - c. Video Film – Masti, Dosti, Matdaan
 - d. Badges – Future Voter of India
 - e. Brochure – How to register & Vote

IV. Badges and Brochure were distributed among the students.

The questions put up by the students are being compiled as a reference book and resource for future voters.

http://ecisveep.nic.in/Sveep_data/ISE_Sveep2017.pdf



Coverage : More than eleven thousand schools and over 2.5 million students were covered by April 2017 under ISE. The details are as follows:

Interactive School Engagement Programme held in Darjeeling District, West Bengal

Election Commission of India celebrated 7th National Voters' Day across the country on 25th January 2017. On the occasion of National Voters' Day celebration in Darjeeling (West Bengal), a special initiative was taken up in various schools as per instructions & guidelines of Election Commission of India.

Interactive School Engagement program was organised at Nepali Girls School, Siliguri on 18.01.2017 with a spot quiz program for the students of schools.

Interactive training programme organised at Banimandir Railway High School, Siliguri on

25.01.2017 included discussions on Indian Constitution and Representation of People Act. The need to enrol as a voter and the process to enrol was described in an interactive mode.

Students with political science background found the interactive programme very interesting and requested for organizing it again in future. They were very interested to enrol as a voter for future. Such initiations teach students a sense of responsible citizenship and inspires them to exercise their newly acquired franchise, when occasion arises.



Questions posed by students during Interactive School Education Programme.

1. What are the functions of Election Commission of India?
2. What are the basic needs to enrol as a voter?
3. How does Indian Constitution help the people of India?
4. How is voting organised by Election Commission of India?
5. Whether ECI elects Prime Minister or President of India?
6. How can we prove Indian citizenship?
7. What is the minimum age of enrolment?
8. Who is the present CEC of ECI?
9. Who is the present CEO of West Bengal?
10. Which form is used for new enrolment?

SPECIAL INITIATIVES

Future Voters

Name of State/UT	No. of Schools	No. of Students
Andhra Pradesh	139	165818
Telangana	107	100786
Arunachal Pradesh	104	14504
Assam	132	6732
Bihar	206	58625
Chhattisgarh	232	42174
Gujarat	261	102508
Haryana	139	41668
Himachal Pradesh	84	14836
Jammu & Kashmir	315	31588
Jharkhand	509	61218
Karnataka	264	38866
Kerala	119	28000
Madhya Pradesh	2403	501100
Maharashtra	3702	777195
Manipur	104	19096
Meghalaya	20	1920

Name of State/UT	No. of Schools	No. of Students
Mizoram	65	9221
Nagaland	02	267
Odisha	174	16715
Rajasthan	572	100305
Sikkim	16	226
Tamil Nadu	452	144066
Tripura	112	14051
Uttar Pradesh	397	105362
Uttarakhand	279	28200
West Bengal	720	49007
Andaman & Nicobar Islands	05	625
Chandigarh	06	4200
Dadra Nagar Haveli	11	150
NCT of Delhi	123	23146
Lakshadweep	11	3944
Puducherry	15	5475
Total	11800	2511594



Empowering Voters with Disabilities in the 2016 Presidential Election and Beyond

U.S. Election Assistance Commission



Background: Americans with disabilities have traditionally not been able to vote independently or privately in American elections. Since the passages of the Help America Vote Act, the Election Assistance Commission has worked to ensure that this mandate is carried out. The United States Congress appropriated \$2.4 billion to reform the way Americans vote. That money is gone but the mandates remain how can we continue to make this a reality?

Brief Description of Best Practice: Over 35 million Americans with disabilities are eligible to vote in the United States, which represents nearly one-sixth of the electorate (Projecting the Number of Eligible Voters with Disabilities in the November 2016 Elections, Lisa Schur and Douglas Kruse, August 2016, <http://smlr.rutgers.edu/news-events/people-with-disabilitiesnow-account-for-close-one-sixth-of-total-electorate>). This accounts for a broad range of disabilities, including mobility, communicative, physical, and cognitive impairments. This population of voters also faces educational, cultural, and political barriers in elections, leading to efforts to improve the voting experience and election processes. In 2002, the U.S. Congress passed the Help America Vote Act (HAVA) to reform the voting process throughout the U.S. Through HAVA, the U.S. Election Assistance Commission (EAC) was created to assist states in improving voting systems and voter access for all Americans. The EAC is an independent and bipartisan federal entity. HAVA contained landmark provisions requiring the secure, private, and independent casting of ballots for voters with disabilities. During the past twelve years, the EAC has worked closely with election officials to promote these access requirements and to foster a climate of understanding in

providing assistance for voters with disabilities. HAVA is a crucial mechanism that enables the EAC to advance accessibility for voters with disabilities across America. The EAC assists voters with disabilities by empowering and supporting accessibility advances with policy initiatives, grants, and funding. The EAC has six duties under HAVA, and three out of these six, and their elaborating statutes, directly mention assisting voters with disabilities as a primary duty of the organization. Accessible Voting Technology Initiative: In 2009 and 2010, Congress appropriated a total of \$8,000,000 to the EAC to create a three-year research and development (R&D) competitive grant competition to improve voting accessibility for all citizens. In answering this charge from Congress, the EAC awarded two intermediary grants through the development of the Accessible Voting Technology Initiative (AVTI) (EAC, AVTI Final Reports, http://www.eac.gov/payments_and_grants/accessible_voting_technology_initiative.aspx). Through the AVTI, the EAC and its grantees have produced approximately 45 R&D technological and administrative solutions that ensure all citizens can vote privately and independently; greatly enhanced voting machines coming to market through technology transfer; and piloted Prime III, an open source voting system in multiple elections across the U.S. Developed by Dr. Juan Gilbert in 2003, Prime III is an open source voting platform capable of assisting all voters with disabilities on a universally accessible system. (The Prime III Absentee System, <https://hxr.cise.ufl.edu/PrimeIII/Absentee/>) AVTI further advanced Prime III by redesigning the user interface and in improving usability and security. It also made Prime III accessible on tablet computers, adopting a first of its kind paper ballot scanning accuracy mechanism for

voters who are blind, and created a webbased portal, which provides universal access for all voters. In order to advance Prime III in elections and foster confidence with elected officials, pilots projects were conducted during elections in three states: Wisconsin, New Hampshire, and Oregon. Following this positive experience, New Hampshire has continued working with the Prime III team. Consequently, the state utilized this universal design voting solution in the spring 2016 presidential primary and will again in this fall's general election. In order to advance open source principles, the Prime III team invited voting manufacturers to utilize Prime III open source technology innovations. The companies are now incorporating Prime III's user interface into new voting systems. In addition, starting in September of 2015, the Prime III open source software was made available online for use across the elections' community. This step has the potential to provide further innovations and lower overall election machine costs.

National Voting Rights Card: The number of eligible voters with disabilities is rapidly growing with the aging of the U.S. population and advances in healthcare. With this ever-growing population come educational challenges that election officials must meet. In the 2012 Presidential election, nearly 30% of voters with disabilities who voted in a polling place reported having difficulties casting their ballot, compared to 8% of voters without disabilities. (Lisa Schur, Meera Adya, and Douglas Kruse, Disability, Voter Turnout, and Voting Difficulties in the 2012 Elections, report to the U.S. Election Assistance Commission, June 2013, at <http://smlr.rutgers.edu/research-centers/disability-and-voter-turnout>.) The EAC discussed this problem with advocacy organizations and voters with disabilities. One proposed solution was to offer voters with disabilities educational materials far in advance of Election Day. In order to remind voters of their rights, the EAC recently issued a National Voting Rights Card for voters with disabilities. The concise card provides voters with their voting rights, allowing them easy access to accessible voting. For example, the card reminds voters with disabilities about their right to cast a ballot privately and independently. It also tells voters of their right to accessible voting machines and polling places. In order to meet the necessity of reaching voters with

disabilities, the EAC created the Voting Rights card in one universally accessible pamphlet, which presents the information in Braille, large print, plain language, and QR code. To date, the EAC has distributed thousands of well-received cards and there are plans to reach thousands more voters with disabilities before the November elections. Voluntary Voting System Guidelines: Moving forward, EAC leads in creating the Voluntary Voting System Guidelines (VVSG), which is the set of testable standards by which all voting systems, are evaluated by EAC. The guidelines significantly increase overall requirements for voting systems and expand access, including opportunities to vote privately and independently, for individuals with disabilities. The next iteration of the VVSG contains expanded requirements covering security, reliability, quality, usability, accessibility, and testing. In order to listen to the voice of concerned citizens, EAC recently established a VVSG public working group focused on human factors and accessibility. This group will help in providing universal design for all future voting systems. (For further information, (EAC/NIST Human Factors and Accessibility Working Groups, <http://www.nist.gov/itl/vote/human-fact>).

Area of Coverage: improving voting for persons with disabilities, through grant funding for improved voting machines, providing resources materials and improved standards

Period of implementation: paper covers from 2006-today

Challenges: How can we continue to improve the voting process for Americans with Disabilities with less resources, and improved technology which needs additional funding? How can this be done while also improving the voting process for all?

Outcome: Through grants the EAC has funded new ways for persons who have disabilities to cast ballots privately and independently, provided voter cards with federal voting rights for persons with disabilities and continues to work on new standards for voting. ■

Submitted by U.S. Election Assistance Commission as a 'Best Practice' during International Conference on 'Voter Education for Inclusive, Informed & Ethical Participation', 19th -21st October, 2016, New Delhi, India

Drawing on Communities for Voter and Civic Education Programming



A diverse and active civil society is a vital component of democratic development, serving to hold governments accountable and expanding public discourse about rights and responsibilities. Historically civil society organizations (CSOs) were restricted with controls on their ability to register, their freedom to assemble and their freedom of speech. Many of these restrictions have been lifted or relaxed since Myanmar started on its Roadmap to Democracy in 2003, allowing Myanmar's civil society to develop into a large and vibrant community, representing a wide range of interests including youth, gender empowerment and ethnic minority rights. Their presence and activism played an important role in the success of the 2015 elections, which were widely credited as the most democratic elections in the country's history. CSOs were able to overcome the historic mistrust of the government and worked collaboratively in new leadership roles, ensuring that eligible voters in Myanmar knew the importance of their vote and how to vote in the elections.

To support this movement, implementers like the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES), an international nonprofit organization dedicated to ensuring all citizens have a voice in elections, worked to build civil society capacity, provided technical expertise and built bridges between CSOs and the Union Election Commission (UEC), the electoral management body in charge of facilitating the 2015 elections, to ensure voter education efforts represented CSO input and outreach was coordinated across all 36 million eligible voters. In addition, since the 2015 elections were the first openly competitive elections with over 92 political parties vying for seats in national and

state/regional parliaments, CSOs played an especially important role in empowering these communities with more comprehensive and impartial voter education, in contrast to limited and often partisan information disseminated to voters by political parties. Given the large need for voter education in this election, many CSOs targeted their efforts at first time voters, with emphasis on reaching two of Myanmar's biggest traditionally marginalized groups: youth and ethnic minorities.

Ethnic Minorities

Myanmar is home to approximately 135 different ethnicities with many different ethnic languages. CSOs including Helping Hands, Kadu Youth Development Association, Kachin CSO Network, Karen CSO Network and Ta'ang Women's Union worked to design interactive and participatory voter education programs focused on empowering ethnic voters. CSOs drew on their local networks to cascade training programs, deliver informational pamphlets door-to-door and host cultural



shows and polling station simulations in community spaces such as markets, health clinics or schools. Given Myanmar is home to one of the world's longest running conflict, CSOs also worked to adapt materials and training guides to their own local and cultural contexts, ensuring a conflict sensitive approach for areas involved in the ongoing peace process. As part of this effort, CSOs also worked in partnership with the UEC to translate official materials into relevant ethnic languages including three Chin languages (Teddin, Lai and Kue Me), two Karen languages (Poe and Sagaw Kayin) and one Shan language. As one participant said, "In the previous 2010 election, we only had to vote. We didn't know anything clearly like why we voted or what benefits we got. Now because of these educational sessions...we gained the confidence to vote."

Youth

Approximately 55% of Myanmar's population is under the age of 30, leaving the youth vote in Myanmar to represent a significant portion of first time voters in the 2015 elections.¹



One of the primary avenues to reach youth voters was through Facebook. Despite having some of the lowest levels of internet access in the world, Myanmar's Facebook usage has grown dramatically over the past few years and with an estimated 10 million Facebook users in Myanmar, 50% of users are under the age of 25.² CSOs designed voter education campaigns using Facebook as the primary tool to provide updated information and to motivate young first time voters. For example, Pandita developed a Vote for Myanmar Facebook campaign, which was widely shared and viewed in the lead up to the 2015 elections. One post on November 1st reached 348,555 people and received nearly 45,000 likes. Pandita used several strategies for their voter education Facebook campaign including posting UEC voter education videos, developing educational cartoons and carrying out a "Let's Vote" photo campaign where voters took photos with Let's Vote signs across the country and posted them to the Facebook page. CSOs like Magway Youth Regional Network and Mon Youth Progressive Organization also worked to reach youth that did not have access to the internet, providing targeted educational workshops and cascade training programs for rural communities.

Beyond the 2015 Elections: Civic Education

Despite widespread voter education efforts leading up to the 2015 elections, surveys following the elections indicated that many individuals continue to lack knowledge of Myanmar's democratic and electoral processes. As captured in IFES' post-election survey, significant gaps exist between men and women's civic participation, with 44% of men reporting they had participated in at least one civic activity compared to 22% of women. Despite public perception of problems in the way democracy is functioning in Myanmar (78% see minor or major problems), there is a high level of public belief (72%) that

¹The Economist Intelligence Unit "A Close Look at Myanmar's Demographic" <http://country.eiu.com/article.aspx?articleid=1983218582&Country=Myanmar&topic=Economy>

²<http://www.mmmtimes.com/index.php/business/technology/20816-facebook-racks-up-10m-myanmar-users.html>

³IFES National Election Survey Myanmar 2015-2016

democracy is the best form of government.³

These findings, in addition to feedback from CSO during the 2015 nationwide post-election review,

emphasized the need to build on the lessons learned from the 2015 voter education efforts to develop civic education

programing that encouraged active participation in Myanmar's evolving democracy and increased voters' knowledge about political processes. CSOs worked collaboratively to develop a core civic education curriculum called Naing Ngan Thar Kaung or Model Citizen. This is an interactive curriculum that provides information on democracy, elected representatives and how to be an active citizen. CSOs piloted this program in areas with low voter turnout for the 2015 elections and targeted at traditionally marginalized voters including women, youth and ethnic minorities. Participants indicated that not only did the program empower them to become engaged citizens, but they also felt encouraged to become future leaders in their country's democratic transition. As one participant from Magway Youth's event noted, "In this TOT training, I noticed many bright, remarkable youths from Magway



region who dedicate a lot for our country's development...I believe this Magway Youth network has planted many good seeds through this civic education TOT training."

Myanmar's young, diverse population represents a great resource for its ongoing democratic transition, especially

if they are aware of the important roles they can play as voters and citizens. CSOs will play an important role in this effort to ensure Myanmar's democratic transition is inclusive of all its citizens. Because of their efforts educating and mobilizing Myanmar's first time voters, youth and ethnic minorities will be better prepared to participate in the democratic process and hold their elected officials accountable. They will also increasingly be interested and prepared to take on leadership roles for their communities. ■



*Maura Scully
Program Officer, Myanmar, IFES*



Title: Advance Voting 2017

Description: The election legal framework includes specific provisions for people who cannot vote on Election Day. This cartoon from International IDEA explains Myanmar's advance voting system.

EMB/Organisation: International IDEA Myanmar

Country: Myanmar

<http://voicenet.in/vnAudioVideo.htm>



Initiatives focusing on youth of Bhutan

1. Democracy Club

The Election Commission of Bhutan (ECB) in collaboration with the principal stakeholders, including the development partners of Bhutan, has engaged in undertaking full-fledged civic & voter education programme to build and promote the idea in schools and other educational and training institutes throughout Bhutan, so that the students and youth are better able to understand their current and future roles and responsibilities as citizens through a "Democracy Club".

The ECB accords high priority to the youth of Bhutan and renders all necessary support in the successful implementation of the Democracy Club around the country. We are happy that the students are benefited from this learning opportunity.

2. Bhutan Children's Parliament

The Bhutan Children's Parliament (BCP) was established with the adoption of its Constitution as an opportunity for Bhutanese children to not only hone their leadership skills through hands on experiences but also be well informed and to voice their ideas, thoughts and feelings so that their concerns and opinions can be heard and included in the social and political landscape.

The Bhutan Children's Parliament has the full set of 67 Members representing the Democracy Clubs of the 47 National Assembly Demkhongs (Constituencies) and 20 National Council Demkhongs.

3. Volunteer-VOICE

Volunteers for Voter Information, Communication and Education (Volunteer-VOICE), a measure to fulfill the need for dissemination of intensive, rigorous and continuous information on democracy and elections to the general public, not only by the ECB but also by an interested Bhutanese Youth.

The ECB has successfully initiated and implemented the Volunteer-VOICE Programme in in Two Dzongkhags (District) with the youth of Bhutan.

4. Celebration of the National Voter's Days

The Election Commission of Bhutan celebrates the National Voters Day every year and the Celebration is done by the Democracy Clubs members in their respective areas. This is the one programme where the youth are involved.

The theme for the 2015 National Voters' Day was "Youth in Democracy", albeit the fact that more than half the population of Bhutan comprises of youth; the voter turnout of youth has been found to be low.

5. Facilitating youth to get Voter Photo Identity Card (VPIC)

It is crucial that the general mass, of whom the youth is a significant part, should be facilitated as a part of celebration by distributing the Voter Photo Identity Card (VPIC) for youth who will attain the eligible voting age.

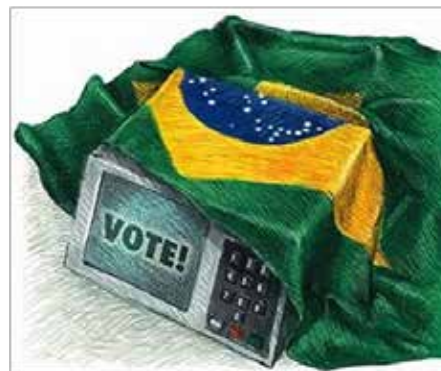
6. Communication Strategy

The ECB has developed Communication Strategy where Facebook page has been created. The Facebook is the most popular social media platform in Bhutan and it has the maximum penetration in the country, which makes the best communication network. It has facilitated two ways communication in contrast to other medium and this forum has become the information source for the end user who are mostly the Democracy Club members and Members of BCP as of now and we are expecting others youth to join the group in our next phase which will be started very soon.

These are the few activities initiated besides the regular voter education programme conducted during the election period to encourage Bhutanese youth's participation in the electoral process. Through these activities, we take care of the many issues related to the youth participation in electoral process and their mindset. ■



Seminar on Political and Electoral Reform in Brazil



On March 23 and 24, 2017, the Superior Electoral Tribunal (TSE) hosted the Seminar on Political and Electoral Reform in Brazil. Topics were discussed that are part of the proposals in progress in the National Congress. The event, promoted jointly by the Electoral Judicial School of the Superior Electoral Court (EJE / TSE) and the Brazilian Academy of Electoral and Political Law (Abradep), was divided into panels with three or four panelists and one rapporteur.



More information at: <http://acontse.tse.jus.br/destaques/2017/marco/financiamento-e-participacao-feminina-sao-debatidos-no-primeiro-dia-do-seminario-reforma-politica>



Workshop to Evaluate Rules Applied to the **2016 Elections**



On November 24 and 25, 2016, the Superior Electoral Court (TSE) held the workshop Evaluation of the Rules Applied to Municipal Elections 2016. The president of the Court, Minister Gilmar Mendes, opened the event.

The changes in the rules of this year's lawsuit brought by Law nº 13,165, known as the Electoral Reform 2015, were introduced, which introduced important changes in Laws nº 9504/1997 (Law on Elections), nº 9.096/1995 (Law on Political Parties) and nº 4.737/1965 (Electoral Code).

In addition to modifying deadlines for party conventions, partisan membership and election campaign time, the reform has brought new

developments related to spending limits in candidate and political party campaigns, as well as the ban on election funding by legal entities.

Five working groups consisting of ministers, judges, prosecutors, lawyers, parliamentarians, consultants, civil servants and electoral authorities dealt separately with the following topics: candidature registration, campaign financing, electoral propaganda, electoral systems and women's participation, as well as subtopics Several.

More information at: <http://acontse.tse.jus.br/destaques/2016/novembro/tse-promovera-workshop-para-avaliar-regras-aplicadas-as-eleicoes-2016>. ■



Superior Electoral Court
The Court of Democracy

International Seminar on 'Strategies for Empowering Young and Future Voters'



International Seminar on 'Strategies for Empowering Young and Future Voters', New Delhi, India, 24th January 2017

International Seminar on 'Strategies for Empowering Young and Future Voters' was organized by the Election Commission of India on 24th January, 2017

in collaboration with UNDP as a part of the National Voters' Day celebrations. The Chief Election Commissioner of India graced the occasion as the Chief Guest with august participation by Election Commissioners of India, the Heads of Election Management Bodies, Commissioners and members from different EMBs of the world, heads of International Organizations related to elections and their representatives, senior functionaries of VoICE.NET besides the other senior officials of the Election Commission of India. The Participating EMBs and the international organizations presented papers on the theme of the seminar.

The seminar was marked by signing of MOUs of cooperation with the EMBs of Australia, Bosnia Herzegovina, Fiji and Nepal besides Inaugural Launch of the VoICE International, the quarterly e Magazine on VoICE.NET platform.

Session I witnessed presentations by H.E. Mr Tom Rogers, Electoral Commissioner of Australia; Mr. Yong Hi Kim, Secretary General,

Association of World Election Bodies; Mr. Dawa Tenzin, Secretary, Election Commission of Bhutan and Dr Suad Arnautovic, Member BiH Central Election Commission, Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Session II included speakers like H E Mr. Mohammad Saneem, Supervisor of Elections, Fijian Elections Office; Mr. Umesh Sinha, Deputy Election Commissioner, Election Commission of India and Mr. William Sweeney, President and CEO, International Foundation of Electoral Systems.

This was followed by session III with presentation by Ms. Shana Kaiser, Program Manager, International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance; H.E. Mrs. Samar Haj Hasan, Commissioners, Independent Election Commission of Jordan; H.E. Mr. Ahmed Sulaiman, Chairman, Election Commission of Maldives and Mr. Karamjit Singh, Trustee, Malaysian Commonwealth Studies Centre.

EVENTS

Election Commission of India



Inaugural Session

Session IV was enriched with presentations by H.E. Mr. Ayodhee Prasad Yadav, Chief Election Commissioner of Nepal; H.E. Mr. Mahinda Deshapriya, Chairman, Election Commission of Sri Lanka and H.E. Mr. Mohammed Chafik Sarsar, President, High Independent Election Authority of Tunisia.

In the closing session, Dr Nasim Zaidi, Hon'ble Chief Election Commissioner of India released the inaugural issue of the quarterly magazine 'VoICE International' in august presence of the participating dignitaries on the VoICE.NET platform.



The Team...



“India is young as per demographics with 120 million young. 20 million young attain the eligibility age of 18 annually. 62 million persons are in the age of 15-17 years as future voters. ECI needs to focus on these two segments.”

Dr Nasim Zaidi, Chief Election Commissioner of India



“Role of the ECI has gradually evolved from a regulator to an enabler and a facilitator.”

Mr A K Joti, Hon'ble Election Commissioner of India

“Challenges of participation by young voters need to be taken note of. Lack of technical skills, motivation, awareness, structural constraints, cultural process result in barriers to participation. Empowering at young age through socio- political engagement is necessary.”

Mr O P Rawat, Hon'ble Election Commissioner of India



“The seminar has additional significance as this happens to be the first event on the VoICE.NET followed by launching of the Inaugural Issue of the quarterly magazine VoICE International at VoICE.NET portal.”

Mr. Umesh Sinha, Deputy Election Commissioner, ECI

“There are 1.8 billion young and future voters in the world. Democratization process for the young and future voters is necessary around the world. India, with a vast population in this age group, has connected with them through social media and the internet.”

Ms. Marina Walter, UNDP



National Voters' Day 2017

The theme for the 7th National Voters' Day, celebrated on the 25th January 2017, was '**Empowering Young and Future Voters.**' The national function was held at Zorawar Auditorium, Manekshaw Centre at Delhi Cantonment. Honourable President of India, Mr Pranab Mukherjee, was the Chief Guest.



The Coffee Table Book '**Unfolding Indian Elections-Journey of the living democracy**' was unveiled at NVD and the first copy was presented to the President by Chief Election Commissioner of India, Dr. Nasim Zaidi. The book traces the journey of evolution of election process from the pre independence era to the present.



National Voters' Day (NVD) 2017 celebration: (left to right) O.P. Rawat, Election Commissioner, Dr. Nasim Zaidi, Chief Election Commissioner of India, the Hon'ble President of India, Sh. Pranab Mukherjee, A.K. Joti, Election Commissioner & Umesh Sinha, Deputy Election Commissioner

An All India Drawing Competition was organised across the country among 15-17 years old school students on the topic 'Every Vote Counts' in the run up to the 7th NVD. The winning entries from the States were displayed at the venue. The best among these entries were declared as National Winners. The President appreciated the creative artwork of the prize winning entries from all the states of India and gave away the prizes to the national winners.

National Awards were presented for excellence in various aspects of conduct of elections i.e. electoral roll management, security management, IT initiatives, voter education and electoral participation and innovation. Awards were also given away to partner departments, CSO and Media for their contribution to election management. The awards were given away by the President. EPIC card was given to the five newly registered voters.



All India Drawing Competition Winners

The President, in his address, congratulated the Election Commission of India for achieving high standards in the conduct of election which are world renowned. He also expressed his happiness on the fact that the Election Commission in India has been able to inculcate in the youth, the motivation to vote, and exhorted the Commission to maintain its standards of non-partisanship.

Election management Bodies from 11 countries besides representatives of various international organisations, Political Parties, former Chief Election Commissioners of India and officials from Embassies and Government organisations attended the function. ■

The National Voters' Day is celebrated every year to mark the foundation day of the Election Commission of India, which was established on 25th January, 1950. The purpose of celebrating this day is to increase enrolment of voters, especially young voters. The day is also utilized to spread awareness among voters regarding effective participation in the electoral process.

Shri Pranab Mukherjee, Hon'ble President of India gives away prizes to winners & EPICs to new voters



Prize winning entries from All India Drawing Competition organized by Election Commission of India at National Voters' Day, 2017





International Women's Day celebrated by **Empowering Women** with voter registrations & EPICs in Maharashtra

Over 60,000 women were enrolled and almost 33,000 Elector Photo Identity Cards (EPICs) were distributed on Women's Day in Maharashtra. International Women's Day is celebrated all over the world on 8th March every year. This year Ashwani Kumar, Chief Electoral Officer, Maharashtra, planned to celebrate Women's Day 2017 in line with National Voters' Day (NVD).

For a wider reach, other stakeholders who work for women's welfare were involved to celebrate this day. Accordingly, several meetings were held with Women & Child Welfare Department, Public Health Department, Education Department, Rural Development Department, ASHA Workers, Aanganwadi Sevikas and NGOs/ CSOs.

The concept as also the motive was explained to them in these meetings. As these welfare departments celebrate Women's Day through different programmes at their level separately, it was, therefore, decided not to have another separate function by Election Office but instead, to participate in these programmes organised by various women's welfare departments and organizations.

Accordingly, the CEO office coordinated with all these departments to include Electoral Literacy



in their celebration. At every such district and tehsil level programs, all facilities like providing 6, 7, 8, 8A forms and guidance from BLOs regarding enrolment were made available to encourage enrolment. Publicity material was prepared by CEO office and published/ broadcast in all forms of media including the social media from the DEO, ERO and even at BLO level.

"Special efforts to reach out to women was taken up 10 days prior to 8th March, so as to prepare EPICs to be distributed to female electors on Women's day similar to NVD. Although this effort was happening for the first time in Maharashtra, the outcome was very encouraging with 60,000 women enrolled and almost 33,000 EPICs being distributed on Women's Day," informed Shirish Mohod, Deputy Chief Electoral Officer and Maharashtra State SVEEP Nodal Officer.

Inspired by this success, it is now decided to celebrate Women's Day, by empowering women through their voter registration and EPICs, every year with more enthusiasm. ■



Maharashtra celebrates Third Gender Day

Inspired by the success of International Women's Day which was celebrated on 8th March, 2017 to create awareness among women, Ashwani Kumar, Chief Electoral Officer, Maharashtra, decided to celebrate 'Third Gender Day' to create awareness among this marginalized community about their electoral rights on 15th April. Since the landmark judgment on recognition to third genders was delivered on 15th April, 2014 by Supreme Court of India, it has become a historical day for the Third Genders (TGs).

In view of this, a meeting with prominent TGs and NGOs like 'Astitva', 'Astha' and 'V-Can' was called on 15th April at CEO office. Eminent personalities like Smt. Laxmi Thipathy, Smt Gauri Sawant, Smt Urmi Jhadvav and other TGs attended the meeting. Smt Indrani Malkani and Smt Seema Sayeed represented their NGOs along with their TGs. In this meeting various socio-economic issues related to the enrolment process were discussed. It was concluded that lack of awareness and lack of documents are the prime cause of TGs not enrolling in big numbers and thus the measures to address them were discussed at length.

Finally, it was decided to hold a Special campaign of one week for their community all over Maharashtra. All NGOs were partnered in this campaign to create awareness and encourage TGs to enrol in the ER. Moreover,

State to observe third gender day

Mumbai | Sonu Shrivastava

The Maharashtra would be the first state to observe 'Third Gender Day' on April 15. After almost three years of the Supreme Court judgement, the Election Commission of India's (ECI) State Branch will mark the day to create awareness among the transgender. There will be a meeting with third gender leader and NGOs which are working for their welfare in Mantralaya on Saturday. The commission wants that more transgenders should come out and register themselves as third gender in large numbers. The observing day will not only create awareness but also build the confidence among them.

The Supreme Court in its landmark judgement on April 15, 2014 had given the "third gender" status for hijras or transgenders. Earlier, they were forced to write male or female against their gender. After the judgment, the transgenders are being incorporated in the electoral roll as third gender across India including Maharashtra. The transgenders are most vulnera-



ble section of society in country. They have to strive hard to get any benefits from government schemes as they don't have any proof. Since the Apex Court had ordered all the states and center that they would devise social welfare schemes for third gender community and run a public awareness campaign to erase social stigma, the ECI's state branch is observing the

'Third Gender Day'. The state branch has prepared a two-and-a-half-minute film and poster for the awareness.

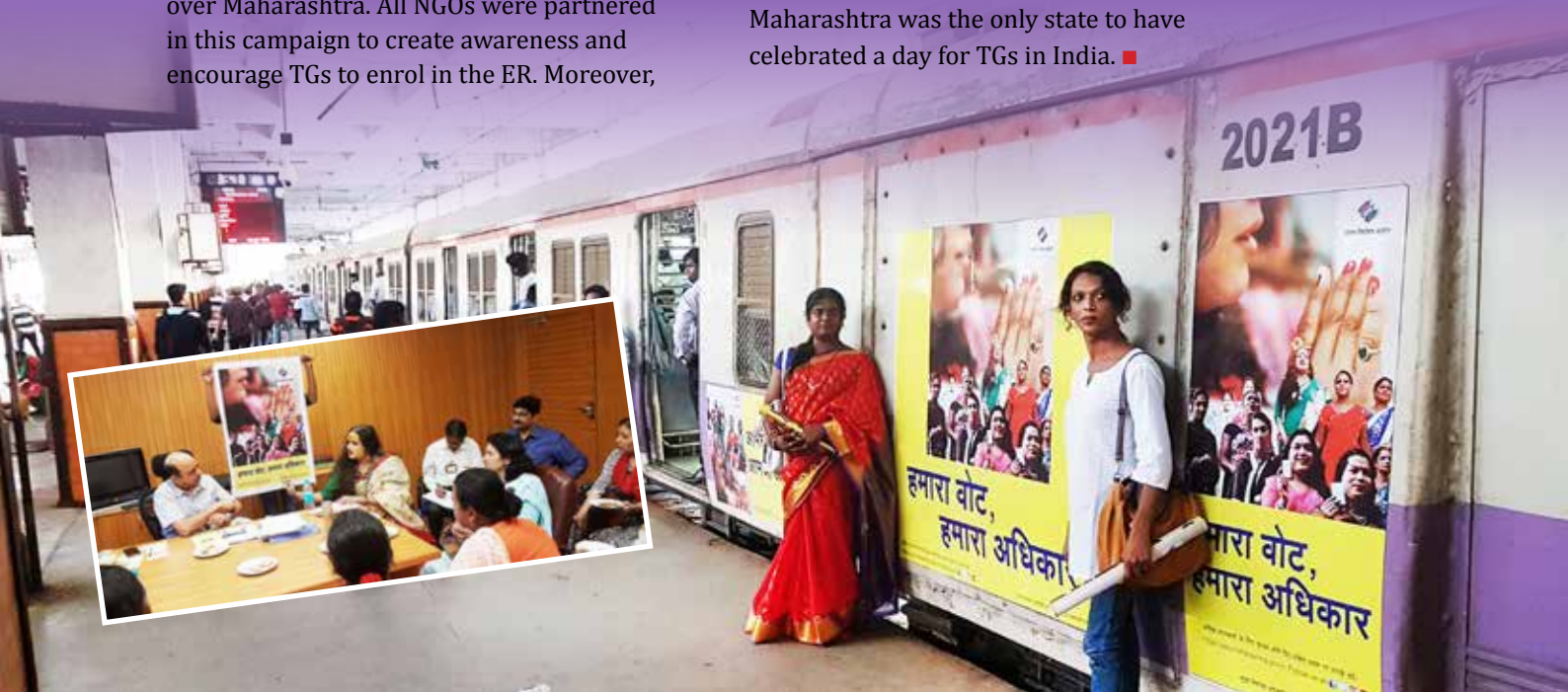
Speaking with Absolute India, deputy chief electoral officer of state branch, Shirish Mohod said, "As the large numbers of transgenders are living in the MMR region and travel by the local train, we have pasted a poster on two local trains. Besides, a film will also be telecast in the 400 theaters of the MMR region as most of them go to theaters for entertainment." Mohod said that the main purpose of the observing third gender day is to create awareness and encourage participation of them in electoral process.

The numbers of the transgenders are not available in census of 2011 as they have registered themselves either male or female categories; the election commission is facing the challenge to determine the exact number of them. Till now, 1700 transgenders have been incorporated in the electoral list as third gender. He also urged, "Transgender should come out and enroll themselves as well as exercise the franchise which they have earned after long battle."

a publicity campaign was chalked out for the forthcoming week (14th April to 21st April 2017).

As the main transportation used by third genders in Mumbai is local trains, therefore, they were used for spreading awareness on elections. Shirish Mohod, Deputy Chief Electoral Officer and Maharashtra State SVEEP Nodal Officer informed that posters with messages on electoral awareness for TGs were pasted on exterior frame of these local trains which run through Mumbai and Thane. "These posters are eye-catching and informative. Similarly watching movies being the most popular media for entertainment for TGs, a Television Commercial was played in over 100 cinemas all over Mumbai," he added.

Maharashtra was the only state to have celebrated a day for TGs in India. ■



Elections Manitoba: Engaging **young voters** in 2016 Provincial Elections

A presentation on 'Engaging young voters in 2016 Provincial Elections' by Elections Manitoba was given by Ms. Shipra Verma, CEO, Manitoba, Canada at Election Commission of India

(ECI) on 1st March 2017. Dr. Nasim Zaidi, Chief Election Commissioner, Election Commission of India; Mr. Umesh Sinha and Mr. Sandeep Saxena, Deputy Election Commissioners of India and numerous other senior officials from Election Commission of India attended the presentation.

She started with the legislative framework that gives Elections Manitoba its mandate to conduct voter engagement initiatives followed by survey findings about Manitoban's political engagement. Finally, she gave a brief overview of some of the key youth voter engagement programs that have been developed in Manitoba.

She explained that Elections Manitoba is the independent non-partisan agency of the Legislative Assembly responsible for conducting all provincial general elections and by-elections. "Under Manitoba's Elections Act, we are mandated to provide information to the public, and specifically to develop



programs that make the electoral process more accessible to those who ***experience difficulties in exercising their democratic rights,***" she informed.

People give many different reasons for not voting, but in the survey reports can they can be divided into three broad categories:

- **Distracted:** had no time, had to work, out of town, sick, forgot, etc.
- **Disassociated:** didn't trust candidates, not interested, didn't know who to vote for, felt vote wouldn't matter,
- **Displaced:** Those who said they weren't on voters list, not enumerated, couldn't vote, had no ID

However, despite all these different reasons given for not voting, there has always been strong support for the role of Elections Manitoba in encouraging people to vote. It was seen that, off the non-voters, 45% strongly support our engagement work, and 81%

at least somewhat support it. As expected, the number increases among voters, with 68% strongly supporting it and 93% at least somewhat supporting it.

Elections Manitoba has been able to achieve that by involving teachers and schools for over 25 years by offering support materials and in-class workshops. 'Your Power to Choose' was developed in 2006 in partnership with educators in the province. The program links directly with the grades 6, 9 and 11 social studies curriculum. Content connects with:

- Decision-making
- Critical thinking
- Values of citizenship

Education guides are available for teachers. They are activity-based and include materials for all the activities in the guide. Lessons in the guide involve many aspects of learning such as listening, reading, researching, role-playing and group activities.

As part of 'Your Power to Choose', in-class workshops are arranged throughout the province. They are available in English or French, for grades 4 and above as also for adult learners. The workshops are designed to be fun and interactive for students. The workshop includes a mini election campaign, where students take on the roles of candidate

and the campaign team. They're given a budget and asked to campaign on the basis of how they would spend that money within their schools. The candidates make posters and give speeches to promote their platform. The mock election follows, with students taking on the roles of election workers. "During the current school year, we gave 282 workshops to 6,240 participants. In the month of the election alone, we gave 87 workshops to about 2,000 participants," explained Ms. Verma.

CitizenNext was introduced for the 2011 election and then again for 2016. The project arose out of two key survey findings:

- Voters were more likely than non-voters to have grown up in homes where politics and current events were discussed.
- Non-voters were more likely to have children under 18 years of age in their households.

The goals are as follows:

- Provide experience of the electoral process to grade 11 and 12 students
- Create awareness among first time and future voters
- Build a foundation to recruit students as future election workers
- Develop familiarity and comfort with environment

Your Power to Choose: Workshops



"The presenter's energy and enthusiasm helped students connect with the learning and understanding of the electoral process. I couldn't ask for a better learning experience."
- Teacher comment

ElectionsManitoba X

Student Information Officers (SIOs)

Overview:

- Recruit high school students to work as information officers on election day

Goals:

- Provide election experience
- Create awareness
- Future election worker recruitment
- Develop familiarity with election environment



ElectionsManitoba X



- SIO promoted primarily through high school principals, coordinated through the HQ but assisted by Returning Officers.

Elections Manitoba promoted the program and recruited the students in the following manner:

- First, contacting principals of all high schools in province
- Providing them with job descriptions and application forms
- Returning Officers supported recruitment in their contact with schools
- Follow up with principals by email and phone

“We had different responses from different school: Some principals didn’t assist because they didn’t want their students missing school. Some may not have even read the information. Others were more enthusiastic and encouraged many students to participate”, Ms.Verma elaborated.

Social media accounts were developed for the first time during the 2011 general elections. and the activity increased manifold in 2016 as they graduated from one-way communication to two-way communication. Moreover, with an aim to complement social

media campaign targeting younger voters, ‘selfie stations’, at all voting places, were created. These encouraged people to share their voting experience and encourage friends and families to vote.

A mobile application was introduced in 2016 which was available for iPhone/ iPad, android and blackberry. It allowed users to find advance locations closest to them in real time (in Manitoba one can vote at any advance location).

She outlined the **challenges** as follows:

- No permanent voters list means no track demographics of the voters.
- Results of these campaigns are difficult to measure, as they are more long-term results and not easy to correlate with voter turnout
- Elementary/ middle school/ high school students may be interested in participating in these programs, but when it comes to voting and being consistent voters, it’s hard to maintain the engagement.
- Aboriginal youth, those not in school, disadvantaged youth are more difficult to reach. ■



Electoral Education Institute (EEI)

EEI Establishment and Opening

EEI is one of the Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC) divisions. It was established according to the Board of Commissioners' decision No. (2), minutes No. (30), issued on 13/3/2013 to be in charge of disseminating electoral knowledge among the electoral process' stakeholders, raise their awareness to know their electoral duties and rights guaranteed by constitution and regulated by legislations. EEI was officially inaugurated on 17/11/2014 with an official ceremony attended by a number of electoral officials and experts to whom EEI strategic plan was reviewed.

The Vision: Disseminate electoral knowledge among electoral process partners to achieve sustainable democratic development.

The Mission: Disseminate electoral knowledge among electoral process partners adopting many strategies in the fields of trainings, conferences, panel discussions, researches and studies, according to international standards and curriculums to achieve the goals and participate in building sustainable democracy.



- Political Entities' Training program
- International observation program, according to international standards
- Electoral reporter preparation program
- Electoral administrations and systems types program
- Electoral researcher preparation program
- Electoral knowledge program
- Development workshops to build the capacities of IHEC and EEI staffs

Second topic: Panel Discussions

EEI held many panel discussions in Baghdad and other Governorates attended by officials, experts and university professors concerned with democracy and elections. These sessions aimed at diagnosing obstacles and challenges facing the electoral process such as elections' laws, political parties' law and the importance of biometric registration. (6) Sessions were held, attended by (136) participants.

Third topic: EEI issues

Researches were written by the researches and studies' unit tackling important subjects in the fields of electoral administrations and systems, political parties' law, electoral disputes, international observation and other researches.

EEI achievements in 2015-2016

First Topic: Training workshops

EEI implemented many training workshops in many fields such as communications with electoral process partners through programs, projects and training workshops targeting stakeholders in addition to other workshops targeting IHEC staffs. The total number of workshops implemented in 2015 and 2016 was (40) that targeted (766) participants tackling the following programs:

Fourth topic: Electoral Library

EEL paper and electronic library includes more than (1500) books, thesis and publications covering different electoral, legal, political, social and historical fields in addition to literature studies. The library also includes the technical comprehensive IHEC reports covering electoral processes that could support specialists and researchers concerned with elections.

Fifth topic: 2017 plans

EEL plans for 2017 included designing new projects targeting electoral process stakeholders aiming at disseminating electoral knowledge as follows:

- Political entities training project (40 workshops)
- Preparing electoral observer project (8 workshops)
- Scientific efficiencies' project (4 workshops)
- Preparing electoral reporter (8 workshops)
- Panel discussions (4 sessions)
- Researches and studies (4)
- **Training workshops:**

Three training workshops were implemented as follows:

Topic	Target group	Date	Duration	No. of participants
Electoral Knowledge	University academics	1/3/2017	2 days	17
Political Parties Training	Political parties' representatives	6/2/2017	2 days	20
Political Parties Training	Political parties' representatives	13/3/2017	2 days	20
Total number of participants				57

EEL in Social Media

In order to communicate with electoral process stakeholders and to disseminate electoral knowledge and democratic practice, EEL face-book page started opening new windows to build wider knowledge and strengthen active participation in elections. These windows are as follows:

1. "Terms and Definitions" to shed light on electoral terms and definitions.
2. "From the Library of EEL" to review one of the electoral and democracy books and present scanned samples"

EEL achievements in 2017

During the first three months in 2017, EEL implemented a number of activities under the following topics:

• Conferences:

EEL held the regional conference for "Electoral System in Iraq, a Reform Vision" on 25/1/2017. The conference discussed the suggested visions in relation to the type of ideal electoral system in Iraq. The conference was attended by more than 50 participants including members of Parliamentary legal committee, Government Spokesperson, representatives of Iraqi NGOs and some university academics.

• Panel discussions:

In cooperation with "Baitul Hikma" House of Wisdom in the Ministry of Culture, EEL organized on 22/2/2017 a discussion panel entitled: "Political Parties in Iraq...opportunities and challenges". The session discussed the means implementing political parties' law and the challenges of implementation. There were recommendations to reform some articles in the law.

3. "Electoral Events" to display electoral events around the world with simple explanation for the electoral system in each country.
4. "Electoral information" to explain some electoral information.
5. "Elections' Numbers" giving information about each Iraqi governorate, number of voters, number of seats in addition to some historical information about each governorate. ■





2017 Executive Board Meeting & General Assembly Association of Asian Election Authorities

The 2017 Executive Board meeting and the General Assembly of the AAEA was held on 20th March, 2017 in Manila, Philippines. Dr. Nasim Zaidi, Chief Election Commissioner Election Commission of India and Chairperson, AAEA presided over the EB Meeting and the GA. Chairpersons, members & senior representatives from twenty EMBs of the AAEA participated in the deliberations of the EB and the GA. The Executive Board meets annually to discuss important issues and reports to the General Assembly of the Association, which meets every two years.

It was decided to amend the AAEA Charter to increase the number of members of the Executive Board from five to seven, including the Chair and the Vice-Chair, in order to have a better and geographically balanced representation of the twenty member EMBs of the AAEA.

The Executive Board also approved the proposal of the Association of the World Election Bodies (A-WEB) that the AAEA become an Associate Member of the A-WEB. A-WEB (www.aweb.org) is considered the largest organisation in the field of electoral

management. It has 106 member organisations and is a partner with various organisations including United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA), and International Foundation for



Association's vision is to promote and institutionalize open and transparent elections, independent and impartial election authorities, professionalization of Asian election authorities, citizen participation in the electoral and civic process, information sharing, and the development of resources for election-related information and research. Mr. Umesh Sinha, Deputy Election Commissioner and Executive Secretary, AAEA presented the Secretariat Report and Financial Report for 2015-16 before the Executive Board as well as the General Assembly.

Electoral Systems (IFES) etc. By becoming an Associate Member of A-WEB, AAEA would gain access to a global platform for mutual communication and sharing of expertise and best practices, thus nurturing and fortifying electoral integrity in respective countries.

Philippines was elected as Chair of the AAEA with a new Executive Board, comprising Russia as Vice-Chair and India (as Past Chair), Indonesia, Kazakhstan, Pakistan and Taiwan as Executive Board members for 2017-19. After the General Assembly, presentations on

'Gender Mainstreaming and Social Inclusion in Elections' were given by EMBs from India, Philippines, Nepal, Taiwan, Cambodia, Maldives, Mongolia, Russia and Sri Lanka with the purpose of sharing the experience among member EMBs. ■



NEWLY ELECTED AAEA EXECUTIVE BOARD 2017-19

AAEA Executive Board (March 2017 - March 2019)

Chair	–	Philippines
Vice Chair	–	Russia

Executive Members

■ India (Past Chair)	■ Kazakhstan
■ Indonesia	■ Pakistan
	■ Taiwan

List of 20 member EMBs with sub-Regional Representation

South Asia

- India
- Nepal
- Maldives
- Bangladesh
- Bhutan
- Sri Lanka
- Afghanistan
- Pakistan

Central Asia

- Kazakhstan
- Mongolia
- Kyrgyz Republic
- Russia
- Tajikistan
- Uzbekistan

South East Asia / Asia-Pacific

- Korea
- Philippines
- Taiwan, R.O.C
- Indonesia
- Cambodia
- Papua New Guinea



BEST PRACTICES ON "GENDER MAINSTREAMING AND SOCIAL INCLUSIVENESS IN ELECTIONS"

PHILIPPINES' COMMISSION ON ELECTIONS

Ma. Rowena Amelia V. Guanzon
Commissioner
Head, Executive Committee
Gender and Development Focal Point System

1

In with the new, improve the old



2

In with the new, improve the old (external)



3

In with the new, improve the old



4

In with the new, improve the old



5

In with the new, improve the old



6

In with the new, improve the old (internal)



7

Institutionalizing the Change in Culture

- An Election Management Body that is independent; voter-centered and competent; and conducting free, orderly, honest, peaceful, credible, **gender-sensitive** and social inclusive elections, in active partnership with election stakeholders



► The Commission en Banc.

8



GENDER MAINSTREAMING AND SOCIAL INCLUSIVENESS IN ELECTIONS

AAEA GENERAL ASSEMBLY AND
EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING, MANILA
PHILIPPINES



ELECTIONS COMMISSION OF
MALDIVES

1



STRATEGIC PLAN 2016-2020

- ECM has adopted a more proactive role in promoting the political participation of women in the recent years.
- Our Strategic Plan 2016-2020 was launched last year 2016 with a pillar exclusive for gender mainstreaming. And this year our section work plans are being aligned with the plan.

2



STRATEGY 1:

- Track institutional progress towards gender targets and collate gender-disaggregated data for all electoral activities

• Election Staff	- 62%
• Election Officials	- 63.53%*
• Observers	- 22.6%*
• Monitors	- 17.89%*
• Voter turnout	- 63.53%*
• Candidates contested	- 12.23%*
• Elected members	- 21.37%

**Date derived from Local Councils Election 2014
For the island councils*

3



STRATEGY 2:

- Performance Gap of workforce in Elections Commission.

- Performance appraisal
- Reviewed in mid-year
- Appraisal results disaggregated gender vice
- Gaps identified
- Strategies to be development to tackle vulnerable areas.

4



STRATEGY 3:

- Developing and adopting a Gender Policy.
Under which we have:

- Had Meetings with NGOs at regular intervals
- Brainstorming sessions
- Tabulated feedbacks and recommendations of the NGOs
- Drafted the policy in collaboration with NGOs

5



STRATEGY 4:

- Consultations held with Political Parties to agree on the most effective measures to increase women's political participation in Maldivian context

- Meeting with political parties at regular intervals and holding brainstorming sessions
- Encouraged parties to nominate women to represent the parties at policy level
- Encouraged parties to nominate women for positions within the parties

6

**STRATEGY 5:**

- Allocated a dedicated ECM Gender Focal Point
 - To advance women's participation in all the ECM's internal and external operations
 - To be the voice of gender in determining fair treatment.
 - To Review the performance gaps
 - To Determine the gender equality when electing members for ECM committees

7

**STRATEGY 6:**

- Developed internal recruitment guidelines and targets to ensure gender equality
 - Allocated formal role for the Gender Focal Point in ECM recruitment processes
 - Gender Focal point is an HR Panel Member and now the HR section Head as well. This helps ECM to keep focus with the gender issues head on

8

**STRATEGY 7:**

- Conduct gender sensitive training for ECM Staff and to public
 - BRIDGE training module on gender to be conducted
 - Civic education training module on gender to be incorporated
 - Gender module to be included in the induction training

9

**STRATEGY 8 and 9:**

- To conduct a study of best practices on methods to increase women's representation in elected bodies and examine how the respective options would play out in Maldivian context
- To advocate for gender balance measures to be included as part of the electoral legislative reform process with regard to temporary legal quotas / "special measures" requiring political parties to nominate a set percentage of women candidates

10

**STRATEGY 10:**

- EC regulation calling for gender balance in domestic election observation teams
 - Consultation held with NGOs and CSO participating as observers, to underline importance of gender balanced observations teams
 - All domestic election observation missions are gender balanced.

11

**OUTCOME:**

- Electoral processes and policies that pro-actively promote the participation of women in the electoral process and with an increased gender balance at all levels of the EC
- Increased political participation of women, both at the local and national level, as voters, observers, election staff, candidates and elected representatives
- Gender perspective incorporated throughout electoral cycle

12

**STRATEGY 11:**

- Raise awareness among voters on the importance of gender equality in decision-making processes
 - Launch media campaign to combat stereotypes and inform electorate on importance of women's political participation
 - Consultation with media to develop campaign plan and content
 - Campaign conducted across via radio, TV, print media, social media
 - Celebrity champions

13

Gender Mainstreaming & Social Inclusiveness in Taiwan's Elections

Dr. Mei-Li Kao
Director General
Central Election Commission
Taiwan, R.O.C.

March 20, 2017



Central Election Commission, Taiwan, R.O.C.

Gender in Elections: Seats Reserved for female

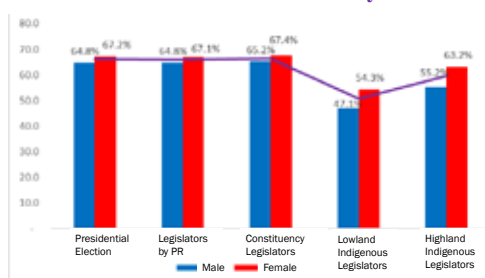


Legislators at large: Half of seats shall be female.
Local councilors: Out of every four elected officials in each electoral district, at least one must be female.



Central Election Commission, Taiwan, R.O.C.

2016 Elections – Voters turnout by Gender



Central Election Commission, Taiwan, R.O.C.

First Female President in Taiwan



President Tsai Ing-wen

The New York Times : "Presidential Race in Taiwan Reflects Women's Rise in Politics"

BBC : "Taiwan, the place to be a woman in politics"

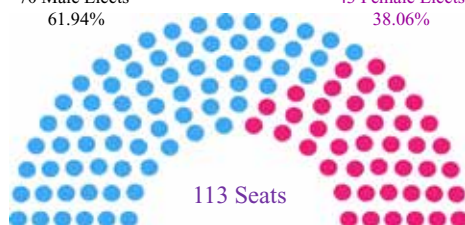


Central Election Commission, Taiwan, R.O.C.⁴

Female Share Seats 2016 Legislators Election

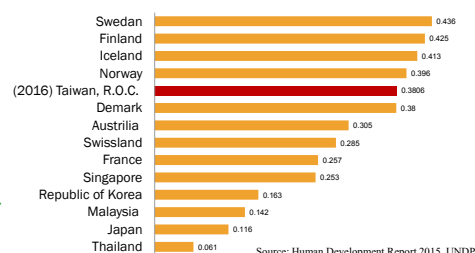
70 Male Elects
61.94%

43 Female Elects
38.06%



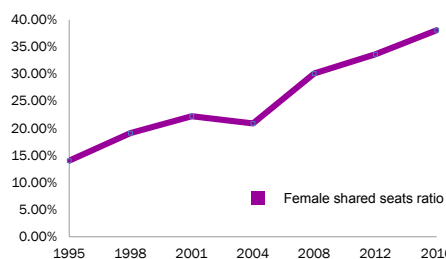
Central Election Commission, Taiwan, R.O.C.

Female Share Seats in Parliament, 2015 Gender Inequality Index, UNDP



Central Election Commission, Taiwan, R.O.C.

1995 - 2016 Legislator Elections



Central Election Commission, Taiwan, R.O.C.

Voting Guide Booths

International Migration Day Fairs, 2016



Central Election Commission, Taiwan, R.O.C.

VoICE International

VoICE international, a VoICE.NET e-publication, was released by Dr Nasim Zaidi, the Chief Election Commissioner of India at the International Seminar on 'Strategies on Empowering Young and Future Voters' held on 24th January, 2017 at New Delhi, India.

This quarterly global magazine on Voter Information, education and participation was launched on VoICE.NET platform as a part of the National Voters' Day celebration. The theme of the inaugural issue of VoICE International was akin to the seminar 'Empowering Young and Future Voters'.

VoICE.NET (Voter Information, Communication and Education Network) is a global knowledge network on voter education with twenty three members which includes Election Management Bodies (EMBs) and other international institutes such as International IDEA, UNDP and IFES. VoICE.NET emanated from the collective resolve of participating EMBs, international institutions and experts in the form of the Delhi Declaration, the two laudable achievements of the October 2016 International Conference on 'Voter Education for Inclusive, Informed and Ethical Participation' held at New Delhi.



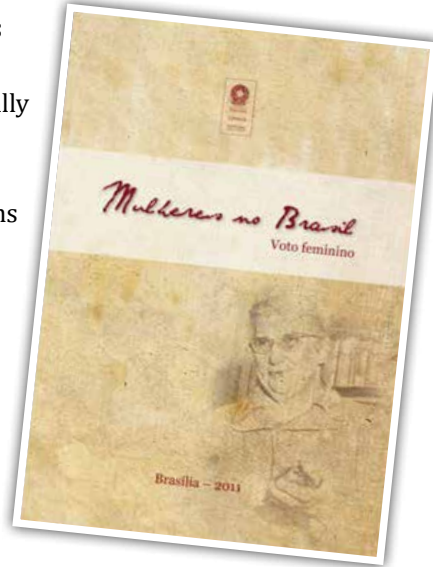


WOMEN IN BRAZIL – FEMALE VOTE

A genuinely Brazilian equipment, the electronic ballot box was created to add ease, agility, transparency and security to the electoral process, eliminating the risk of fraud, which historically placed the results of the elections under suspicion.

Both the hardware of the ballot boxes and the various programs that integrate the electronic voting system were designed and built under the guidance of the Superior Electoral Court.

In addition to telling the story of the process of computerizing the vote in Brazil, the booklet aims to clarify the main doubts of the voters regarding the moment of voting and to present the various procedures performed to ensure the security of the elections, including the tests and the Audits made in the system.



Access the book at: http://www.tse.jus.br/hotsites/catalogo-publicacoes/pdf/57_porDentroDaUrna1.2.pdf

INSIDE THE BALLOT



A genuinely Brazilian equipment, the electronic ballot box was created to add ease, agility, transparency and security to the electoral process, eliminating the risk of fraud, which historically placed the results of the elections under suspicion.

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Access the book at: http://www.tse.jus.br/hotsites/catalogo-publicacoes/pdf/57_porDentroDaUrna1.2.pdf



ELECTION REPORT 2014

With approximately 143 million voters¹, Brazil is the 4th largest democracy in the world. The Electoral Justice, through the regional electoral courts, the electoral judges and the servants of the Judiciary, works to guarantee these voters the freedom to vote; To ensure that the voter who appears on the day of the election is actually the registered voter; And so that the vote given is, in fact, the vote cast.

The purpose of the 2014 Election Report is to provide transparency to the main information and activities related to the electoral process, with numbers and data relating to that election, without, however, making any analysis or comparison with previous data, and without attributing any Information.

The report is an information tool delivered to voters on data from all stages of the electoral process. It corroborates, therefore, the mission of the Superior Electoral Tribunal (TSE), which contributes to consolidate the constitutional role of the Electoral Justice, among others, to provide citizens with reports on the election, in a clear and independent way from previous analysis of previous data.

Access the book at: http://www.tse.jus.br/hotsites/catalogo-publicacoes/pdf/relatorio_eleicoes/relatorio-eleicoes-2014.pdf



ELECTIONS IN BRAZIL: A 500-YEAR HISTORY



This is the motive of this work: almost five centuries of elections, since 1532. In five hundred years of history, there were disputes, conquests of rights, moments of authoritarianism and cries for freedom.

There were many obstacles and the actors involved in the electoral processes developed during this period. The act of voting has already been seen as an indication of superiority and an instrument of control exercised by the powerful. In other times, nobility, income, gender and literacy were some of the exclusion criteria of the select group of former voters.

This book materializes the effort of the Electoral Justice directed to the rescue of the memory. The team responsible for the Museum of the Superior Electoral Court, in carrying out this work, reconstructs an important part of the Brazilian electoral history, reinforcing the vocation of this Specialized Justice to

be at the service of Brazilian citizens.

Access the book at: <http://www.tse.jus.br/hotsites/catalogo-publicacoes/pdf/tse-eleicoes-no-brasil-uma-historia-de-500-anos-2014.pdf>

Unfolding Indian Elections – JOURNEY OF THE LIVING DEMOCRACY

Unfolding Indian Elections – Journey of the Living Democracy, is a coffee table book that has been put together painstakingly by Election Commission as a tribute to the nation and the people on the occasion of its 70th year of independence and has been published by the Publications Division.

It is an election memoir celebrating the spirit of participatory democracy and capturing memories through the years. The book traces the long journey of the evolution of elections—bringing to light through rare photographs, not just how Election Commission planned and conducted the elections, but also emphasises the uniqueness, conceptual development and people's enthusiasm for them. Thematically organized 11 sections with a set of photos and a concise chapter takes the reader through the journey of elections.



The Coffee Table Book was unveiled at the 7th NVD and the first copy was presented to the Hon'ble President of India.

Unfolding Indian Elections Journey of the living democracy

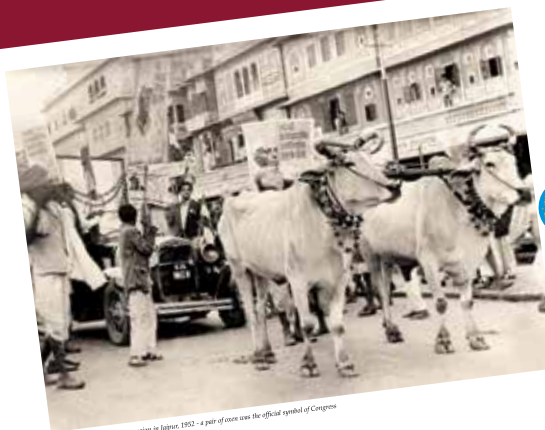
Independence heralds Universal Adult Suffrage

The first general elections to the Lok Sabha and the elections to the state assemblies were held during 1951-52. Both were conducted on the basis of universal adult suffrage. Article 326 of the Constitution of India, adopted on 26th November 1949, empowered every citizen above 21 years of age, on a qualifying date, to vote in territorial constituencies. But implementing the ideal was a challenging task for an impoverished and newly independent nation. Therefore, the idea evoked awe, wonder and even skepticism in both home and abroad. Firstly, it was a humongous task to administer elections of that magnitude. Secondly, given India's poor adult literacy, the wisdom of adult franchise was challenged to unravel every adult citizen. Thirdly, given India's poor adult literacy, the wisdom of adult franchise was challenged to administer elections of that magnitude. Thirdly, given India's poor adult literacy, the wisdom of adult franchise was challenged to administer elections of that magnitude.

But the political philosophy behind India's freedom struggle made universal adult suffrage unavoidable. The freedom movement was conducted in the name of every Indian person. That all-Indian ideal was upheld by the Constituent Assembly.

Two sets of legislation under the Representation of the People Act were notified in 1950 and 1951. The process of election began on September 10, 1951 with issuing of notification. It concluded on June 4, 1952 when election of West Bengal Legislative Council was completed. In 489 seats to be filled by the election (out of 499) in the 1st Lok Sabha, 72 seats were reserved for candidates of Scheduled Castes and 19 for Scheduled Tribes. A total of 1,374 candidates were on the fray. A total of 15,361 candidates contested for an aggregate of 3,283 seats of legislative assemblies in the states.

The global community witnessed the elections with great interest. The governments of Nepal and Indonesia had sent their official teams for extensive study of the elections from administrative and legal angles. Numerous enquiries were received from nations in Africa, the Middle East and South America on the elections. Based on the success of the Indian experiment, Sudan in November-December 1953 held elections on the basis of adult franchise. The first Chief Election Commissioner of India, Shri Sukumar Sen, ICS, chaired the international commission that oversees the elections.



An election campaign in Jaipur, 1952 - a pair of oxen was the official symbol of Congress



Polling parties carrying EVMs traverse the farthest, highest & toughest terrains...



Haridwar, Uttarakhand Pradesh, 2014



A hot ride, Andhra Pradesh, 2014

Travelling on elephant back, Assam 2014



Walking through snow, Himachal Pradesh, 2014

Voter Engagement with young people in Scotland (Spring 2017)

Campaign launch to get 16 and 17 year olds ReadyToVote in council elections

More than 200 high schools across Scotland ran electoral registration and voting workshops for pupils on 1 March 2017 to mark the launch of the Electoral Commission's ReadyToVote campaign.

The campaign, which is being run in partnership with education bodies and councils across Scotland, aims to ensure that as many 16 and 17 year olds as possible are registered and able to vote at the Scottish council elections on 4 May – the first Scotland wide council elections at which 16 and 17 year olds are eligible to vote.

Nearly 80,000 16 and 17 year olds registered to vote ahead of the Scottish Parliament election last year and 78% of them claimed to have voted in the poll. The deadline to register ahead of the Scottish council elections in May is 17 April, Easter Monday.

Andy O'Neill, Head of the Electoral Commission in Scotland said:

"Councils are responsible for so many services that are important to young people, whether that be schools, transport or sporting facilities. So we don't want young people to miss out on having their say in the council elections just because they aren't registered or don't know how to vote.

A full copy of the Ready to Vote toolkit including info-graphics, example tweets and fact sheets can be found on the Electoral Commission website:

http://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0014/220190/May-2017-Ready-to-vote-toolkit.pdf

Public awareness and the UK referendum on membership of the European Union (June 2016).



Under the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act (PPERA), the UK Electoral Commission has a responsibility to provide public information during a referendum. Below are some examples of the campaign materials and images used by the Electoral Commission. The overall campaign was designed to support voters to participate fully and to help them to cast their vote with confidence.

A voting guide was delivered to the UK's 28 million households and a wide range of communication channels were used to raise awareness. The guide was at the center of the campaign contained impartial information on the referendum and how to vote, including: eligibility, postal voting, proxy voting and an example ballot paper with instructions on how to complete it. A full copy of the guide can be downloaded here:

http://www.aboutmyvote.co.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0010/203410/EU-Referendum-voting-guide_England-and-Scotland.pdf

The supporting television advert for the campaign can be watched on youtube here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KYDjTJ8kuFk>



Front cover image of UK Electoral Commission Voting Guide

The Electoral Commission campaign also included tailored communications to armed forces personnel. The advertising used imagery that represented the three main branches of the armed forces (the Army, the Navy and the Royal Air Force). In addition, we ran full page advertising in Navy News, Soldier and RAF News – publications popular amongst armed forces personnel. Both strands of advertising (that targeting British citizens abroad and that targeting members of the armed forces) ran on an earlier time frame than the advertising in the UK to take into account the logistics of international postal services. It also encouraged voters to register for a proxy vote to significantly mitigate this issue.



Targeted Armed Forces campaign image – example of twitter imaging

The Electoral Commission worked with the Football Supporters' Federation to secure a page in the booklet they delivered to fans who would be attending Euro 2016, which spanned across June and July. Info-graphics with a specific message were used to target people attending Euro 2016 football tournament. The Euro 2016 post in English generated 2.5 million impressions on Twitter. This is a useful example of how to tie together a campaign with major events happening in the run up to a poll.



Euro 2016 Facebook infographics

Working together with major social media platforms also proved an effective way of reaching large numbers of voters. With Twitter, the Electoral Commission devised a two-pronged campaign which saw them produce two bespoke neon emojis to match the overall campaign branding.

The first emoji was a neon tick which appeared every time people used the hashtag '#EURefReady' between 6 and 7 June. The second was a neon ballot box with an 'X', which appeared with the popular '#EURef' hashtag from 7 June until 10pm on polling day. '#EURefReady' was used in over 40,000 tweets by 25,000 users.



Custom Twitter emojis

Women's political participation in Latin America: some progress and many challenges



Chinchilla, Kirchner and Rouseff Image: Edel Rodriguez

Over the last two decades, important regulatory progress has been made in Latin America on the promotion of women's political participation.

16 of the 18 Latin American countries have implemented affirmative action mechanisms, aimed at enhancing women's participation on electoral lists. Moreover, 5 countries - Bolivia, Ecuador, Costa Rica, Mexico and Nicaragua - have approved parity.

Despite this significant regulatory progress, there are still large gender-based inequities in the political sphere. For example, even though in 2017 on average 28.1% of the members of parliament in the region are women (ranking the region second in the world), it has not yet been possible to go beyond 30%. In addition, this average implies large differences in terms of parliamentary representation in the lower or single chamber among the different countries of the region.

On the one hand, in four countries parliament has over 40% of women elected, i.e. Bolivia, Mexico, Ecuador and Nicaragua. These countries have approved parity and alternation on the electoral lists. On the other hand, some countries have a clear underrepresentation with less than 20% of women in Congress.

These inequities are not limited exclusively to elected office but they also persist in the political parties, as key organizations to encourage a greater female presence in decision-making spaces. These inequities are clearly present in the organization and structures of the political parties, as shown in studies conducted by International IDEA and the IADB. The studies conducted between 2009 and 2015 show that there remain gender gaps in the political parties which have not yet been closed and which persist over time. The pattern is constant: in terms of militancy, the presence of men and women is very similar, but in decision-making spaces and levels,

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women's participation is decreasing. In other words, there is a "power pyramid" in which "the greater the power, the lower women's presence".

How has progress been made?

Historically speaking, any progress in terms of women's political participation has not been an easy process. Rather, the processes have been long, involving confrontations and tough public and political debates. The alliances among women politicians, social movements and male and female members of parliament have played a fundamental role in encouraging important citizen mobilizations thanks to which the need for generating changes in the exercise of power was put on the agenda. This was primarily based on broadening the concept of democracy and citizenship, including women in conditions of equality. International IDEA and the Inter-American Commission of Women (CIM) of the OAS have systematised the cases of Bolivia, Ecuador and Costa Rica as some examples of these processes.

In addition, the different countries have conducted a series of creative actions, among which public campaigns. One successful example is the *50/50 Parity is Now* campaign conducted in Bolivia. The campaign that accompanied the movement of organized women demanded the application of parity and alternation, because despite enactment of the regulation, there were still weaknesses in application thereof, which lowered

effectiveness. The results were successful, achieving a female representation of 53% in the Chamber of Representatives and of 46% in the Senate.

Furthermore, it should be noted that the campaign in Bolivia considered that although the number of women was important, this was not enough. One fundamental effort consisted in preparing a political agenda from women to promote and guarantee the political, economic and social rights of women. To a large extent, the success of this campaign was thanks to the alliances and synergies among different stakeholders, i.e. politicians, civil society, and international entities such as IDEA which played an important role.

Within the objective of promoting a more equity-based democracy, it is important to have information as the basis for decision-making. In this sense, in Latin America International IDEA, UNDP and UN women have implemented "ATENEA", a comprehensive monitoring system to keep track of progress in the design of parity policies in the region. The focus is on information for action. ■

Pilar Tello Rozas

Carolina Floru

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*Masai women outside of Morogoro wait to cast their ballots in Tanzania's 2000 elections.
Photo : Julie Ballington, Programme Manager, Gender and Political Participation, IDEA*

Regional organizations coming together for **political empowerment of women**

Achieving gender equality and political empowerment of women is now more relevant than ever and it is a responsibility that pertains to all the local, national, regional and international actors.

This statement comes at a time when there is a global commitment, under the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals, to achieve gender equality and reduce all inequalities by 2030. As a result of the ongoing regional consultations that are being held by International IDEA, the Community of Democracies and UNDP, the main challenges identified are:

- A need to continue promoting equal access to education at all levels for men and women.
- A need to engage men at all levels to effectively achieve gender equality and foster the political participation of women.
- A need for regional organizations to work together with national governments to support and empower women's capacities.
- The full implementation of international and regional legal/policy instruments designed to advance gender equality in the national legal framework.
- To achieve the political empowerment of women in the private and public sectors and secure a stronger female participation in political parties.
- To foster the creation of alliances among key stakeholders.
- To balance gender quotas depending on national and regional realities.
- To identify gaps in legal and policy



*World Map
Image: Matti Mattila*

instruments regionally and globally.

- To adequately channel financial resources.

In March 2016, the International IDEA-led Inter-Regional Dialogue on Democracy, the only platform that brings together eight of the main regional organizations to discuss democracy, held an inter-regional workshop on gender equality and a high level meeting with heads of the regional organizations that are part of the platform, to further discuss this issue.

Additionally, International IDEA, the Community of Democracies and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) are working together in the implementation of the Regional Consultations Programme. This initiative aims at holding five regional consultations with focus on Africa, the Americas, Asia-Pacific, Europe and the MENA Region. The results will be published by the end of 2017 as the Inter-Regional Policy Guidebook on Gender Equality and Political Empowerment of Women. ■

Luis José Consuegra

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Developing **women leaders** in Tunisia

The members of the new Tunisian government of national unity were sworn in on 27 August, one day after winning the parliamentary vote of confidence. The new government has 40 members (26 ministers and 14 secretaries of state), and 20 per cent of them are women (up from 10 per cent in the previous government).

Alongside this increase in women in government is a great achievement, International IDEA is proud to highlight that Neziha Labidi, a participant in the trainers of trainers (ToT) programme for women in Tunisian political parties, was appointed new Minister of Women, Children and Family Affairs.

The ToT programme was hosted under the four-year International IDEA/NIMD project, 'Respect for Women's Political Rights' which was launched in January 2014. The ToT was hosted over nine months and brought together 22 women from 8 Tunisian political parties and 9 governorates across the country. The modules of the training included public speaking and media relations, negotiation and mediation skills, strategic planning, and electoral campaign management. The final module presented skills on the organization and techniques of training so that the participants could return to their governorates and train their fellow party members.

Just after her nomination as minister, Labidi was present at the last workshop in order



*Tunisian women participate in a rally
Photo: iKnow Politics*

to receive her certificate of completion. Labidi thanked international IDEA for the ToT programme, and affirmed that she had duplicated each of its modules within her political party. She stated that having many participants from different political parties for several days each time contributed to more collegial relationships between the women in various political parties and helped them build a plural society transcending political struggles.

Since the completion of the trainings, International IDEA has supported 19 women in eight parties to replicate the trainings in their home constituencies. As result more than 133 women have been trained across the country.

As a result of the success of this first ToT, the Tunisia programme is implementing a second series of trainings geared towards political party members in the south of the country, where women leaders are frequently less targeted for such trainings. ■

Shana Kaiser

Hamza Amor

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Using public funding to have more women parliamentarians



*International Women's Day 2012 at the European Parliament
Photo: European Union*

Last year, women made up less than a quarter of parliamentarians worldwide. While the number has been steadily increasing, more needs to be done. The key to having more women as representative is to influence political parties since they are the ones who choose the candidates for elections.

Many countries give public funding to political parties to even out the playing field and to make sure that private interests do not dominate politics. An idea we are exploring is linking a part of this public funding to having more women as representatives.

Now, about one in eight countries in the world are doing this. In 2017, International IDEA will be looking at the best ways of doing this are so that countries around the world are able to have more women as representatives.

Countries such as Chile, Ireland, Kenya and Colombia have all linked public funding with women's representations, and all of them have had more women parliamentarians elected.

International IDEA's Political Finance Database has more information on this particular issue. We believe it would be good for parties to have more women candidates. As Justin Trudeau, the Prime Minister of Canada, said when asked two years ago why he thought it was important that his cabinet had an equal gender balance: "Because it's 2015". ■

Gary Klaukka

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Safeguarding **women's political participation** in Myanmar's constitution



Photo: Annamari T. Salonen / International IDEA Left to right: Daw Khin Lay (Director Triangle – Women's Support Group), Daw Pansy Tun Thein (Advisor, Gender Equality Network) and Professor Dr. Khin Mar Yee (Head of the Department of Law, University of Yangon)

Does the constitution have a special provision for gender equality? Who implements the rights enshrined in Myanmar's constitution?

These were some of the questions on the lips of participants from civil society, academia, the judiciary and parliamentarians at an introductory workshop on the constitution assessment for women's equality held in Yangon in February 2017.

International IDEA's Constitution Assessment for Women's Equality, which is now available in Myanmar language, helps stakeholders analyse a constitution or draft constitution from perspective of women's constitutional rights and equality. Participants learned about the experience of Nepal. International IDEA's Head of Mission in Nepal, Sheri Meyerhoffer, who led the workshop, said "Engaging women activists to audit various drafts of the constitution contributed to progressive gender equality

and protection provisions in Nepal's 2015 Constitution."

The workshop sparked a number of ideas on how to take the recommendations of the workshop forward, both individually and collectively. MP Susanna Hla Hla Soe (NLD) said "I will share this tool with others in the Women and Child Rights Committee and report to the Speaker about this workshop and topic".

Organized by International IDEA Myanmar in partnership with Triangle Women Support Group and Gender Equality Network (GEN), the workshop is part the MyConstitution programme supported by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Norway. ■

Annamari T. Salonen

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Politically empowering women for democracy



International Women's Day Logo

This year's International Women's Day's theme, "Be Bold for Change", is a call to forge a better working world - a more gender inclusive world. In particular, it calls for groundbreaking action that truly drives the greatest change for women.

International IDEA has been at the forefront of advancing the political participation of women. We believe that democracy is incomplete without policies, measures and practices that seek to reduce inequalities between men and women in all spheres of life. It is in this light that we are committed to support Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5, "achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls". Our call to action is best expressed by our Secretary-General in his message on what can be done to tackle violence against women in politics, taken from an interview for International Women's Day.

In 2017, we continue to produce knowledge products, as well as undertake initiatives that highlight the role of women in politics with the end view of making democracies function better. We have partnered with key institutions of democracy, Election Management Bodies (EMBs) and political parties and published A Framework for Developing Internal Gender Policies for EMBs and A Framework for Developing Gender Policies for political parties. These standards enables EMBs and political parties to manage their internal operations and processes, allowing for equal distribution of power between men and women. Furthermore, at the country level, we help build the capacity of women government executives through training and supporting spaces for peer-to-peer exchange and learning. In the case of Haiti, for example, we supported the organization of the Federation of Women Mayors of Haiti, which is a platform to strengthen knowledge of among

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others democratic accountability at local level, as well as gender mainstreaming in municipal policies.

In this year's newsletter and to commemorate International Women's Day, we feature stories on our efforts to take action for women, starting with our work to develop more knowledge products for democratic actors. In *Regional organizations coming together for political empowerment of women*, we present our consultative approach, working with regional organizations to arrive at Inter-Regional Policy Guidebook on Gender Equality and Political Empowerment of Women. In *Using public funding to have more women parliamentarians*, we explore experiences of democracies on how public funding can support a level playing field in politics; thereby improving political participation of women.

In *Empowering youth – women and men - for democracy in Tunisia*, we present an innovative approach to engaging the youth for democracy. Currently, being utilized in Tunisia, the Youth Democracy Curriculum seeks to build the capacities of the young people – women and men – to lead the change that they would like to see in their democratic contexts. Following the positive feedback that we received from the participants, we are now looking at ways to apply the curriculum in other regions and countries.

In relation to our work in regions and countries, we present our activities in Latin

America through a feature story on *Women's political participation in Latin America: Some progress and many challenges*, where we also discuss the various actions that we undertook including building alliances in countries in the region, as well as a campaign in Bolivia. In *Developing Women Leaders in Tunisia*, we present our training of women local executives in Tunisia, which included in particular the recently appointed Minister for Women, Children and Family Affairs in the country. Finally, in *Safeguarding Women Political Participation in Myanmar's Constitution*, we focus on the rule of the Constitution in safeguarding women's political participation. Here, International IDEA's Constitution Assessment for Women's Equality is applied to Myanmar, drawing from the experiences of applying it to Nepal – a poignant example of our work in promoting South-South cooperation.

It is clear to International IDEA that there is no single strategy that can completely address gender inequalities that span the world in all spheres of life—including in democracy building processes. We, thus, need to work together and do our part for only being bold can we indeed effect change. ■

Raul Cordenillo

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Election Commission of India signs MoUs with four Election Management Bodies (EMBs)

Aiming to establish an institutional framework for their ongoing cooperation in the field of election management and administration, Election Commission of India signed Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with four Election Management Bodies (EMBs) at the International seminar on 'Strategies for Empowering Young and Future Voters' organized at New Delhi, India on 24th January 2017. The MoUs signed are as follows:



- (1) A Memorandum of Understanding was signed between India and Australia for international cooperation by Dr Nasim Zaidi, Chief Election Commissioner of India and Mr Tom Rogers, Election Commissioner of Australia.



- (2) A Memorandum of Understanding was signed between India and Nepal for international cooperation by Dr Nasim Zaidi, Chief Election Commissioner of India and Mr Ayodhee Prasad Yadav, Chief Election Commissioner of Nepal.



- (3) A Memorandum of Understanding was signed between India and Bosnia-Herzegovina for international cooperation by Mr A.K. Joti, Election Commissioner of India and Dr. Suad Arnantovic, Member-Commissioner and past President, Central Election Commission of Bosnia-Herzegovina.



- (4) A Memorandum of Understanding was signed between India and Fiji for international cooperation by Mr O.P. Rawat, Election Commissioner of India and Mr. Mohammad Saneem, Supervisor, Fijian Elections Office.

The major aims of these MoUs are as follows:

- Promotion of exchange of knowledge and experience in the field of organizational and technical development;
- Strengthening the administration of electoral processes;
- Exchange of information, material, expertise and technical know-how relating to electoral processes and systems;
- Training of personnel and development of human resources;
- Organizational development and capacity building.

Election Commission of India has so far signed MOUs with more than twenty Election Management Bodies (EMBs) and international organizations across the world for cooperation in election administration and management. ■

Women turnout surpass men in the recent provincial elections in 5 states in India

General Elections to the State Assemblies of Goa, Manipur, Punjab, Uttarakhand and Uttar Pradesh held in February-March witnessed higher female voter turnout than men in all the five states.

The female voter turnout percentage surpassed men turnout by 6.4 points in Uttarakhand, by 5.5 points in Goa, by 4.7 points in Uttar Pradesh, by 3.8 points in Manipur and 1.4 points in Punjab.

In these elections, majority of the states witnessed participation of Third Genders (T.Gs). Uttar Pradesh witnessed an astounding 4.5% turnout of third genders.

Voter Turnout:

Assembly Elections 2017

State	Male	Fe-male	Total	Gender Gap
Goa	78.48	83.98	81.27	-5.5
Manipur	84.45	88.26	86.4	-3.81
Punjab	76.73	78.16	77.40	-1.43
Uttara-khand	63.08	69.72	66.25	-6.64
Uttar Pradesh	59.21	63.38	61.11	-4.





Yet another **snap election** for the mountain Kingdom

Lesotho to undergo another snap election. The Independent Electoral Commission of Lesotho is currently in the process of delivering elections which will be held on the **3rd of June, 2017**. This follows a vote of no confidence that was passed in parliament by the opposition. Subsequent to that, the King made a proclamation announcing election date. The Commission therefore prepared the

election calendar showing electoral activities that will follow thereafter. It bears the dates, the activities and the relevant sections of the National Assembly Electoral Act, 2011. It is known as Election Time-Table. It is the road map on which legal election activities are achieved. Lesotho held National Assembly Elections in 2012, thereafter there was a snap election in February 2015.

National Assembly Elections Time Table Notice 2017

Pursuant to section 37 of the National Assembly Electoral Act 2011.

Director of Elections publish the National Assembly General Elections Time table as set out below, which marks the beginning of elections period with effect from the 13th March 2017 for the General Elections to be held on the 3rd June 2017.

Event	Start	End
Beginning of election period	Monday 13/03/2017	Saturday 10/06/2017
Registration of 17-year-olds	Monday 13/03/2017	Sunday 10/06/2017
Suspension of registration of electors	Sunday 19/03/2017	Saturday 10/06/2017
Application to vote as an advance elector	Monday 27/03/2017	Sunday 09/04/2017
Publication of the elector's register	Monday 27/03/2017	Sunday 02/04/2017
Submission of objections to the elector's register	Monday 27/03/2017	Monday 03/04/2017
Determination of objections on the register by the Commission	Monday 27/03/2017	Tuesday 04/04/2017
Voting day for advance electors	Saturday 27/05/2017	Saturday 27/05/2017
Voting day	Saturday 03/06/2017	Saturday 03/06/2017
Publication of final election results	Saturday 10/06/2017	Saturday 10/06/2017

VoICE International

VoICE.NET





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 20th October 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 and representatives from UNDP, International IDEA, IFES and Malaysian Commonwealth Studies Centre. **VoICE.NET** contents are provided by the member EMBs/Organisations and the portal is maintained by Election Commission of India.