# V ICE International

A Quarterly Global magazine for Voter Information, Education and Communication

A VoICE.NET e-Publication

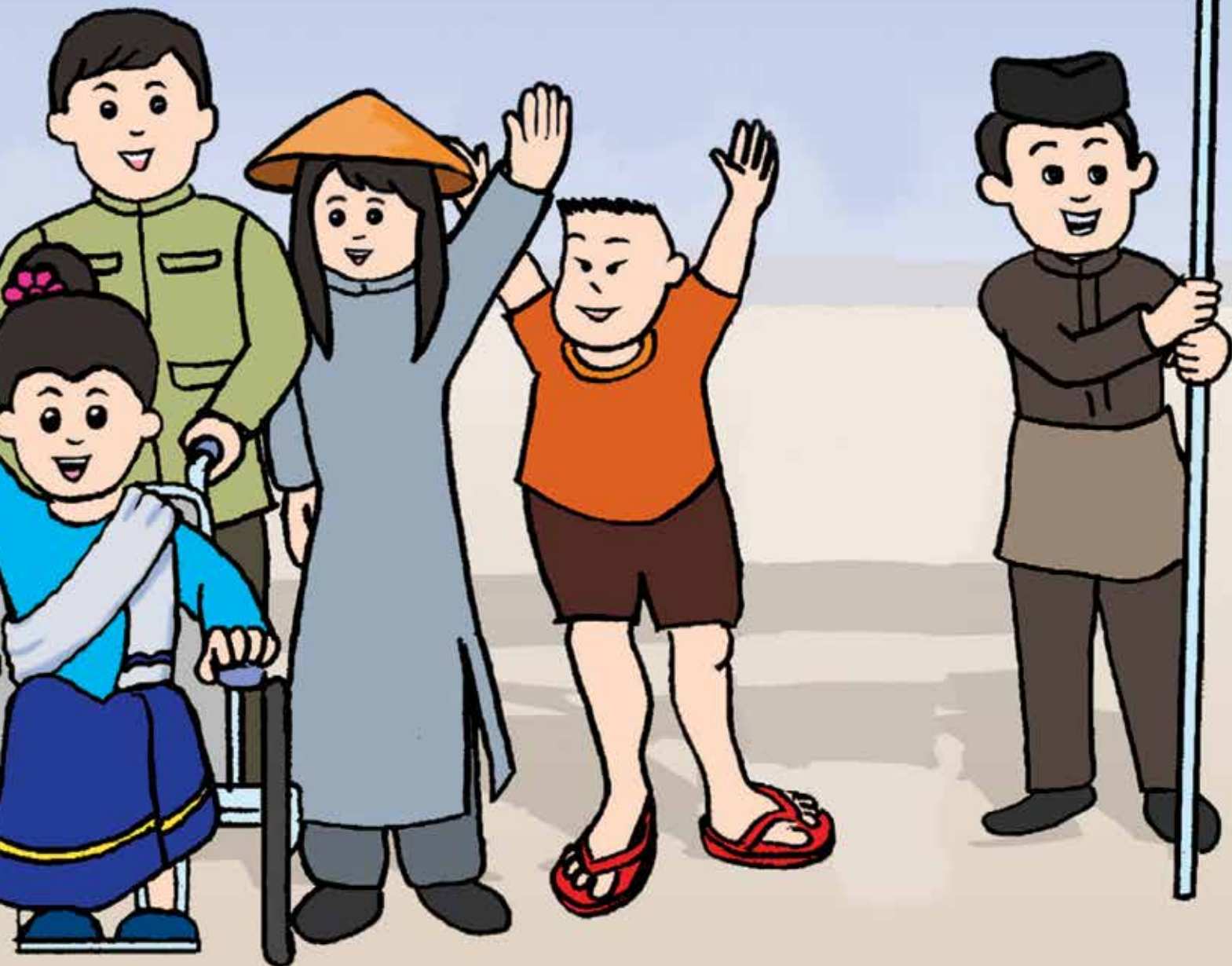Global Knowledge Network on Voter Education . . . *learning from each other*



Special Initiatives for Enhancing Participation of
# Persons with Disabilities (PwDs)

*Incheon Strategy*
*United Nations ESCAP*

# VoICE International

# Editorial

The VoICE International grows...the VoICE.NET grows. Yes, we have moved on to the third issue of VoICE International with a robust response and an encouraging participation from democracies across the world. So, today, we have a larger international experience to share with you– features on the special theme of this issue as also numerous other informative sections.

We shared with you the global experience on 'Strategies for Empowering Young and Future Voters' in the inaugural issue early this year in January followed by 'Gender: Voter Education for Enhancing Women's Participation' in the second issue. Now we bring to you the knowledge and experience on 'Voter Education for Enhancing Participation of the Persons with Disabilities' through rich contributions from the EMBs of Brazil, Bulgaria, Fiji, India, Maldives, Nepal and United States besides International IDEA, IFES and UNDP. 'Insights' includes articles on the guidance from the UN Conventions on Persons with Disabilities and experiences from Afghanistan, Canada, Kenya, Myanmar, New Zealand and Paraguay on voter education for PWDs.

Relevance of voter education in the context of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR),

the two principal and universal legal instruments has been realized through the guiding principles for voter education as spelt out in the UNCHR Handbook on Human Rights and Elections (1994). While adoption of the Universal Declaration marked the beginning of electoral participation as a human right, the issue of 'Inclusion of the PwDs' in electoral participation was discussed specifically in the 2006 UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) with over 160 signatories.
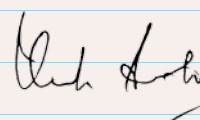
Pioneering work has been done by various EMBs and international institutions such as WHO, International IDEA, IFES, UNDP, USAID etc. to support inclusion and voter education programs for the PwDs in many countries. The mandate of the UN instruments coupled with the country wise legislations and the support from the EMBs as also other institutions especially the Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) for participation of PwDs in the electoral process has made a substantial impact in removal of barriers to their inclusion. I dedicate this issue of VoICE International to the cause of inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in electoral participation.

The informative segments of the issue are enriched with international viewpoints for our readers. A new special section on 'Perspectives' has been added to the magazine. This issue carries an interview with Dr. Nasim Zaidi, former Chief Election Commissioner of India. Dr. Zaidi was the primary architect of VoICE.NET and VoICE International; it means a befitting tribute to have him as the first for this interaction. We intend carrying through this practice in future issues as well.

I also welcome the new Chief Election Commissioner of India, Mr. A. K. Joti who provides us promising support and guidance on VoICE.NET and the VoICE International.

**Umesh Sinha,**
Executive Secretary, VoICE.NET and
Editor-in-Chief, VoICE International

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# The Electoral Justice Accessibility Program: Review and Perspectives

On June 19, 2012, the Superior Electoral Court approved Resolution n. 23.381, which established the Electoral Justice Accessibility Program (Programa de Acessibilidade da Justiça Eleitoral - PAJE, in Portuguese). Its primary goal is to equalize opportunities for citizenship exercised by voters with disabilities. On the normative stage, the Resolution is based on the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, approved in Brazil with status of constitutional amendment, as well as on other legal documents for promotion of rights of persons with disabilities, such as Law n. 10.098, 19 December 2000, and Decree n. 7.037, 21 December 2009. Furthermore, Decree n. 5.296, 2 December 2004, which on its article 21, sole paragraph, deals specifically with accessibility oriented to the exercise of the right to vote, stipulating that 'in case of the exercise of the right to vote the electoral section ballots should be appropriate to the use with autonomy by persons with disabilities and with reduced mobility, and should be installed in totally accessible voting location, including parking facilities'.

On its article 2, Resolution TSE n. 23.381 establishes that PAJE 'aims at gradually implementing measures to remove physical, architectonic, communicational and attitudinal barriers in order to promote wide and unrestricted access to electoral process with security and autonomy for persons with disabilities or with reduced mobility'. Here it is possible to identify three perspectives of accessibility: physical (including architectonic), communicational and attitudinal.

Physical perspective is traditionally the first to receive attention, and Brazil was no exception to this rule. However, the formal awareness has not yet been converted into effective physical accessibility. For example, in 2016 the Court of Auditors of Federal District conducted an audit in 104 buildings in which public services are provided and in 108 access roads to them. The result: 100% of the buildings and 99% of the roads have accessibility problems[1]. A sad irony is that all of the 13 analyzed Special Teaching Centres[2] failed on accessibility. All that at Brazil's capital.

That scenario reflects on Electoral Justice (EJ) context, as the voting locations are installed at public - not necessarily property of EJ - and private buildings. However, article 3 of the mentioned Resolution determines that the Regional Electoral Courts to elaborate an action plan oriented to the best selection of voting locations by electoral judges, considering accessibility criteria; to monitor accessibility at voting locations; to replace non-accessible locations for accessible ones, among other measures. On that aspect, there are gains to point out: for example, between 2012 and 2014 elections the number of Special (i.e. accessible) Electoral Sections increased 23.9%[3].

It is interesting to note that part of the mentioned article 3 was incorporated to the Brazilian Electoral Code through Law n. 13.146, July 6, 2015, the so-called Brazilian Law for Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities. To article 135 of Electoral Code, which opens a chapter regarding voting locations, it was added §6º-A: 'Regional Electoral Courts should deliver instructions to the electoral judges in each election, in order to guide the selection of voting locations, thereby ensuring accessibility to voters with disabilities or with reduced

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[1]Court of Auditors of Federal District. 100% dos prédios públicos do DF analisados em auditoria têm problemas de acessibilidade. Available at:https://goo.gl/HrFEuy.

[2]Special Teaching Centres are education centres focused on students with disabilities and Global Development Disorders (GDD).

[3]Superior Electoral Court. Acessibilidade na Justiça Eleitoral: Relatório de diagnóstico da acessibilidade na Justiça Eleitoral, p. 24.

mobility, including its surrounding and access to transport systems.'

With that reinforcement it is likely that more significant results on physical accessibility will be achieved in the next elections, and that is a legacy of Resolution TSE nº 23.381/2012.

Regarding communicational perspective of accessibility, article 7 of the Resolution should be highlighted. It imposes that social communication divisions of Electoral Courts conduct awareness and information campaigns addressed to voters with disabilities.

Added to other initiatives - like accessibility of Electoral Courts' websites, which follow a number of protocols[4] - such campaigns, developed by the Superior Electoral Court and Regional Electoral Courts as well, approach persons with disabilities of the electoral process. This can be shown in electoral enlistment numbers: between 2012 and 2014 elections, the number of voters with disabilities increased from 151,211 to 502,400[5].

Let us finally turn to attitudinal perspective, perhaps more sensitive than the other two due to the fact that it represents a cultural change that cannot be achieved overnight. We already highlighted significant increase of electoral enlistment numbers concerning persons with disabilities, but there are other aspects to consider. First, such enlistment increase tells us much about the exercise of the active electoral capacity (related to the right to vote) but those gains are not being converted into effective political participation of persons with disabilities beyond voting and taking part in the electoral process. In other words, there are no significant improvements concerning the exercise of passive electoral capacity (related to the right to be voted), as the number of persons with disabilities that hold an elective office is negligible regardless of the level (federal, district, state and municipal).

The effective access of persons with disabilities to elective offices depends on a way more

sensitive factor: access to political parties. To vote, it is enough to be enlisted, but to be voted people have to affiliate. It is necessary to have effective access to the internal party electoral process, which is something that is practically non-existent. Thus, in a party democracy like ours, we will not be able to improve political accessibility without undertaking the internal democratization of political parties. And that is an aspect of the attitudinal perspective of accessibility, perhaps the most important one nowadays.

Finally, we have to praise the innovations brought by Resolution n. 23.381/2012, as well as the direct improvements it has achieved. Obviously, between law and reality there are always gaps to fill. And that is why political accessibility should be permanently at hand on the way to implement inclusive laws such as the Resolution and to see beyond horizon, where the worst problems are hidden. A superficial view over the problems would even result in formal gains concerning accessibility promotion, but the elimination of physical, communicational and attitudinal barriers can only be reached with policies and programs that deal with that theme in depth.

After five years of the Resolution, the worth of that initiative of the Superior Electoral Court is out of doubt, mainly for the fact that it inserts political participation of persons with disabilities in the electoral agenda permanently.



*Prof. Dr. Fábio L. Quintas*
*Director of Superior Electoral Court*
*(Brazil)*



*Prof. Adisson Leal*
*Chief-Advisor of Superior Electoral Court*
*(Brazil)*

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*Superior Electoral Court. Acessibilidade na Justiça Eleitoral: Relatório de diagnóstico da acessibilidade na Justiça Eleitoral, p. 24. Available at: <http://www.justicaeleitoral.jus.br/arquivos/relatorio-de-diagnostico-da-acessibilidade-na-je>.*

[4]*Superior Electoral Court follows the rules of Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG), which are international standards on this matter.*
[5]*Superior Electoral Court. Acessibilidade na Justiça Eleitoral: Relatório de diagnóstico da acessibilidade na Justiça Eleitoral, p. 25.*

## BULGARIA

Central Election Commission

# Preserving Person with Disabilities' (PwDs) Right to Participate in Elections

It is not coincidental that the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) has included in its reports significant care for the indicators on the right to political participation of persons with disabilities. In that light was also the Agency's 2014 report. It shows how the rights of persons with disabilities are respected in the European Union and how, when given the proper opportunity, persons with disabilities take active part in political life. However, the report revealed that the EU countries still have many difficulties that disabled people face.

"Political participation is a fundamental right which everyone should exercise on equal basis", says Agency's Director, Morten Kjaerum.

Along with the inaccessible environment, absence of voting and information alternatives, unawareness about the special needs of persons with different disabilities, administrative

barriers, etc. appear to be among the most serious limitations that disabled people face.

On the other hand, it is not easy for countries to assess that which mental health problems should be subject to limitations and whether they should place such limitations on persons with disabilities.

According to the ABC of human rights, the right to vote is not an absolute or basic right and countries rightfully have discretionary powers to set certain requirements, to introduce restrictions based on objective and reasonable criteria. That is precisely why persons with

specific mental health problems are not capable of participating in the election of management bodies in different countries, as well as in politics.

In 2006, the UN recognised the right of persons with disabilities, including mental disabilities and with mental health problems, to vote and to stand as candidates in elections. However, countries have state sovereignty and, accordingly have developed legal systems which rightfully restrict certain political rights. Examples from the recent past of Europe demonstrate that this issue should be approached very carefully.

The Republic of Bulgaria has a very democratic electoral law which has been developed over the course of more than 60 years that makes use of the achievements and the best practices of electoral law worldwide. This is reflected in the significant strides registered with respect to electoral rights of citizens with disabilities.

Provisions such as mobile polling stations, mobile ballot boxes, voting with attendant's assistance under certain circumstances, etc. have been provided.

In some types of elections, the Section Election Commission (SEC) provides the persons with disabilities with a declaration form wherein they state that they have not voted and will not vote at another location.

Local authorities create serious organisations and plan based on the decisions of the Central Election Commission. Mobile Section Election Commissions (MSEC) are created in

compliance with certain requirements. MSECs enable citizens with disabilities to be visited at their respective address so that they can exercise their right to vote. At places where the requirements for the creation of a MSEC are not met, municipalities arrange transport for persons in wheelchairs to the polling stations. MSECs ensure secrecy of vote, easy and smooth voting by persons with disabilities.

Applicable to persons with disabilities are other legislative requirements for getting ballot papers and envelopes, for marking the sign 'X' or 'Y' on ballot papers and all rules of invalidity of ballot papers apply as in all other cases.

An important opportunity for the persons with disabilities is the adopted general rule that in places where polling stations are opened on the upper floors of a building with more than one floor, one of the sections on the first (ground) floor is designated for voting by voters with locomotor and eyesight impairments. Such stations are signified by special plates, signs and are easy to access and use.

The Republic of Bulgaria has always taken utmost care for persons with disabilities and has always strived to make use of the best practices concerning the exercise of the right to vote of persons with disabilities.

*Mariya Musorlieva*
*Vice Chairperson*
*Central Election Commission, Bulgaria*

*Source: sputniknews.com*

*Source: sofiaglobe.com*

## FIJI

Fijian Elections Office

**FIJIAN ELECTIONS OFFICE**
*My Election, My Fiji*

# Making Participation in Electoral Processes Inclusive for Persons with Disabilities

**Country:** Fiji

**Theme:** 'Special Initiatives for Enhancing Participation by Persons with Disability (PwDs)'

**Title of The Best Practice / Case Study:** Making participation in electoral processes inclusive for persons with disabilities.

**Area of Coverage:** Through the establishment of the Elections Disability Access Working Group [EDAWG], the Fijian Elections Office [FEO] works with representatives of Disabled Persons Organisations [DPOs] to discuss ways to make the electoral process more inclusive for persons with disabilities all over Fiji.

**Period of implementation:** May 8, 2016 – April 5, 2017

## Background:

Following the establishment of the Fijian Elections Office under the Electoral Act [2014], the FEO organized and conducted the 2014 General Election for the new 50 member parliament. The Multinational-Observer Group [MOG] held that the 2014 General Election in Fiji was fair and broadly represented the will of the Fijian people. The 2014 General Election also saw the lowest number of invalid votes in Fiji's history – 0.75%.

The Electoral Act [2014] sets out the arrangements for voting by people with disability:

*The Supervisor must, to the extent feasible, ensure that appropriate arrangements are made for persons with disabilities or other special needs to enable the effective realization of their electoral rights, including the following:*

a)     *Polling activities located at ground level and ramp access at polling stations; and*

b)     *Polling booths designed for persons in wheelchair to allow such persons to vote*

The FEO had tagged the names of those voters with disabilities on the Voter Roll, to ensure that when they arrived at the Polling Venue, they were assisted to the Polling Station most convenient to them and the Presiding Officer was familiar with assisting voters with special needs. The FEO also made some Polling Venues accessible by building ramps for wheelchair access. During training, Presiding Officers were taught how to assist voters with disabilities. In most villages polling officials also ensured that **curbside voting** was observed when a request was made by bedridden voters. A police officer would accompany two [2] election officials to the curb to oversee the voting process, one of whom would always be the Presiding Officer for the Polling Station.

Voter education materials, developed by the FEO, included YouTube videos in sign language. The 2013 Constitution was also translated into Braille.

The MOG also noted that 'Polling Staff and communities should be commended for their efforts to ensure all Fijians had the opportunity to vote.'

In line with these findings, the Fijian Elections Office in its Strategic Plan [2015-2019] under Objective 4 titled 'assess requirements for voters with disabilities and special needs' and under Goal 6 required the Director Operations to liaise with Government Organizations, Civil Society Organizations and private agencies to assist in identifying locations of people with disabilities and to develop and implement strategies to allow disabled voters to have access to the electoral process.

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Fijian Elections Office

### Brief Description of Best Practice:

The first ever Pacific Regional Disability Rights Dialogue [PRDRD] co-hosted by the Fijian Elections Office [FEO], the Pacific Disabilities Forum [PDF], the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat [PIFS], and the International Foundation for Electoral Systems [IFES], was held from 8 – 11 May, 2016. It was attended by election management officials and disability rights advocates from over 20 countries.

At the PRDRD, the FEO undertook the commitment to formalize the Election Disability Access Working Group [EDAWG]. The FEO also indicated its intention to create a platform for the direct involvement of DPOs in assisting the FEO to make voter services more inclusive.

Dialogue participants drafted recommendations for the Pacific Islands, Australia, and New Zealand Electoral Administrator's (PIANZEA) Network on increasing election access of persons with disabilities. The group's advocacy resulted in the inclusion of disability access in PIANZEA's conference statement.

On 31 August, 2016 a Terms of Reference [TOR] was signed between the FEO, PDF and the Fiji National Council of Disabled Persons [FNCDP]. The TOR was adopted as a guiding document to assist the EDAWG in ensuring that Fiji's electoral systems, awareness materials and venues were accessible for all persons with disabilities in Fiji.

### Challenges:

Some of the challenges that the FEO faces in enhancing participation of persons with disabilities are:

1. The lack of data on persons living with disabilities.

2. The high costs involved in making access provisions for all persons with disabilities, as well as in the production of awareness materials in various formats.

3. The FEO does not own a Braille Printer, therefore it is restricted in its ability to offer awareness materials in Braille for persons with visual impediments.

4. In Fiji not all persons with disabilities go through standard training so it becomes difficult to implement a one size fits all response approach for persons with disabilities.

5. 37.5%[1] of disabilities affecting Fijians are not known, therefore the FEO is working to address persons living with congenital disabilities, acquired disabilities and those living with both types of disabilities.

6. There are many cases in Fiji where the disability is a result of a medical condition, such as amputation due to Diabetes. 23.37% of persons living with disabilities in Fiji are categorized as 'Acquired.'

7. Technological challenges with disability propriety software to fully maximize the potential of addressing the needs of persons with disabilities.

### Outcome:

Since the signing of the TOR, the FEO has implemented projects to enhance inclusiveness for all persons with disabilities in Fiji, which are highlighted as follows:

1. **Ground Level Access and Ramps at all the FEO Offices, Voter Services Centres and selected Polling Venues.**

- A standard requirement which has been incorporated into the leasing arrangements for venues that the FEO uses, for both long-term and short-term, is the location of main access points at the ground level of any building and the inclusion of a ramp.

- This standard, although not applicable to all Polling Venues, is also included in the Polling Venue Assessment, which is carried out periodically to ensure that information on the availability of access for all persons with disabilities is captured in the Polling Venue Directory.

- Please refer to Appendix 1 for a sample of the Polling Venue Assessment Form.

2. **Facilitating Mobile Electronic Voter Registration for Persons with Disabilities.**

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[1]FNCDP (2010), Making Women with Disabilities Visible.

**FIJI**     Fijian Elections Office

- The FEO has and continues to encourage persons with disabilities to request for Mobile Registration Teams to provide voter services in the convenience of their homes.

- Please refer to Appendix 2 for examples of the FEO's Mobile Registration Team providing voter services to persons with disabilities.

3. **Production of civic and voter education materials in formats that are accessible to persons with disabilities.**

- As a standard, the Directorate of Strategic Development and Communications at the FEO has adopted the practice of ensuring that all videos and television commercials produced for all awareness campaigns must include a sign-language interpreter at the bottom right hand section of the screen.

- So far, the FEO has produced videos which incorporate a sign-language interpreter for the following: Registration, How to locate a Polling Venue, Postal Voting, Pre Poll Voting, Voting Procedures, Results (where to check for results) and more recently – VoterCard 2.0 and the 2017 Nationwide Registration Drive.

- Please refer to Appendix 3 for an example of a television commercial which was produced to raise awareness about the new VoterCard.

- On April 5, 2017, the Electoral Commission launched the new FEO website *(www.feo.org.fj)* which

incorporated disability access features for all persons with disabilities. All the disability access features are located at the top right hand corner of the web-page, which is easily identifiable by the universally recognized symbol for disability access. These features are:

- 'Text to speech' feature: Users simply have to click on a 'Listen' icon on the web-page that they would like to have read out to them and the web-page generates audio which reads out the selected contents on the page. This is especially important for those who have visual impediments or low-literacy.

- Inverted colours: This special feature is for persons with visual impediments and are not able to recognise the colours green, red and blue. Because the FEO website is primarily blue in colour, this feature enables users to easily invert the colours chromatically to view the website in a colour of their choice.

- Font adjustment: This special feature was designed for those persons who may have partial visual impediments, which inhibits their ability to read fonts that are small in size. Users can use this feature to either increase or reduce the font size to suit their needs.

- Please refer to Appendix 4 for a screenshot of the new FEO website *(www.feo.org.fj)* which has disability access features located at the top right hand corner of the screen.



| PART 4 - ACCESSIBILITY | |
|---|---|
| Mode of Transport: Any   Road Condition: TarSeal   Is Suitable for Wet Weather Condition? Yes | |
| Travelling Time From Divisional Office: 30-40 minutes | |
| Public Transport Available: Bus,Taxis,Minivan   Distance from Nearest Public Transport: | |
| Alternative Access: | |
| Accessiblity for Elderly and Disabled: Accessible | |
| Is There Loading Area? | Is There Parking Area? |
| Specify Waiting Area: Sports Arena in the School | Specify Eating Area: Kitchen Utensils available |
| **Mobile Network Services** | |
| Digicel: Yes   Network Bar: 3   Is Test Call Clear? Yes | |
| Innk: Yes   Network Bar: 3   Is Test Call Clear? Yes | |
| Vodafone: Yes   Network Bar: 3   Is Test Call Clear? Yes | |
| TFL: Yes   Network Bar: 3   Is Test Call Clear? Yes | |
| Accessor's Comment: 5minutes from the Sawani Police Post | |
| Supervisor's Comment: | |

**Appendix 1:** Sample of the Polling Venue Assessment Form

# FIJI

Fijian Elections Office





*Above: A disabled person signs the National Register of Voters with his foot after verifying his details.*

*Left: The FEO's Mobile Registration Team assists a disabled voter during the 2017 Nationwide Registration Drive.*

**Appendix 2:** Examples of the FEO's Mobile Registration Team providing voter services to persons with disabilities.



Interpreter

**Appendix 3:** Example of a television commercial which was produced to raise awareness about the new VoterCard.
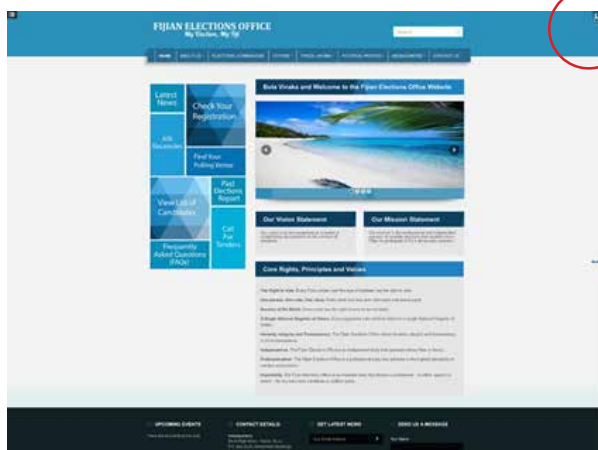


Disability access features

**Appendix 4:** Screenshot of the new FEO website *(www.feo.org.fj)* which has disability access features located on the top right hand corner of the screen.

*Patricia Mallam*
*Director, Strategic Development and Communications*
*Fijian Elections Office*

# Special Initiatives for Enhancing Participation of Persons with Disabilities

A Person with Disabilities (PwD) is defined by Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016 as 'a person with long term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairment which, in interaction with barriers, hinders his/her full and effective participation in society equally with others.' The United Nations Convention of Rights of Persons with Disabilities stressed on respect for inherent dignity, individual autonomy including freedom to make one's own choices and independence of persons, full and effective participation and inclusion in society, respect for difference and acceptance of persons with disabilities as part of human diversity and humanity, accessibility etc.

General elections provide for exercise of choices by the voters to choose their representatives through adult suffrage and it calls upon the Election Machinery to ensure:

(i)     all eligible citizens are registered as voters in the electoral roll and

(ii)    all voters are empowered to make choices for their representatives by casting the vote. Persons with Disabilities (PwDs) being special section of the society which requires a positive action wherein the electoral machinery reaches out to them for registration as voters and creating proper facilities to enable them to cast their vote.

Since the very beginning, planning for elections to the Legislative Assembly of Goa stressed on inclusivity by ensuring effective participation from all sections of the society. The leading association of Persons with Disabilities, Disability Rights Association of Goa was consulted in strategizing to ensure effective enrolment and education of PwD voters.



*Iconic Voter: Ms Tania Fernandes from Raia under Courtorim Constituency*

## Enrolment & Enumeration of PwD Voters

During Special Summary Revision of Electoral Roll steps were taken to:-

i.     Enrol PwD voters by visiting special homes run by Government & NGOs

ii.    Special Focus was given on enrolling persons with mental disabilities, who, due to general ignorance were left out from enrolment. It was stressed to the Electoral Registration Officers (ERO) that mentally unsound criteria has to be proved by following due procedure. Merely a fact that a person is staying in special home

does not bar him/her from registration under the Representation in People's Act, 1950 unless a competent authority certifies him/her as being of an unsound mind.

iii.   Booth Level Officer (BLO) registers were modified by including a column indicating types of disability if any, so that during house to house verification a comprehensive list can be maintained to assess the quantum of PwD voters.

## Provisioning of Assured Minimum Facilities (AMF) at Polling Stations

The Election Commission of India has changed the concept of providing facilities at the polling stations from Basic Minimum Facilities to Assured Minimum Facilities (AMF) which includes - provision for ramps, drinking water, separate toilets and electricity. The AMF provisioning is a positive action from the election machinery to ensure that voters are provided with adequate facilities when they come to cast their votes. This calls for proper assessment of all the polling stations and planning to ensure provisioning of facilities before the date of actual poll. Two-way monitoring system was adopted for creation/ upgradation of AMF at polling stations, one by Returning Officers another by Engineering Officers. The land-owning agencies were instructed to upgrade the facilities to meet AMF guidelines. Weekly follow up was taken up by the District Election Officer and Chief Electoral Officer and progress of the same was reported to the Election Commission of India. The Assured Minimum Facilities were in place by the time elections were announced and wherever, permanent AMF were not possible, temporary arrangements were planned and completed 3 days before poll.
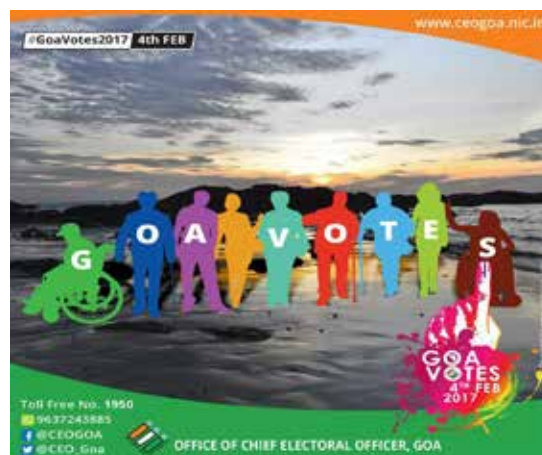


## Systematic Voters' Education & Electoral Participation (SVEEP)

Goa planned to go for usage of Voter's Verifiable Paper Audit Trail (VVPAT) in all polling stations which called for effective education for all voters especially PwD voters. The VVPAT Demo teams went to all special homes to impart VVPAT usage training. Further, special sessions were organized for blind voters to impart training in casting of vote. The message of inclusive election was further emphasized by inclusive election theme paintings on the walls of the Chief Electoral Officer's Office. The social media was used for promotion to ensure high participation from PwD voters by posting special info-graphics.

## Special Operating Procedure (SOP) for PwD Voters

Mapping of PwD voters was done by BLOs during house to house survey.  A polling station-wise book was prepared enumerating all PwD voters who were willing to take assistance of election machinery in casting votes. The booking also contained phone numbers of PwD voters. The Sector Offices were given responsibility to pick and drop

## Inclusive Election Initiative

- All Persons with Disabilities/Infirm Mapped
- Telephone numbers of Voters needing pickup mapped
- Sector Officers made responsible to pick up the needy voters
- Necessary facilities at Polling Stations for Ease of Voting by PwDs, Infirm, Old Voters
- Directory of 2700 PwDs prepared for launch by Hon'ble ECI

## INDIA

Election Commission of India



the voters from their home at the designated time to ensure the PwD voters face least difficulty in exercising their voting rights. The Returning Officers arranged for wheel chairs and volunteers to help PwD voters in casting their votes. The SOP contained list of around 2700 PwD voters. The SOP was also shared with leading NGO Disability Rights Association of Goa.

### Divyang Polling Station

To showcase the capabilities of Persons with Disabilities, a general polling station for all voters was managed exclusively by PwD polling officials. It was named as "Divyang Polling Station". An affirmative action was made to give a positive message to the society through Divyang Polling Station. As a token of participation in Divyang polling station, a pen was given to all first time voters. The Times of India reported Divyang polling station as a roaring success. A special modified vehicle was used to transport the officials to the polling station from the Dispatch Centre. One distinguishing feature of Divyang Polling Station was that it did not have any PwD voter. The voting percentage of this polling station was 85.09%, above the State average and voters were also satisfied with the performance of the officials.

### Conclusion

The General Elections to the Legislative Assembly of Goa witnessed significant steps in ensuring the creation of a proper environment for enrolment of PwD electors and exercising voting rights by them. It also witnessed enhanced usage of media for inclusive elections and showcased the potential of Persons with Disabilities by setting up Divyang Polling Stations. Persons with Disabilities participated enthusiastically in high numbers and emphasized that disability is not a hindrance in showcasing one's ability.



*Kunal*
*Chief Electoral Officer, Goa*
*Election Commission of India*



Divyang Polling Station

# Encouraging Participation of Persons with Disabilities (PwDs) through New Initiatives

The Constitution of Republic of Maldives states under Section 25 that unless otherwise provided in the Constitution, every citizen of Maldives eighteen years of age or older has the right:

(a)   to vote in elections and in public referendums, which shall be held by secret ballot;

(b)   to run for public office;

(c)   to take part in the conduct of public affairs, directly or through freely chosen representatives. With this statute the Election Commission of Maldives has the responsibility to ensure that every citizen of the country, including people with disabilities be given an equal opportunity to participate in the voting process from registering to vote to submitting ballots.

Over the past several decades, government officials, especially the Election Management Body in Maldives, have implemented reforms designed to encourage disabled adults and other citizens to vote by making the process simpler and the experience easier. There are numerous techniques that could enrich the involvement of people with disability in innumerable voting events. This starts with Voter Registration. With the right to vote being granted after a person turns eighteen years, the voters re-registration is only applicable to those citizens who have relocated themselves from their recorded household and for those voters who have been scheduled to travel on the day of voting. Election Commission of Maldives accepts re-registration forms from third party individuals. Thus, people with disabilities are not required to come in person

for their registration. Once the registered lists of eligible voters are published in the media and various other sources, faults are acknowledged and amendment requests are accepted through the complaint mechanism even by a third party. Thus, the registration procedure is completed effortlessly.

The day of Election is a hassle for every 18 year old citizen in Maldives. Polling stations are established according to the number of eligible voters. People with disabilities are competent to cast their vote within a short degree of time. Election Commission of Maldives organizes multiple measures for disabled voters to cast their vote with ease. This includes being able to cast their vote without waiting in a queue. According to the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) 2010, the term, disability means an individual has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more of his/her major life activities or there is a record of such an impairment or an individual is regarded as having such an impairment. However, the case is slightly different in Maldives. The arrangements are only accessible to those three categories of voters; who are considered disabled by Regulations for Local Councils Election.

Section 35 (b) of this regulation states that assistance will be given to those people to tick/mark on the ballot paper assuming that they are physically unable to do it.

1.   Blind people or people whose eyesight is so bad that they are unable to put a tick mark on the ballot paper themselves.

2.   People who cannot use either of their hands.

3.    People who are too old and weak to put the tick mark on the ballot paper with their own hands.

4.    People who are too ill to put the tick mark on the ballot paper.

This regulation provides people with disabilities and people who are too ill to be given an easier way to cast their vote.

In the late 19th and early 20th centuries several states across the globe denied the right to vote to people with disabilities, reflecting the fact that they have no right and assistances towards the nation's developments and constituency. Around the same time people with disabilities were being isolated in large institutions and subject to eugenic practices and policies. The general rationale for enshrining these restrictions from state Constitutions were targeted to the people who needed state assistance closely than the rest of society.

However, the situation has been improved with human rights campaign and other awareness programs around the world.

With regard to all these historical tactics, the Elections Commission of Maldives has designed and implemented various programs and awareness campaigns to generate public awareness that people with disabilities do have a right to vote. With years of efforts and implementations of regulations, today the discrimination against persons with disabilities has declined in Maldives.

*Nazma Nizam*
*Assistant Director, Commissioners Bureau,*
*Election Commission of Maldives*



Photo Courtesy : BBC

**NEPAL**  Election Commission, Nepal

# Empowering Persons with Disabilities in Elections: A Nepal Case Study

According to the last Census of Nepal (2011), about two percent of the total population has some kind of disability. As per the report, physical disability consists of about 36 percent of the total number of the disabled followed by low vision (18%) and the deaf (15%). The number having multiple disabilities is about 7 percent of the total disabled.

The Constitution of Nepal has ensured the rights of the persons with disabilities to education, social security and social justice. For the political participation of the persons with disabilities in the state affairs, the Constitution has also made necessary provision for their representation through the electoral system in both the House of Representatives and the State Assemblies.

In line with major national policies and legislations, the Election Commission of Nepal has formulated its Gender and Inclusion Policy as well as the Strategic Plans. All these policy documents make arrangements for the mainstreaming and promotion of the persons with disabilities (PwDs) with adopting different measures particularly in the process of election management. Some of the concrete initiatives taken as per the given legislations and policies can be listed as follows:

**A)   Constitutional Provisions**

The Constitution of Nepal under the right to equality ensures that special provisions can be made to empower and promote persons with disabilities along with other minorities. Similarly, article 42 of the Constitution, right to justice states that the PwDs have right to participate in the state bodies on the basis of inclusive principles. It also provides for the right of the PwDs to live with dignity. The guiding principles of the state also ensure that the transportation and infrastructures are to be disabled friendly. More importantly, the Constitution has also provisioned that political parties, while



Photo Courtesy : Suraj Sigdel, International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES)

filing candidacy in the House of the Representatives and the State Assembly under the closed list proportional system, have to provide for the representation of persons with disabilities.

**B)    Legal and Strategic Provisions**

Being based on the Constitution, the Commission has drafted electoral laws which have adequately addressed the issues of political inclusion of the PwDs and other minority groups. As per the strategic plan of the Commission, the principle of inclusion and the principle of participation are some of the guiding principles for the execution of everyday activities of the Commission. The strategic plan also stresses on voter education and outreach activities targeted for the minorities. It has also sought the provision of a separate official to assist the PwDs in the polling process.

**C)    Electoral Procedural Aspects**

The Commission has initiated legal and policy provisions in action in almost all electoral infrastructures and processes including voter registration.

**1.    Disabled Friendly Infrastructure**

The Commission annually allocates a certain portion of the budget for constructing ramps in polling locations. So far it has constructed 51 ramps so as to facilitate easy access to the PwDs in the process of voter registration, in particular and polling, in general.

**2.    Capacity Building Initiatives**

For capacity development of the PwDs, the Commission has conducted BRIDGE training (Access to Electoral Process) and other disable focused trainings. Such trainings include, training to the deaf and to the visually impaired. Required resource materials for the deaf has been prepared with more visuals and simplified language while for the visually impaired,

materials have been generated in the Braille script and distributed to them.

**3.    Voter Registration Initiatives**

The Commission, considering the access of the PwDs and voters in geographically remote places, conducts periodic voter registration campaigns. Moreover, in the registration process, the registration software has been designed in such a way that if there is someone with disability, his/her disability type is recognized, categorized and registered in the registration process.

**4.    Poll Day Initiatives**

The Commission has managed the fast access facility and the voting assistance facility to the PwDs in the polling process. On the poll day, a PwD does not have to be in a queue and if he or she is fully unable to cast vote without assistance, the polling officer or, his/her nearest relative can assist him/her in casting the vote.

**5.    Voter Education**

The Commission has also been making efforts to produce disabled-friendly leaflets, posters and other materials for the promotion of voter education among PwDs. The Commission has also mobilized some of the non-governmental organizations for this purpose.

Finally, Election Commission of Nepal is in the contiguous process of taking different initiatives for the promotion and main-streaming of PwDs in the electoral process in Nepal. Different stakeholders and development partners have also been supporting the Commission for this.

*Navaraj Dhakal*
*Joint Secretary*
*Election Commission, Nepal*

**USA**　　　U.S. Election Assistance Commission

# HAVA's Independent Voting Promise Drives Innovation, Empowerment, Policy

Twenty-seven years ago this July, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) was signed into law. While this ground breaking civil rights law prohibited discrimination based on disability and was instrumental in improving accessibility across much of our society, the ADA did not contain specific provisions guaranteeing persons with disabilities the right to vote independently and privately. That didn't happen until 12 years later when the Help America Vote Act (HAVA) became a law.

HAVA, which is also the statute that created the Election Assistance Commission (EAC) was the first time in American voting history that a law guaranteed voters with disabilities the right to vote without any assistance, a right so simple and fundamental to our democracy that most Americans take it for granted. It forever changed the U.S. election landscape, driving innovation, improving election services and empowering voters from coast to coast.

HAVA also made a real difference in the lives of voters with disabilities. For example, Nancy Ward started voting when she was 18, but she voted independently for the first time when she was about 61. She was one of the first visually impaired Americans to test new technology designed to make ballots more accessible. When asked about the experience, she was moved to tears, noting that the ability to vote privately without having another person present to walk her through the process was empowering.

In order to ensure voters like Nancy have the ability to cast their ballots without assistance, we must harness the power of technological advancements. We know that paper ballots are not accessible for some Americans, so it is critical for voting system manufacturers to commit to innovations that meet that goal and for jurisdictions to invest in voting systems that support the promise of HAVA. As the EAC works to craft the next generation of voting system testing guidelines, we are working with disability rights advocates, election officials and election system manufacturers to find solutions that meet this need.

It's also important to recognize that accessibility issues stretch far beyond voting machinery. All Americans should have the ability to get to their polling place to cast their ballot. Jurisdictions have a responsibility to establish polling places that are consistent with ADA law and take steps to ensure that all Americans have the ability to shape our democracy. That includes voters with disabilities, veterans who sustain combat injuries, those with Limited English Proficiency, as well as Americans who are overseas or serving in our military.

The best way to protect voters is to make sure they know their rights. That's why in 2016 the EAC created voting rights pocket cards to guide Americans on Election Day. These small cards –available in formats that include braille and large print – provide voters with information about how to cast their vote, what to do if they have a problem at the polls, and the rights that govern their participation in national elections. An informed voter is an empowered voter, and we are always looking for ways to work with local election officials in the effort to improve voter experience. So far we've distributed thousands of these cards and will continue to make them available in future elections.

As we approach the 15th anniversary of HAVA, the EAC is reaffirming its commitment to

## USA

U.S. Election Assistance Commission

carry out the bill's landmark provisions by making sure all voters have the opportunity to cast their ballot independently and privately. We will continue to host public hearings and participate in other events where these important issues are examined and a variety of perspectives are presented. We will also continue to work alongside advocates, innovators and lawmakers who support the technology and policies needed to protect that right.

The EAC was established by the Help America Vote Act of 2002 (HAVA). It is an independent, bi-partisan commission charged with ensuring secure, accurate and accessible elections by developing guidance to meet HAVA requirements, adopting voluntary voting system guidelines, and serving as a national

clearinghouse of information on election administration. EAC also accredits testing laboratories and certifies voting systems, as well as audits the use of HAVA funds.

*For more information about the EAC's work or to contact us with ideas about how we can improve the voting experience for all Americans, please visit www.eac.gov.*

*Photo Courtesy : http://www.amsvans.com/ blog/disability-law/wheelchair-accessibility-laws/*

*Thomas Hicks*
*Vice Chairman*
*US Election Assistance Commission*

## Int. IDEA

International Institute for Democracy and
Electoral Assistance

# Taking on the Challenges
## of Electoral Access and Political Participation in a New Democracy

A meaningful democracy enables the voice of the most marginalized to be heard and values their participation as equal members of society. In Bhutan, the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA) is working with civil society to take on the barriers to political and electoral participation of persons with disabilities. This is an important component of International IDEA's support to democracy and the development of democratic institutions in Bhutan.

International IDEA is committed to ensuring electoral rights of ALL citizens and assisting new democracies to develop policies that ensure electoral access for persons with disabilities. With its partners, International IDEA gathered stakeholders composed of election administrators, disability rights advocates and experts and members of parliament from more than twenty countries to draft the Bill of Electoral Rights for People with Disabilities in Sigtuna, Sweden in 2002. The resulting Sigtuna Declaration articulates countries' responsibility to ensure equal rights of persons with disabilities to electoral participation, as well as standards on secret voting, polling place accessibility and equal electoral rights for persons with mental disability.

Persons with disabilities count among the most vulnerable to exclusion and marginalization in Bhutan. To meet their needs, welfare services such as land and medical support have been granted under the King's Kidu, and through

institutions such as the Khaling Blind School. As in many other countries, the issues of political and electoral participation of persons with disabilities have received little attention.

It will be recalled that King Jigme Singye Wangchuck put Bhutan on a path to democracy in 2001. The shift from an absolute monarchy to a constitutional democratic monarchy culminated in democratic elections for the National Council in 2007 and the National Assembly in 2008. Since then, the 2011 local government elections, and the 2013 National Council and National Assembly elections were held. It is anticipated that periodic elections for the members of the National Council and National Assembly will proceed as planned in 2018.

The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities holds voting and standing as candidates for elective posts as fundamental to the political participation of persons with disabilities. While the Election Act of 2008 and the associated guidelines issued by the Election Commission of Bhutan (ECB) include provisions on voting access for some disability groups, these have not been fully implemented. No official data is available on voters and candidates with disabilities but findings from civil society research indicate low participation rates within the sector.

Within this context, International IDEA partnered with Ability Bhutan Society (ABS) to draft the 'Strategy to Improve Electoral Access and Increase Political Participation of

**Int. IDEA**

International Institute for Democracy and
Electoral Assistance

Persons with Disabilities in Bhutan.' The aim was to empower Bhutanese civil society and DPOs to take the lead in advancing political participation and electoral access for persons with disabilities, within the framework of human rights. With an international expert engaged by International IDEA, key informants from civil society, Disabled Peoples Organizations (DPOs), government, political parties and parliament were sought for dialogue on the issues and developments as well as the priorities that need to be pursued.

The resulting document provides guidance to civil society and Disabled Peoples Organizations (DPO) in advocating for policy reforms and government programs, and serves as a tool for stakeholders to develop their own programs on political and electoral rights of persons with disability. More importantly, the document identifies existing opportunities and resources that can be leveraged by civil society and DPOs. These include policy and development planning processes that see an increasing openness from the government to engage civil society; human resources in schools and institutions that cater to persons with disabilities; and, opportunities for collaboration among stakeholders.

The process of developing the strategy document was designed to engage civil society to think comprehensively, and to build their capacity to broaden the conversation about electoral and political rights. The use of a rights-based approach was foremost to promote the understanding that electoral and political participation are human rights. Moreover, the electoral cycle approach was introduced because too often, electoral access dialogues tend to focus solely on voting day provisions. By using the electoral cycle approach, civil society can hope for more comprehensive policy reforms and institutionalized programs from the ECB and other stakeholders. Moreover, civil society's own initiatives for the disability sector will be better informed to go beyond voting processes to include civic and voter education, election monitoring, training for election administrators, and participation in political parties, among others.

Negative attitudes toward disability proves to be the biggest barrier to the participation of persons with disabilities in Bhutan. That disability is believed to be a karmic consequence of a person's past life has resulted to the discrimination and exclusion of persons with disabilities and their families. There is little public support for enabling voters and candidates with disability. Furthermore, political parties have not been inclusive of persons with disability within the party membership and party platforms. The perception is that persons with disabilities in the country are not well-organized and therefore are not a political force.

Civil society and DPO efforts, complemented by the advocacy of ABS's royal patron, Queen Gyaltsuen Jetsun Pema Wangchuck, have generated some support for issues such as accessibility and the needs of children with disabilities. However, much needs to be done to raise awareness on the political and electoral rights of persons with disabilities. Aside from negative attitudes, the lack of comprehensive data on disabilities, the inaccessibility of the built and natural environment, and the systematic disenfranchisement resulting from legislation and regulations are some of the pressing issues identified in the strategy document.

International IDEA is committed to support its partner civil society and DPOs in pursuit of accessible electoral processes and increased political participation of persons with disabilities. Armed with the priorities outlined in the strategy document, and continuous through capacity building and technical assistance, it is hoped that the partnership effects changes to government policy that will lead to the voice of persons with disabilities being heard, and democracy truly taking root in Bhutan.

*May Gladys Butoy*
*International IDEA*

**IFES**     International Foundation for Electoral Systems

# Ensuring Voter Education Accessibility to Citizens with Disabilities

The World Health Organization estimates that there are one billion women, men, and children with physical, visual, auditory, intellectual, and psychosocial disabilities. These citizens encounter numerous barriers to participation in political and public life, including communication barriers. Communication barriers restrict the information that persons with disabilities receive. In the context of elections, such a lack of information might result in not knowing when elections are taking place, the contents of party manifestos, polling station locations, or how to mark the ballot.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) Article 29 guarantees that people with disabilities have the right to participate in political and public life on an equal basis as others. The treaty has been ratified by over 90% of UN member states, thus making its provisions the international standard. Sustainable Development Goal 16 also calls on states to ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels. These international frameworks call on all election stakeholders, including election management bodies (EMBs), disabled people's organizations (DPOs), civil society, and political parties to ensure that electoral information is available in formats accessible to citizens with disabilities.

The International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) has developed voter education materials in collaboration with EMBs and DPOs in dozens of countries around the world. Based on this experience, IFES has compiled good practices for implementing disability-inclusive voter education campaigns. Key lessons learned are the importance of developing materials



*(This TV spot on accessible voting processes in Kosovo incorporated both sign language and captions to engage voters who were deaf or hard-of-hearing. Source: IFES)*

in multiple types of accessible formats and ensuring that the dissemination methods reach multiple marginalized groups, such as women with disabilities and youth with disabilities.

## Why is Dissemination in Multiple Formats Important?

Voter education should be disseminated in multiple types of formats in order to be fully accessible to all citizens. Common types of formats include print, radio, television, digital and interactive events. Multiple formats refer to a combination of these formats. For example, a voter education campaign might include any of the following:

- **Print:** posters, brochures, flyers, newspaper ads or comics
- **Radio:** call in shows, dramas, ads
- **Television:** public service announcements (PSAs), talk shows, animations
- **Digital content:** websites, social media, YouTube
- **Interactive events:** street theatre, voting simulations, concerts

Using multiple formats during a voter

**IFES** International Foundation for Electoral Systems



*(This pictorial 2016 poster from Haiti shows people with and without disabilities discussing issues before an election. Source: IFES)*

education campaign is helpful for reaching all voters, not just voters with disabilities. Using several types of methods to disseminate information increases the likelihood that citizens hear important messages about the electoral process.

## What Makes Voter Education Accessible?

For persons who have sensory disabilities, information is not always accessible. Combining multiple formats ensures that all voters receive the information. For example, for persons with visual disabilities, billboards are inaccessible because the information is conveyed only visually. For deaf voters, radio is inaccessible because they cannot hear what is being said. However, using both billboards and radio ads during a voter education campaign helps to reach both voters who are blind and voters who are deaf.

Easy-to-read and wordless content help reach all citizens. Easy-to-read format uses simplified text and pictures to help make information easier to understand for people who have low literacy skills or who have an intellectual or learning disability. Wordless content such as pictures can be used in conjunction with facilitated voter education workshops or on its own. Persons with intellectual disabilities, persons with low literacy and persons who do not speak the main language of a country all benefit from wordless content.

The infographic below contains additional suggestions for making voter education in any format accessible to everyone.

## Reaching Women with Disabilities and Youth with Disabilities

People with disabilities are among the most marginalized communities in the world. This marginalization is compounded when a person identifies with multiple marginalized groups,



How to Make Content Accessible to Persons who are Blind, Deaf, or Have Intellectual Disabilities

print/digital
- Use braille
- Add alt-text to images
- Include images and simple language
- Provide transcripts for all videos

radio
- Provide transcripts
- Pair radio campaigns with other formats
- Use simple language

interactive
- Make sure all information is spoken out loud
- Describe the action that is taking place
- Include sign language interpretation

television/video
- Make sure all information is spoken out loud
- Include sign language interpretation and captions
- Include images and simple language

Graphic developed by IFES

**IFES**  International Foundation for Electoral Systems



*(This 2012 comic from Myanmar features a woman with a disability. Source: IFES)*

such as being a woman or a young person. In addition to producing materials in multiple types of accessible formats, voter education should also be disseminated in a manner likely to reach women with disabilities and youth with disabilities.

Sixty percent of all persons with disabilities are women, and women with disabilities are less likely to receive comparable education or training, have access to health care or have employment opportunities. In Myanmar, IFES identified that women were less likely than men to know how to mark a ballot. In order to address this gap, IFES partnered with women's groups to develop a targeted voter education initiative, including sample ballots, where women could practice voting using apples, oranges and other fruit as 'candidates.' IFES and the women's groups developed brochures describing the process of how to vote, which they shared in markets along with sample ballots. As part of this initiative, images of women with disabilities were integrated into the voter education materials.

Youth with disabilities are less likely to have access to information regarding democratic institutions than their peers. Including youth as active participants in their societies decreases the likelihood that they become involved in violent conflict and civic unrest. In Kenya, IFES worked with the EMB to develop

a voter education program that was delivered in schools. The materials developed for the campaign included images of youth with disabilities.
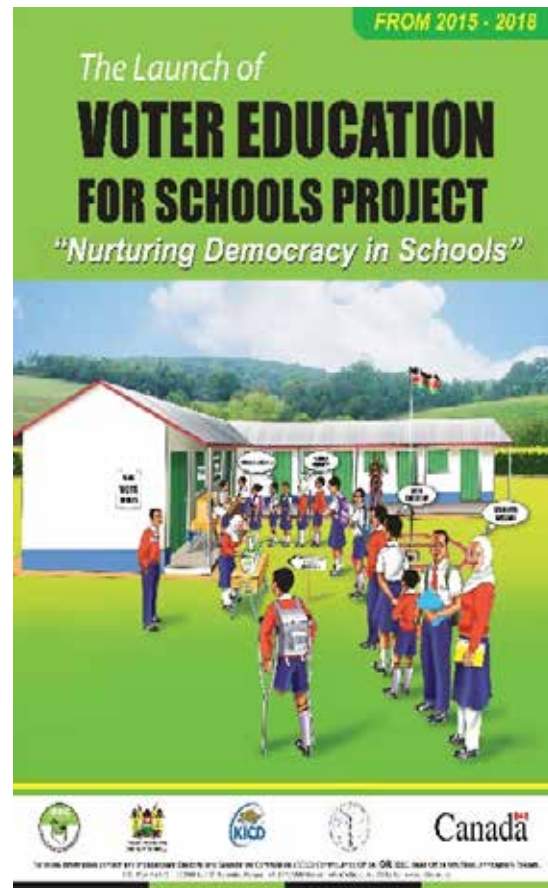


*(This Kenyan poster includes youth with disabilities and was disseminated in schools. Source: IFES)*

Including images of women with disabilities in the Myanmar brochure and images of youth with disabilities in the Kenyan poster, did not add an additional cost – it just required asking the graphic designer to draw images of women and youth with disabilities. By ensuring that voter education materials are developed in multiple types of formats as well as proactively including women with disabilities and youth with disabilities in broader outreach efforts, EMBs can ensure that their messages are inclusive of all citizens.

*Virginia Atkinson*
*Senior Access and Inclusion Specialist*
*IFES*

**UNDP**  United Nation Development Programme

# Initiatives for Boosting Participation of Persons with Disabilities (PwDs)

The right to participate in political and public life is a well-established principle of international human rights law and elaborated in Article 21 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and Article 25 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), which guarantees to all citizens the right and the opportunity, without unreasonable restrictions, to take part in the conduct of public affairs directly or through freely chosen representatives; to vote and to be elected at genuine periodic elections; and to have equal access to public service.

While the right to participate in politics and public life is well-established in human rights law, persons with disabilities are frequently denied their right to political participation in a variety of ways and for a variety of reasons, often the result of direct or indirect discrimination. For example, stereotypes regarding disability often lead to discrimination against persons with disabilities in decision-making processes generally and in the specific processes of voting, running for office, or participating in public outreach initiatives by political parties.  Obstacles faced by persons with disabilities often include combined aspects of legal, physical and transportation and informational barriers, among others. In the case of persons with disabilities, participation in political and public life enables one to take part and have a voice in decisions that affect oneself and one's community and country.  Such participation is an important means of overcoming exclusion and discrimination and dismantling other barriers frequently faced by persons with disabilities.

UNDP is committed to the inclusion of all, including persons with disabilities in its work to empower people and in its  work towards the achievement of SDGs.  UNDP is part of the UN Partnership on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNPRPD), a unique collaborative effort between UN entities, governments and civil society that supports country-level work towards implementation of Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). UNDP country offices have also supported a variety of programmes that focus on PwDs.

The following are some of UNDP's recent experiences and interventions for inclusion of persons with disability in the electoral processes from its Country Offices in Moldova, Timor-Leste and Nepal:

## UNDP Moldova

The 2015 General Local Elections were the first elections in Moldova where each polling station was equipped with special materials to allow participation of vision-impaired voters. With the UNDP Project support, special sleeves (envelopes) for ballot papers were produced to be used by voters with visual impairments, being universal – regardless of the type of

**UNDP**   United Nation Development Programme

elections, with numbers written in Braille script and opening to mark the ballot with special stamp.

The procedure was tested during 2014 elections in 57 polling stations and the feedback from voters was very positive.

Video learning products made by the Center for Continuous Electoral Training on voting procedure by using the sleeves –

*https://www.youtube.com/ watch?v=0wFmwVpOEBY&feature=youtu.be*

The CEC printed and distributed through local NGOs (members of the Moldovan Society of the visually impaired) 50 copies of the 'Voters' Guide' in braille language.

## UNDP Timor-Leste

In Timor-Leste during the Parliament elections UNDP is supporting a monitoring assessment of people with disabilities' participation to ascertain their access in the electoral processes, specifically in the polling centres on Election-Day but also including the voter registration and electoral campaign.





UNDP Electoral Project- LEARN in collaboration with International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) and Raes Hadomi Timor Oan (RHTO), the largest NGO supporting people with physical disabilities in the country with members in all the municipalities of the country. The objective is to monitor the accessibility of people with disabilities in electoral process.

Also, UNDP LEARN project and the electoral management bodies of the country (STAE and CNE) has also launched a specific voter education campaign targeting people living with disabilities. UNDP LEARN project activities are funded by Government of Japan and Korea.

## UNDP Nepal

The UNDP Electoral Support Project (ESP), Election Commission, Nepal and Nepal Association of the Blind (NAB) organised trainings for the persons with visual disability and has produced IEC material developed under the project:

*United Nation Development Programme , India*

## INSIGHTS

# Inclusive Electoral Literacy
for Persons with Disabilities:
Guiding Principles and
International Experiences

## 1.1 Introduction

We have already discussed (VoICE International, Volume I Issue2 Pages 34-37) the relevance of voter education in the context of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), the principal and universal legal instruments as also the guiding principles for voter education in the UNCHR Handbook on Human Rights and Elections (1994). Adoption of the Universal Declaration marked the beginning of participation as a human right.

## 1.2  Special Groups: Guiding Principles under Specific UN Instruments

The issue of inclusion in electoral participation is discussed in a number of specific human rights documents, such as the 1965 UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD) and the 1979 UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) as well as in the 2006 UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). This article intends to focus on the guiding principles as laid down in the CRPD, the practice and experience of voter education in different countries. We start with the excerpts from the Convention.

## 1.3 UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disability, 2006 (CRPD)

### Article 21: Freedom of expression and opinion, and access to information

States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to ensure that persons with disabilities can exercise the right to freedom of expression and opinion, including the freedom to seek, receive and impart information

and ideas on an equal basis with others and through all forms of communication of their choice, as defined in article 2 of the present Convention, including by:

(a)    Providing information intended for the general public to persons with disabilities in accessible formats and technologies appropriate to different kinds of disabilities in a timely manner and without additional cost;

(b)    Accepting and facilitating the use of sign languages, Braille, augmentative and alternative communication, and all other accessible means, modes and formats of communication of their choice by persons with disabilities in official interactions;

(c)    Urging private entities that provide services to the general public, including through the Internet, to provide information and services in accessible and usable formats for persons with disabilities;

(d)    Encouraging the mass media, including providers of information through the Internet, to make their services accessible to persons with disabilities;

(e)    Recognizing and promoting the use of sign languages.

### Article 29: Participation in political and public life

States Parties shall guarantee to persons with disabilities political rights and the opportunity to enjoy them on an equal basis with others, and shall undertake:

(a)    To ensure that persons with disabilities can effectively and fully participate in political and public life on an equal basis with others, directly or through freely

chosen representatives, including the right and opportunity for persons with disabilities to vote and be elected, inter alia, by:

(i) Ensuring that voting procedures, facilities and materials are appropriate, accessible and easy to understand and use;

(ii) Protecting the right of persons with disabilities to vote by secret ballot in elections and public referendums without intimidation, and to stand for elections, to effectively hold office and perform all public functions at all levels of government, facilitating the use of assistive and new technologies where appropriate;

(iii) Guaranteeing the free expression of the will of persons with disabilities as electors and to this end, where necessary, at their request, allowing assistance in voting by a person of their own choice;

(b) To promote actively an environment in which persons with disabilities can effectively and fully participate in the conduct of public affairs, without discrimination and on equal basis with others, and encourage their participation in public affairs, including:

(i) Participation in non-governmental organizations and associations concerned with the public and political life of the country, and in the activities and administration of political parties;

(ii) Forming and joining organizations of persons with disabilities to represent persons with disabilities at international, national, regional and local levels.

The provisions contained in CRPD specify the mandate for inclusion and special attention to PwDs in terms of universal electoral participation

### 1.4 WHO on Persons with Disabilities

The World Health Organization (WHO) has estimated that 15 percent of the world's population has a disability, with 80 percent of these persons living in developing countries.

PwDs may also include various ethnic, religious, socio-economic and gender groups. Elections provide them an equal opportunity, with other citizens, to exercise their preferences and shape political outcomes.

The mandate of the UN instruments coupled with the country legislations and the support from the EMBs for participation in the electoral process has made a substantial impact in removal of barriers to inclusion. Pioneering work has been done by international organizations, such as UNDP, WHO, NDI, IFES etc, to support inclusion and equal access through targeted voter education programs in many countries.

**1.4.1** There are several other international Treaties and agreements which support the inclusion of the PwDs

### 1.5 Voter Education for Greater Inclusion of all Citizens

The main aim of voter education is to provide all the requisite information for electoral participation effectively and efficiently to all constituents to achieve the desired objectives of universal adult suffrage. While many categories of voters are covered under the general or formal voter education programs, there are special groups which need strategically well designed and a focused outreach and special campaigns to receive voter information and motivation to participate. Efficacy and efficiency of any voter education program lies in effectively reaching out to such special groups also. Media, Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) may be involved as important stakeholders in voter education outreach for inclusion of such special groups. Voter Education outreach and campaigns should address and motivate inter alia the PwD voters for maximization of participation and voter turnouts for achieving the overall objectives of the universal adult suffrage.

This article, visits the experience of different countries in addressing voter education on inclusion of the Persons with Disabilities. The article also highlights the support provided by the EMBs, international organizations and civil society organizations to the special voter education campaigns for PwDs in such countries.

## 2. Afghanistan: Contributing a Voice; Voter Education Campaigns

Afghanistan has a total population of about 33 million. Going by the 15% estimate laid down by WHO, the population with a disability is estimated at 5 million. Afghanistan ratified the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities on September 18, 2012.



**2.1** The democracy and the electoral processes have evolved in Afghanistan in recent past in a sustained manner. Despite the challenges before them, the Independent Election Commission has initiated the voter education process in Afghanistan with the help of international organizations such as IFES, UNDP etc. besides the in house activities. Separate Media Commission under the IEC has been established under the law to ensure fair access to the public mass media.

### 2.2 Voter Education

Voter education campaign has been carried out by the EMB in Afghanistan through posters and leaflets. The posters, some of which are discussed as follows, convey a focused message of encouragement to inclusion for all categories of voters for electoral participation.

### 2.3 Registered voters

The illustration shown on the left was part of a series of voter education posters produced by the IEC. It explains as to how to register as a voter before the election in simple yet effective manner.

### 2.4 Contributing a Voice

The poster illustration shown below is part of a voter education presentation that was used to explain as to how a successful vote leads to an elected official joining Afghanistan's government. It was produced by the Joint Electoral Management Body (JEMB) and supported by the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) and the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) for the 2005 election.

# 3. Canada

### 3.1. Elections Canada: Accessibility Policy and Service Offering for Persons with Disabilities

Election Canada's vision envisages accessibility as an ongoing process to provide universal, flexible and inclusive services that benefit the electors. In the recent years they have focused on eliminating barriers for people with disabilities.

### 3.2. Policy for People with Disabilities

EC developed its policy for People with Disabilities in February 2015 in consultation with their Advisory Group for Disability Issues.  Launched in 2014, the Advisory Group aims to fulfill its commitment to ongoing consultations with groups that represent persons with disabilities. An early outcome of this consultation came in February 2015, with the development of an Accessibility Policy and Service Offering.

### 3.3 Accessibility

The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms guarantees the right to vote in federal elections in Canada. Accordingly, the EC is committed to inclusive, universal and varied services that respond to the needs of electors from different categories. The Canada Elections Act provides for a variety of voting methods and allows the Chief Electoral Officer to advertise the services it offers for assisting voters with disabilities. EC has worked to remove the obstacles voters may encounter by making continued improvements to the electoral process, including communication and administrative processes. The voting process includes the following features to reflect inclusion:

- Flexible voting methods: Voting by mail or at a local Elections Canada office; advance voting days; mobile polls serving facilities for seniors or persons with physical disabilities; and, in special cases, voting at home in the presence of an election officer and a witness.
- As much as possible, level access to local Elections Canada offices, polling stations and other premises used during an election.
- If a polling station does not have level access, provision of a transfer certificate on request and permission to vote at another location.
- If requested in advance, sign language interpreters to assist electors at the poll.
- The ability to have an election officer, a friend or a relative to assist an elector with a disability in marking the ballot at the poll.
- Voting screens that admit plenty of light, lighted magnifiers to make the ballot easier to read, Braille and large-print lists of candidates on Election Day and tactile and Braille templates that fit on top of a ballot.
- Requisite training to election officers and community relations officers for meeting the accessibility needs of people with varied disabilities.

### 3.4 Policy: A Living Document

EC intends to continue working with the disability community to better understand accessibility issues and reduce barriers. Accessibility Policy and Service Offering document has a specific focus on the tools and services that people with disabilities can expect when they vote. This document is intended as a 'living' document to be updated following the next general election in light of accessibility best practices, evaluations and new opportunities for improvements to take place. Among other things, the policy describes the mechanism for feedback, complaints and inquiries from individuals concerning accessibility. Elections Canada welcomes feedback that will help it to better serve PwDs. Questions or feedback on this policy may be provided to EC online at 1-800-463-6868.

### 3.5 EC's Commitment

EC is committed to building upon the accessible electoral framework that Canadians trust and use, to be responsive to the needs of Canadians of all abilities, to working to accommodate voters and employees with disabilities, to make the voting experience as accessible as possible and to engage people with disabilities about the

services that affect them. In this context, EC is committed to adopting the following principles:

- Design for choice and flexibility by thinking inclusively.
- Educate and inform Canadians using plain language.
- Provide Canadians with modern and convenient ways to access information, register and vote.
- Improve the voting experience and make it easier to participate by removing barriers.
- Support the independence, and respect the dignity of people with disabilities.

### 3.6  Accessibility Initiatives

Elections Canada works on a continued basis to remove obstacles by making improvements to the electoral process, including communication and administrative processes. EC has taken a number of steps to improve the accessibility to the electoral process. These include:

- Enhanced and expanded cross-disability training for both election workers and Elections Canada staff.
- Increased investment in community outreach for people with disabilities.
- User friendly signage and voting screens at polling places.
- New voting tools such as magnifiers and Braille lists of candidates.
- A polling place accessibility review process that follows a updated  checklist of 35 accessibility criteria.
- Improvements to   website accessibility.
- A revamped communications campaign on information in plain language and in accessible formats.
- Greater consultation and outreach programs to share information.  EC works with national and provincial organizations and leverage their networks to reach larger number of  people with disabilities.

### 3.7. Informed by Consultation and Research

Elections Canada's ongoing accessibility initiatives build upon research and consultation

undertaken since the last general election. In 2011–2012, Elections Canada met with 19 national and provincial disability organizations across Canada. The goal of this exercise was to build better relationships with the PwD community and gain a better understanding of its needs and the barriers that people face. In 2014, Elections Canada launched its first ever Advisory Group for Disability Issues.

### 3.8. The Voting Experience – Tools and Services at Polling Places

### 3.8.1 Polling Places

In consultation with experts and the PwD community EC has developed accessibility criteria for polling stations. The Returning Officers use Accessibility Checklist to evaluate the accessibility of potential sites prior to the election. This checklist contains 35 criteria, 15 of which are mandatory. After an election is called, EC sends out a voter information card to all registered voters indicating the accessibility of polling places with the following information, in one of three ways:

- The site meets 15 accessibility criteria. The accessibility symbol is displayed, along with where to find more information.
- The site is wheelchair accessible. The accessibility symbol is displayed, along with the phone number that you can call for help.
- The site has no wheelchair access. The accessibility symbol is not displayed, but voters are encouraged to call their Returning Office for alternate location.

Voter Information Service also provides complete details of accessibility to the concerned voters. EC's help lines also provide guidance.

### 3.8.2 Tools and Services

**EC provides a variety of tools and services for PwDs:**

- Magnifiers with light (4x)
- A tactile and Braille voting template that fits on top of a ballot
- Large-print lists of candidates

- Braille lists of candidates (available on election day only)
- Language or sign language interpretation (to be requested in advance)
- Assistance in marking a ballot
- Improved voting screens that let in more light
- Information through video if required.

### 3.8.3 Language or Sign language interpretation

If a voter requires language or sign-language interpretation on Election Day, he may request Elections Canada's available Officer to provide the service as per time prescribed. Online service through TTY is also made available.

### 3.8.4 Service Animals

Elections Canada supports the use of service animals to assist voters with disabilities at polling places. Election workers are fully aware that service animals are working animals and should not be distracted, spoken to or offered food.

### 3.8.5 Assistance from Others

Voters with disabilities may require the assistance of a support person to help them vote. Support people provide assistance to a person with a disability and may be a family member, friend, personal support worker, intervener or sign-language interpreter. The support person will be required to take an oath to respect the secrecy of the voter's choice. A Deputy Returning Officer can also help a voter mark the ballot. This will always be done in full view of a poll clerk.

### 3.8.6 Assistive Devices

Voters with disabilities, in particular people with a visual impairment, may use a personal mobile device, such as a smart phone, to read their ballot behind the voting screen. All reasonable steps should be taken to preserve the secrecy of the vote.

### 3.8.7 Community Relations Officers for Accessibility

The Community Relations Officer program was created to reduce barriers to voting faced by certain groups of voters. Officers provide information on when, where and ways to register and vote as well as the tools and services available to voters.

EC has added Community Relations Officers for accessibility across Canada to engage voters with disabilities and local organizations, and to serve as a resource to the Returning Officer.

Additionally, information on accessibility has been included in a new communications booklet and toolkit provided to all community relations officers.

### 3.8.8 Training for Election Workers

The training program takes into consideration the time constraints associated with training electoral officers and incorporates in-class and online training. Our online training modules, including videos, are fully accessible and have been tested by people with disabilities.

**Elections Canada's accessibility training:**

- Makes election workers aware of accessibility tools at the polling place.
- Provides tips on how to maintain these accessibility features.
- Makes election workers aware of various tools available to voters, and
- Educates them on how to approach a voter who may require assistance.

### 3.9 EC's Website Accessibility

The Elections Canada website is compliant with the federal standard on web accessibility, which follows World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) accessibility guidelines (version 2, level AA). EC is always working to improve the website's accessibility.

*Details may be accessed at: http://www.elections.ca/content. aspx?section=vot&dir=spl/policy&document*

## 4. Inclusive Voter Education in Kenya

Kenya has a population of 45 million and the population of the persons with disabilities is estimated at 6.7 million (as per WHO's estimation level of 15%). Kenya ratified the CRPD in the year 2008.

**4.1** Kenya has in place the 'Persons with Disabilities Act' 2003 to provide support and equal access to PwDs. Excerpts of Article 29 and 30 from the Act are given as below:

**Persons with Disabilities Act (2003)**

**Article 29**

(1) All persons with disabilities shall be entitled at their request, to be assisted by persons of their choice in voting in presidential, parliamentary and civic elections.

(2) A person who undertakes to render assistance under subsection (1) shall do so strictly in accordance with the instructions of the voter.

(3) A person described in subsection (2) shall bind himself, in the prescribed form, to comply with that subsection.

(4) A person who contravenes subsection (2) is guilty of an offence.

**Article 30**

Polling stations shall be made accessible to persons with disabilities during elections, and such persons shall in addition be provided with the necessary devices and assistive devices and services to facilitate the exercise of this right under this section.

**4.2 Voter Education Weeks: 'Informed Voter for Informed choices'; Emphasis on Inclusion**

During this week, the IEBC sensitizes public on the importance of participation in the electoral process that helps in boosting the continuous voter registration process. Other issues highlighted cover inclusion and mainstreaming, party lists, political tolerance and dispute resolution mechanisms etc. The voter education weeks are implemented countrywide through outreach programmes



*Voter Education using road shows: A Citizen going through Voter Education materials at the ASK show in Kenya.*

to schools, electoral technology exhibitions, media campaigns, onsite service delivery, open stakeholders' forum, and town hall meetings. IEBC engages stakeholders in advance to derive larger voter satisfaction from the event. IEBC has given a special call inter alia to the Persons with disabilities to participate in the forthcoming elections and all facilities are provided for such voters.

**4.3 IEBC Collaboration with the IFES**

IEBC collaborates with the IFES for facilitating consultative forums for Persons with Disabilities (PwDs), Women and Youth forums. Further, IEBC also collaborates with the KCHR (Kenya Commission of Human Rights) for assessment of participation of Persons with Disabilities in General Elections.

Inclusion of the PwDs is prominently demonstrated in banners displayed at the launch of a new voter education initiative for schools in Kenya. Led by the IEBC, the Kenyan Ministry of Education, Science and Technology and the Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development (KICD) the project is supported by the IFES and the Canadian Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development.
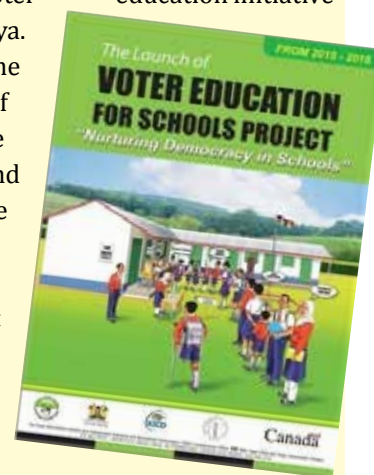


*Banners Announcing Launch of 'Voter Education for Schools Project' in Kenya*

## 5.Inclusive Voter Education in Myanmar

### 5.1. Inclusion in the Electoral Process: Persons with Disabilities

Myanmar has a population of 56 million and population of PwDs is estimated at 8.5 million (as per the 15% estimate of the WHO). Myanmar ratified the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in December 2011. Myanmar has made sustained efforts for inclusion of PwDs in the 2015 electoral process.

### 5.2. Inclusive Voter Education

The Myanmar Independent Living Initiative (MILI) collaborated with the Union Election Commission (UEC) to develop inclusive voter education posters, brochures, logos and pamphlets etc. that provide guidance and instructions for voters with disabilities and the public as such on how to cast their ballot for October 2015 elections. Visuals with simple language and clear message help mitigate communication challenges that may occur especially for people with low literacy levels besides effectively addressing the problem of barriers to inclusion. Use of local language further helped in dissemination. These materials were used as a vital component of the Voter Education Campaign in 2015 elections in the country.

The initiative was supported by the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES), the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, and the United Kingdom Department for International Development (DFID).

Some of the best practice materials are briefly mentioned step wise in the following:

### 5.2.1 Encouraging Everyone to Vote: The LOGO

In support of the 2015 elections in Myanmar, UEC and the MILI developed a logo for a voter education campaign. Using a logo for a campaign allows voter education materials to be identified as part of a broader campaign and helps emphasize the importance of election accessibility. The logo was used on



several voter education materials, including brochures and for voter education concert held in Myanmar.

### 5.3. Supporting the Right to Vote

### 5.3.1 Creating a Campaign

As the 2015 election approached, UEC of Myanmar and MILI worked to create a campaign in advance, encouraging persons with disabilities to vote and participate in the election. The production of the poster was supported by IFES.



### 5.3.2 Encouraging Citizens to Register to Vote

This poster was produced by the Myanmar UEC to encourage citizens to register to vote. It was created for 2015 elections with support from the IFES.

### 5.3.3 Citizens and Voter Registration



This poster was produced by the Myanmar UEC with support from IFES to encourage citizens to register to vote for 2015 elections



### 5.3.4 Registering to Vote

This poster provides information on how voters can submit a form to correct their voter registration information or to report that a



registered voter may be ineligible to participate in elections.

### 5.4. Guidelines for Voting

In support of the 2015 elections Myanmar UEC and MILI developed an inclusive brochure explaining the guidelines for voting. The



brochure was printed and distributed with support from the United Kingdom's DFID, the Australian government's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, and the IFES

### 5.5 Voting by Persons with Disabilities



MILI in collaboration with the UEC developed an inclusive voter education poster that provides instructions for men and women with disabilities on how to cast their ballot in October 2015 elections. The poster was produced with support from IFES, DFID and other agencies referred to above.

## 6. New Zealand: Inclusive Voter Education, Disability Strategy and Initiatives for PwDs

### 6.1 Introduction

All New Zealand citizens have the right to have their voice heard and as such, equal access to enrollment and voting at elections. In this context, the Electoral Commission of New Zealand provides efficient and effective electoral assistance in terms of enrollment and voting to persons with disabilities, aborigines, other categories requiring voter assistance besides women. The initiatives of EC NZ are supported by the provisions of the Elections Act 1993 and the rules made under this Act.

### 6.2 Access 2020 Disability Strategy

EC NZ has developed Access 2020 strategy taking into account the improvements made during last three elections and integrating them into a long time framework. Through this process, the Commission aims to identify and remove the barriers that the PwDs face at the time of enrollment and exercising their right to vote. The focus of the disability strategy of EC NZ is to support persons with disabilities and their families 'whanau and caregivers' for participation in electoral process.

### 6.3 Initiatives of EC NZ

EC NZ continued all of its initiatives from the 2011 general election through 2014. Main initiatives include the following:
- information in accessible formats including Braille, large-print, audio format and screen reader files
- information and consultation opportunities in New Zealand Sign Language
- DVD resource kits and facilitation guides for voters with an intellectual disability
- Plain English resources including posters, booklets and DVDs

### 6.4 Special Voters

Special Voters Defined under the Law: As provided under the electoral legislation of New Zealand, a person who is otherwise qualified to vote may vote as a special voter under inter alia the following conditions:

- A person intends to be absent or is actually absent from the district on the day of polling;
- A person who intends to be outside or is actually outside New Zealand on the polling day;
- A person is unable to attend to vote at any polling place in the district by reason of illness, infirmity, pregnancy, or recent childbirth;
- A person is unable to vote on the polling day by reason of a religious objection;
- A person satisfies the Returning Officer or the issuing officer that on any other ground it will not be practicable for him to vote at a polling place in the district without incurring hardship or serious inconvenience.

Special vote can be cast only as per prescribed procedure under the law.

### 6.5 Blind, Disabled or Illiterate Voters

An elector who is wholly or partially blind or whether because of physical handicap or otherwise, unable to write or has severe difficulty in reading or writing, or is not sufficiently familiar with the English language to vote without assistance, can vote as per prescribed procedure under the Election laws of New Zealand. The law elaborates the procedure as well as the nature of assistance that may be provided to such voters.

### 6.6 Provision of Telephone Dictation to Blind Voters

EC NZ delivered telephone dictation voting to voters who are blind or visually impaired or have another disability with the result that they are unable to vote independently and in secret at the 2014 General Election.

### 6.7 Enrolling and Voting in Sign Language

The election resources of EC NZ provide information and guidance for enrolling and voting in New Zealand sign language for voters who require this assistance.

*Details of the Access 2020 disability strategy and other disability resources of the Electoral Commission, New Zealand can be accessed at its website for voter information, awareness and educative purposes.*

# 7. Paraguay: Voter Education for Persons with Disabilities

## 7.1 Introduction

Paraguay has total population of 6.8 million of which, population with a disability is estimated at 1million (as per World Health Organization's 15% estimate). Paraguay ratified the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities on 03 September 2008 and as such recognizes equal access to the persons with a disability for electoral process including voting rights.

## 7.2 Accommodations for Voters with Disabilities

The Supreme Tribunal of Electoral Justice (STEJ) has done a pioneering work for voter education of PwDs. In this endeavor the STEJ has taken several initiatives in collaboration with civic society organizations. Some of these are as follows.

## 7.3 VE for PwDs through Posters

In 2015, with assistance from Fundación Saraki and the United States Agency for International Development, they produced a large poster to explain the different types of election accommodations available for people with visual, hearing, intellectual, physical and psychosocial disabilities. During the municipal elections in November 2015, STEJ also produced and distributed posters with large photos and clear instructions to assist/ support all voters, including those with disabilities, in understanding the voting process on Election day.
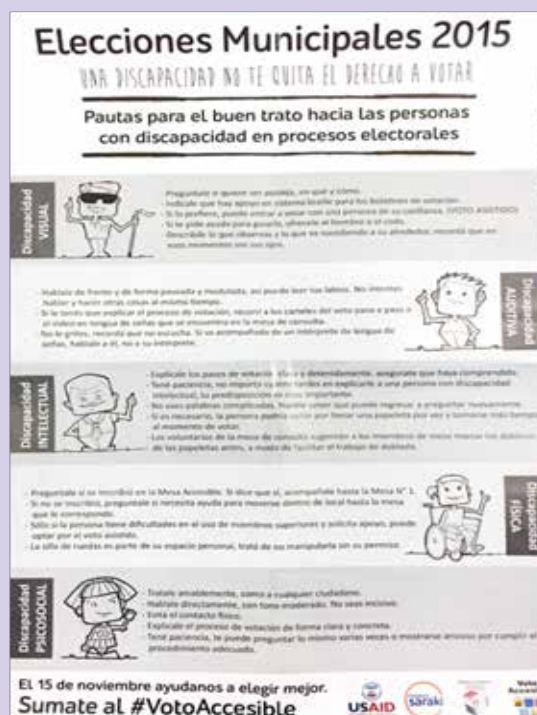


## 7.4 VE Accessible Voting Guide

In 2015, Fundación Saraki, a Paraguay organization dedicated to supporting the rights of persons with disabilities and their access to elections produced 'The Accessible Voting Guide', which carries a message 'a disability doesn't take away the right to vote" on the cover, explains step-by-step instructions to vote, as well as recommendations to make voting processes more accessible to persons with disabilities. This voter education guide educates and informs persons with disabilities of the regulations in Paraguay that support voters with disabilities. *(Details may be seen at http://www.saraki.org/)*

## 7.5 VE Brochures

Fundación Saraki, a Paraguayan organization dedicated to supporting rights of persons with disabilities, produced a number of brochures on access to elections. The brochures aim at providing learning information on assistive devices for PwDs. This resource also elaborates description for the process of voting at home, including who is eligible to do so. *(Details may be seen at http://www.saraki.org/)*
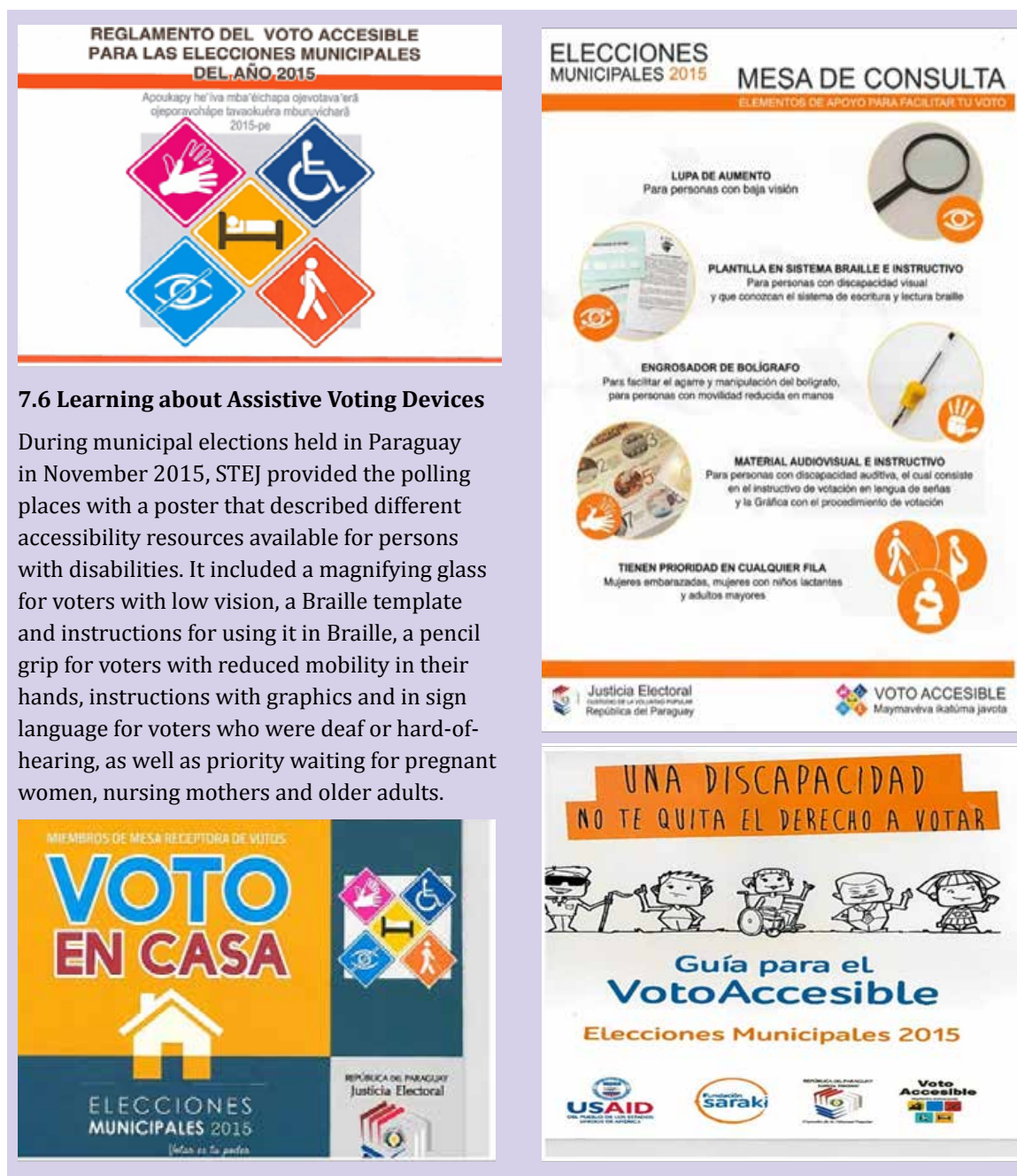
### 7.6 Learning about Assistive Voting Devices

During municipal elections held in Paraguay in November 2015, STEJ provided the polling places with a poster that described different accessibility resources available for persons with disabilities. It included a magnifying glass for voters with low vision, a Braille template and instructions for using it in Braille, a pencil grip for voters with reduced mobility in their hands, instructions with graphics and in sign language for voters who were deaf or hard-of-hearing, as well as priority waiting for pregnant women, nursing mothers and older adults.





### 8. Conclusions

The discussion on the, International Conventions, practice and experience of many countries across the world reflects the support provided by the EMBs for electoral participation by PwDs. While the campaigns through visual posters carry large motivation value to the target populations for electoral participation, initiatives by many Participating Democratic States have supported inclusion of PwDs in electoral participation. Further, the International organizations such as IFES, ACE, International IDEA have provided support to the cause of equal access and enhancing electoral participation by the PwDs.

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## INSIGHTS

# Barriers to Inclusion:
## Hindrances Faced by Persons with Disabilities for Participation in Electoral Process

The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that 15 percent of the world's population is disabled. Of it, eighty percent of these persons are living in developing countries (WHO, 2011). Despite such a reasonable population of the specially-abled the world over, their engagement in the political process is not adequate and wholesome. Can we ever think of a healthy democracy if these people representing various ethnic groups and socio-economic backgrounds are impeded in their political participation?

As with normal citizens, elections are an elemental way for the disabled to have a say in the political process. This may not only relate to their specific problems related to disability, but also those concerning basic human needs. While providing pecuniary assistance to the disabled in the welfare programs can give them temporary help, their true inclusion begins only if they are made to voice their opinions in the programs that affect them.

Only an inclusive election programming can break the barriers for the disabled and can bring them at par with the normal citizens. The benefits of an inclusive election programming are myriad. It shall not only bring the disabled into the mainstream of society but also help do away with the social stigmas attached to them. For example, if these people are involved as poll workers, election administrators, contestants, supervisors and voter educators, it can not only integrate them with normal citizens but also highly empower them.

There are numerous other advantages of a disabled inclusive election programming. If the specially-abled participate as voters in large numbers, politicians will be much more inclined to make their policies of health, education and transportation inclusive. A well-connected Disabled Persons Organization (DPO) can also be engaged in political activism. An inclusive election programming not only benefits the disabled, but also the aged, immigrants and the illiterates. Above all, disability rights pave the way for discussing human rights in general.

Now let us understand as to what is disability in the context of electoral processes. Hindrances in communication are a major disability in the context. Communication through sign language or sub-titles in an outreach video is an inclusive step but it must be remembered that the sign language of each country varies. The difference is more in indigenous deaf communities. Then there are disabilities of the unapparent kind in the form of chronic pain and bipolar disorder. Gender-based challenges are another area of concern. Disabled women's political participation is hindered by a variety of institutional, social and cultural barriers. Inaccessibility to polling stations, vulnerability to physical and sexual violence and lack of independence often impede the electoral participation of these women.

Barriers for the electoral participation of Persons with Disabilities (PwDs) start from

the day the elections are notified. For bridging them, measures need to be taken right from the pre-election stage. The potential barriers at this stage are in the form of discriminatory election laws, selection of inaccessible polling centers, information to voters not being distributed in a disabled-friendly manner, non-inclusion of PwDs as observers and inadequate budgetary allocation for accommodation of disabled.  The 2003 decision of the Slovenian Constitutional court needs to be underscored here. Here, the Slovenian Constitutional Court reviewed whether the requirements of the Law on Elections for Slovenian Parliament, the Law on Presidential Elections and the Law on Local Elections for registering only people with full legal capacity were in compliance with the constitution. The Constitutional Court decided these election laws were unconstitutional, ruling that: 'the capacity to exercise suffrage is impossible to be identified with legal capacity.' (Journal of Republic of Slovenia, 2003)

In 2012, the Ghanaian government passed a Mental Health Act that protects the civil and political rights of persons with psychosocial disabilities. While the new law now allows residents of psychiatric hospitals to vote for the President, voter registration policies impede some residents from voting for regional candidates, such as members of Parliament, if registered in a different constituency than where the hospital is located. (Equal Access, 2014)

The election law may also impact policies regarding voting with an assistant. In some cases, voters with disabilities might request assistance when voting. The choice of assistant can impact the secrecy and security of the vote, as an assistant could intimidate or manipulate the voter. To mitigate this risk, Disabled Persons Organizations (DPOs) participating in the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disability (CRPD) drafting process negotiated a requirement that voters with disabilities be allowed 'assistance in voting by a person of their own choice' in Article 29 of the CRPD. However, many States violate this directive and only allow poll workers to provide assistance in voting.

In Guatemala, the Election Management Bodies (EMBs) recruited volunteers with Down syndrome to package election materials. The EMB featured these volunteers in promotional materials and public service announcements, thereby sensitizing the general public to the abilities of persons with disabilities. (Equal Access, 2014)

International donors and implementing agencies can play a major role in mitigating the barriers caused by discriminatory election laws as it can help review the election laws by means of providing regional examples which can suggest ways to make these laws more inclusive. The work done in Egypt is a case in point. Here, the local organizations resulting in Egyptian Human Rights Council went on to establish a disability committee advocating the rights of persons with disability.

Election Management Bodies (EMBs) should brainstorm to make the electoral process accessible to the disabled. For instance designing ballots bearing the photos of candidates or party logos can be a step in the direction. The officials of EMBs should be trained on international standards on how to make the electoral process more disabled inclusive. A mock census survey in Washington revealed that encouraging governments to count the number of disabled persons in their census provides relevant data to election administrators (Washington Group, 2013).

Polling station accessibility is another barrier which needs to be set right in the pre-electoral period.  Many Disabled Persons Organizations (DPOs) have been working in these organizations. In 2012, the Georgian Coalition for Independent Living, a DPO, conducted a door-to-door survey to determine where persons with disabilities live in the country. They then submitted this information to the EMB to assist with selection of polling centers and distribution of assistive devices.

In 2009, the Lebanese Physical Handicap Union and International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IEFS) partnered with a geographic information system (GIS) firm to conduct a

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mapping activity to determine the locations of inaccessible polling centers and then entered this information into a database that was shared with the government and posted online. (Equal Access, 2014) In Armenia, a 2007 campaign to build ramps to polling stations was accompanied by a voter education campaign targeting voters with and without disabilities. (IFES, 2010)

Developing a plan for procuring and distributing assistive tools in the pre-electoral phase should be a major task of the EMBs. These comprise of tactile ballot guides, Braille ballots, lowered voting booths that are accessible to wheel chair users to ensure secrecy of the vote, magnifying glasses, portable lighting and large grip pens that can assist voters with disabilities. Technical support in voter registration process is another significant way to ensure the participation of persons with disabilities in the elections.

After the pre-election period comes the electoral period. One of the major events of this period is the observation of electoral process. Disabled persons should be trained to conduct election access monitoring here. Nomination of PwDs can also contribute to their inclusion in a great way. Some countries, such as Zimbabwe, have introduced quotas to ensure persons with disabilities are included as parliamentarians. The United Kingdom has introduced the Access to Elected Office fund (Governmental Digital Service, 2012). This fund helps candidates with disabilities meet additional costs, such as accessible transportation or sign language interpreters. The fund gives candidates grants of up to £10,000 GBP ($16,000 USD).

Lack of an inclusive campaign process is yet another barrier impeding the participation of disabled voters. Voters with disabilities often lack access to party pledges and election manifestos. DPOs can use the elections as an opportunity to engage candidates on issues specific to the disability community. DPOs in Guatemala and the Dominican Republic have conducted similar outreach with candidates. The inclusion of DPOs in the creation of a code of conduct also provides an opportunity

for additional pledges to make campaigns accessible to all citizens. As debates form an important step in making electoral choices, efforts need to be made to make them intelligible. For example, in Guatemala, the EMB provided professional sign language interpreters for debates so that the deaf and hard of hearing constituents could follow on TV. DPOs should connect with the organizers of debates so that they can provide inputs on the organization of the venue and information, as well as provide suggested questions for the candidates relevant to issues important to the disability community. (Equal Access, 2014)

Because of inaccessible media, voters with disabilities are sometimes the last to know the results of the election. To counter this trend, the Kenya National Association of the Deaf partnered with the national televised news channel to provide live sign language interpretation to announce the results of the 2013 election. This was the first time deaf, hard-of-hearing and hearing Kenyans received election result information simultaneously. (KNA, 2013)

The post-electoral period is an opportune moment to assess the extent of inclusion in elections. Audits of polling stations, post elections, have revealed that many a times the site of these stations do not comply with the laws. Improving accessibility of government institutions, conducting capacity-building activities for electoral staff and advocating the implementation of legal and administrative reforms are other few steps in this direction. The Philippines Commission on Election appoints a specific commissioner responsible for disability rights. However, these commissioners do not always have a disability rights background. This period is also the best time to know the gaps in the knowledge of the electorate and the civic education imparted.

Nevertheless, there are several challenges when it comes to inclusion of persons with disability in the electoral process. States that do count disability in their national censuses use different definitions and often estimate a number far below the World Health

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Organization's (WHO) 15 percent worldwide approximation. Discrimination within the family is another challenge. A report prepared by the Vietnamese Hanoi Independent Living Center found that of 50 families of persons with disabilities interviewed, half do not believe persons with disabilities need to vote because they "do not need to be concerned about political issues. '(Agenda, 2013)

It is high time persons with disability rose from being mere subjects of aid programs. They must constitute a significant part of the electoral process by being active participants in it.

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*Photo Courtesy : USAID*

*Photo Courtesy : www.dailymail.co.uk*

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# Incheon Strategy

### Main ideas of the Incheon Strategy

Persons with disabilities should:

- Be respected.
- Be able to make their own choices.
- Not be discriminated against.
- Be able to participate in society the same way as everyone else.

**It is OK to be a person with disability!**

**Persons with disabilities should:**

- Have equal chances to go to school, to get jobs, to vote, to be elected, to go to the market and do all the things that everyone else does.
- Be able to access information easily.
- Be able to use public transportation to go to different places.

Easy to understand

**Goal 2**

Promote participation in political processes and in decision-making

**INSIGHTS**   United Nations ESCAP

# 'Make the Right Real' for Persons with Disabilities in Asia and the Pacific



**How do we know if we are making progress to achieve this goal? (Indicators)**

2.1  Count the number of persons with disabilities who are members of parliament.
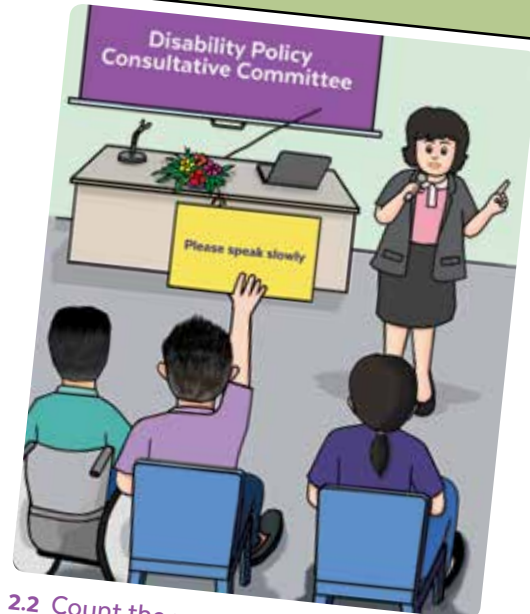


2.2  Count the number of persons with disabilities who are members of the main national government body on disability.



2.3  Count the number of persons with disabilities who are members of the main government body for equality between women and men.

2.4  Count the number of places in the national capital where persons with disabilities can easily go to vote, without having to show other people who they have voted for.

**INSIGHTS**

# Ensuring Inclusive and Accessible Trainings

Trainings are a good opportunity to share knowledge about a specific topic, and support participants in developing the skills they will need to become effective disability rights advocates or allies. Though trainings require a lot of time, they can be fun and interesting, especially when activities are included. However, sometimes training activities are not fully inclusive of participants with disabilities. This resource provides some general guidelines for inclusive trainings and



*In Myanmar, women who are blind or have low vision take notes during a training on international disability rights standards.*
*Source: International Foundation for Electoral Systems*

some information on how to modify different types of activities so that all participants are able to join and learn.

## General guidelines for inclusive trainings

Regardless of which training activities are chosen, here are some things to keep in mind:

- **Choose an accessible venue.**
  - o Host the training on the ground floor, unless there is a working elevator or lift available.
  - o If possible, prop the doors open so that participants can easily enter and exit.
  - o Try to find a location that is on flat

ground, not on a hill or steep incline.
- o If the room might be difficult to find without assistance, ensure there are greeters to direct people to the room.
- o Ensure that there is at least one accessible bathroom stall nearby for participants to use.
- o Set up the room so there are wide and clear pathways around tables.

- **Ask participants if they need assistance.**
When participants register for the training, provide options for assistance, such as: "sign language interpreter", "reading the materials in advance", "an assistant to read written materials to me", or "easy-to-read language."

- **Create simple and clear Power Points.**
If a PowerPoint is being used as part of the training, it is important to create simple slides with a few bullet points or images that can be briefly scanned by participants. This way, if a person is using a sign language interpreter, they can read and turn back to the interpreter as quickly as possible.

- **Offer materials such as Power Points and handouts in advance whenever possible.**
Some participants will learn better if they are given time to read the materials in advance of the training. Others might need to share the materials with sign language interpreters to come up with appropriate translations for specialized vocabulary.

- **If materials cannot be provided in advance, add extra time for reading.**

For example, when presenting using a Power Point, pause for about 3 seconds before speaking each time a new slide with text comes up. This provides a little bit of time for participants to read the slide and then redirect their attention back to the presenter.

- **Choose different types of activities for each training.**
  This way, everyone has a chance to learn the way they learn best. For example, some people prefer listening or reading activities, while others prefer hands-on activities.

- **Avoid activities that require strenuous physical movement or that are too difficult to adapt.**
  These include obstacle courses, human 'knots', activities that severely limit movement in some way (e.g. Color STEP Games), or activities that depend too much on one particular physical ability (e.g. the ice-breaker 'Telephone', which solely depends on listening).

- **Provide written directions for activities with a lot of steps.**
  For some participants, it will be helpful to have written instructions if there are several steps involved in an activity.

- **Communicate with participants with disabilities in respectful ways.**
  - o When approaching a person who is blind or has low vision, identify yourself by name.

- o If a person is working with a service animal, do not pet or distract the animal.
- o If approaching a deaf or hard-of-hearing person where they cannot see you, gently tap their shoulder or wave a hand in their peripheral vision to get their attention.
- o When getting attention during an activity, provide both visual and auditory commands. For example, flash the lights or wave a flag when calling out for attention.



*Participants learn how to be an election observer in the Dominican Republic.*
*Source: International Foundation for Electoral Systems*

- **Be flexible.**
  It is rare that one solution will always work for everyone. Be willing to adapt or switch activities if needed.

## Modifying training activities

Below are ideas for modifying four popular types of activities, including team-building games and ice-breakers. The adaptations that are used may depend on the pre-existing skills and capacities of participants.

| **Activity type #1: Physical movement**<br>**Participants move around a room, or small objects are tossed or passed around** ||
|---|---|
| Examples | Possible Adaptations |
| **Agree or Disagree**<br><br>In a given space, one side is designated as the 'Agree' side, and the opposite side is the 'Disagree' side. Preselected prompts are read by the moderator, and participants move to either side depending on if they agree or disagree with the statement.<br><br>**Ball-tossing**<br><br>Participants sit or stand in a circle and toss a ball or other soft object, taking turns to respond to game prompts.<br><br>**Moving Forward**<br><br>Participants are assigned a person, job, or other characteristic. They line up in a row, and then the trainer calls out different scenarios. Participants who match the scenario are able to move forward; those who don't, stay where they are. The game ends when the first person to reach the finish line arrives. | • In activities such as 'Agree or Disagree', describe the results. For example: "Most people are on the Agree side, and a couple are on the Disagree side"<br><br>• Pass objects around instead of tossing<br><br>• If there are spoken statements that are part of the activity, provide them on a Power Point slide, poster or piece of paper so they can be read as well<br><br>• Ensure there are no obstacles in the room or hallway that would prevent free movement, such as a rope on the floor, bumps in the floor, or narrow passageways |

| **Activity type #2: Performance**<br>**Noise, gestures or acting is used to communicate** ||
|---|---|
| Examples | Possible Adaptations |
| **Samson, Delilah and the Lion**<br>*(also known as 'Tiger, Man, and Gun')*<br>Similar to 'Rock, Paper, Scissors', only there is Samson (man), Delilah (woman), and a lion. Participants are in two rows facing each other. They huddle, choose which one they want, and turn around to show that pose.<br><br>**Line-up**<br><br>Participants use nonverbal communication to line up in order of height, birth month, or other characteristic.<br><br>**Role-playing**<br><br>Participants are divided into groups. Each group is given a scenario (e.g. 'Meeting with a member of Parliament') and a little time to figure out who will play each role. At the end, the participants gather together, and each group performs their role-play session. Other participants can give feedback or comments on the role play.<br><br>**Pictionary or Charades**<br><br>Create 10-20 slips of paper, each with an election terminology (e.g. 'gerrymander', 'sitting member'). Divide participants into two teams. Each person will come up, choose a slip, and then have 2 minutes to either draw or perform their card. Performers are not allowed to use words or sign language to describe their terminology. The first team to correctly guess all of their cards will win. | • Add visual input to auditory games, and vice versa. For example, in 'Samson, Delilah and the Lion', participants can use both noise and a gesture to communicate.<br><br>• Instead of asking participants to turn around in games such as 'Samson, Delilah and the Lion', permit them to remain facing each other as they discreetly decide what to do<br><br>• In an ice-breaker like 'Line-up', pick a characteristic or category where participants can use both sound and a gesture to communicate and organize themselves, like animals or famous characters from local television or movies<br><br>• For role-playing activities, provide scenarios in both written and spoken formats, and emphasize that every group member should have a role<br><br>• In role-playing activities, ask group members to write down or draw a quick script<br><br>• For activities such as Pictionary or Charades, consider providing descriptive commentary while performers draw or act, e.g. "it looks like she is drawing a box"<br><br>• Also, for Pictionary or charades, assign someone to write down a list of 'rejected' suggestions as participants go along |

| Activity type #3: Building or crafting<br>Materials are provided and participants are asked to build or make something | |
| --- | --- |
| Examples | Possible Adaptations |
| **Spaghetti game**<br><br>Participants are provided with uncooked spaghetti and marshmallows, and asked to work together to create the highest structure they can in a given amount of time.<br><br>**Snowflake**<br><br>Participants are asked to fold a sheet of paper in half. Then they fold it again. They are asked to make a small tear anywhere on the paper. When the papers are unfolded, no two papers are exactly the same. | • If a participant needs to build something and struggles to grasp smaller items, switch out objects for larger and easier items to put together, such as pre-torn tape and cardboard sheets<br><br>• In some cases, an assistant might be helpful for folding papers in some activities such as the 'Snowflake' ice-breaker (this should never be done without first checking with the person with a disability to see if this is ok) |

| Activity type #4: Writing, drawing or reading<br>Participants are asked to write, draw, or read | |
| --- | --- |
| Examples | Possible Adaptations |
| **World Café**<br><br>Participants are divided into groups and each group is rotated around a room to different stations. At each station is a different treat (e.g. small candies or sweets) and a different topic.<br><br>**Bingo**<br><br>Participants win by shading in a row of boxes on a card, where the contents of the boxes match the information called out or found out from others.<br><br>**Round Robin**<br><br>This is best used for groups of less than 10 people. Choose one group topic. At a signal, each person writes down ideas on a sheet of paper. After one minute, the paper is passed to the next person. On the new sheet, they will write more ideas, but cannot repeat anything. Continue until the sheets have gone around or ideas have stopped coming. The group then chooses 2-3 ideas to discuss. | • In group activities such as World Café where there is a lot of written materials, pass around the materials instead of asking participants to move<br><br>• Provide printed materials in accessible formats, or make reading them aloud part of the activity<br><br>• An alternative way to make activities such as 'Bingo' or 'Round Robin' accessible is to conduct the activity in pairs rather than individually |

# Gender Perspective : Elections

## WOMEN AND MEN IN POLITICAL PARTIES

### Women with leading role in political parties

| PARTIES: | PARLIAMENTARY | EXTRA-PARLIAMENTARY | INACTIVE | TOTAL: |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 6 | 13 | 25 | 44 |
| NUMBER OF WOMEN LEADING A PARTY | 0 | 1 | 1 | 2 |

Source: http://www.e-democracy.md/parties/

### Membership of political parties disaggregated by gender

49.7%
50.3%

Source: OMNIBUS CBS-AXA, December 2015
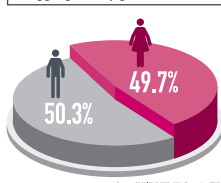
### Share of women and men in the structures of political parties

| LOCAL Organisation | DISTRICT Organisation | NATIONAL Council |
|---|---|---|
| 54.9% 47.0% | 26.5% 9.8% | 20.2% 4.3% |

Source: OMNIBUS CBS-AXA, December 2015
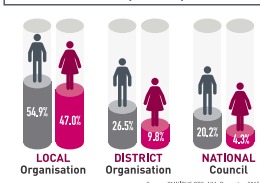
### Men and women engaged in electoral activities at local level during the 2014 Parliamentary Elections

Electoral candidates' proxies  59.9% 40.1%

Door-to-door information of citizens

Observers  56% 49.8%

Organization of meetings with the candidates

Source: OMNIBUS CBS-AXA, December 2015
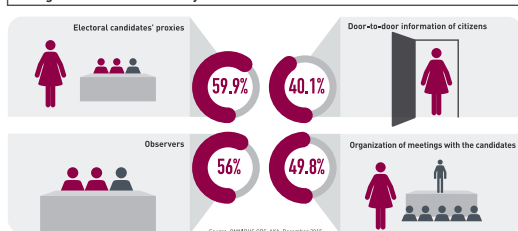
## WOMEN AND MEN IN PARLIAMENT

### Share of seats held by women in the Moldovan Parliament
at the first meeting after elections from 1990 to 2014

| 1990-1994 | 1994-1998 | 1998-2001 | 2001-2005 | 2005-2009 | 2009-2009 | 2009-2010 | 2010-2014 | 2014-2018 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 3.7% | 4.8% | 8.9% | 10.9% | 20.8% | 23.8% | 24.8% | 18.8% | 20.8% |

Source: CEC
*Note: Percentage of women after the validation of mandates by The Constitutional Court Legislature
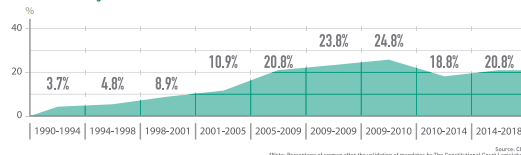
### Women in Parliamentary structures following 2014 Parliamentary Elections

%

13.2  Committee on agriculture and food industry
21.0  Committee on economy, budget and finance
27.8  Committee on national security, defense and public order
27.2  Committee on public administration and regional development, environment and climate change
28.6  Legal committee on appointments and immunities
33.3  Standing Bureau
43.8  Committee on culture, education, research, youth, sports and media
44.7  Committee on foreign policy and European integration
46.5  Committee on social protection, health and family
53.3  Committee on human rights and interethnic relations
32.7  **Total**

Source: www.parliament.md
(as of 1 February 2016)

### Women and men in the Parliamentary Committees

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Chair | 3 / 6 | |
| Deputy Chair | 2 / 12 | |
| Secretary | 2 / 6 | |
| Member | 14 / 53 | |
| Secretariat | 26 / 17 | |

Source: www.parliament.md
(as of 1 February 2016)
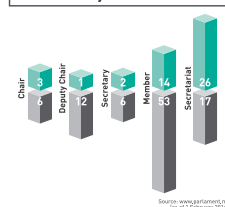
### Average number of legislative initiatives submitted by women and men MPs in 2015

11.2   14.7

Source: www.parliament.md
(as of 1 February 2016)

## WOMEN AND MEN IN PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS

### Share of women candidates and of elected women in the Moldovan Parliament
during 1998 – 2014

CANDIDATE

| 1998 | 2001 | 2005 | 2009'04 | 2009'07 | 2010 | 2014 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 15.7% | 18.1% | 29% | 28.5% | 28.4% | 29.9% | 31.2% |
| 8.9% | 10.9% | 20.8% | 23.8% | 24.8% | 18.8% | 20.8% |

ELECTED

Source: CEC
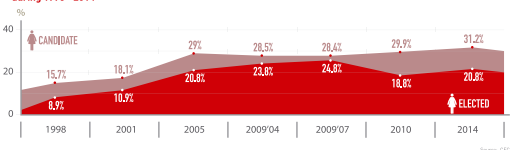
### Share of women on the lists of candidates
for the 2014 Parliamentary Elections

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| MSP „Ravnopravie" 53.6% | PDA 48.9% | PPR 40.2% | PP PVE 40% | PPNȚ 39.6% |
| PLDM 36.6% | PDM 35.7% | PLR 35% | PL 33% | PAD 31.4% |
| PPRM 31.1% | PPMPA 30.4% | PNL 28.2% | PCRM 27.2% | PPCD 25.9% |
| PFP 23.3% | PCR 22.6% | PPM 21.6% | PSRM 21.4% | BeAMUV 20% |
| UCM 17% | | | | |

TOTAL:  31.4%  68.6%

Source: CEC
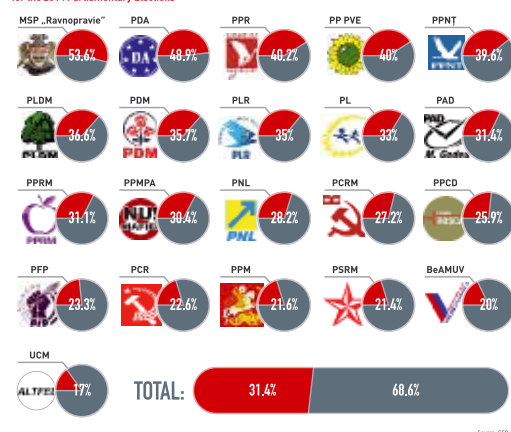
## WOMEN AND MEN IN PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS

### Percentage of women candidates on the candidates lists of political parties
that formed the Parliament after 2014 Elections

| 1998 | 9.7% | 0% | 0% | 0% | 28% |
| 2001 | 13.6% | 18.4% | 0% | 0% | 0% |
| 2005 | 23.3% | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0% |
| 2009'04 | 30.4% | 29.4% | 17.6% | 23.3% | 0% |
| 2009'07 | 32.0% | 33.0% | 17.6% | 28.4% | 0% |
| 2010 | 23.3% | 33.3% | 26.2% | 25.2% | 0% |
| 2014 | 27.2% PCRM | 35.7% PD | 36.6% PLDM | 32.0% PL | 21.4% PSRM |
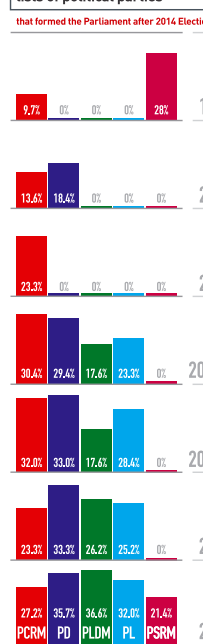
### Ranking of women and men on the lists of candidates

| Number of persons at the top of the list | | Percentage in top five |
|---|---|---|
| 2 / 13 | 1998 | 5.3% |
| 0 / 17 | 2001 | 5.9% |
| 1 / 10 | 2005 | 21.8% |
| 2 / 10 | 2009'04 | 21.7% |
| 0 / 8 | 2009'07 | 10% |
| 2 / 18 | 2010 | 15% |
| 2 / 18 | 2014 | 23.1% |

Source: CEC
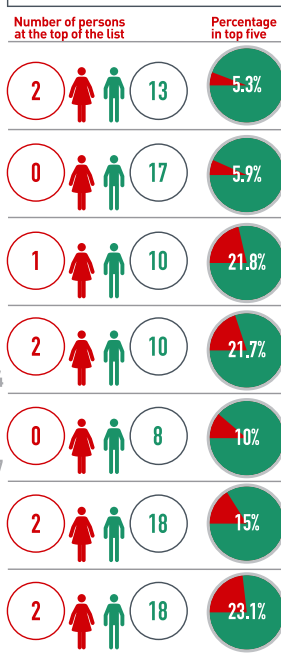
# 2015 General Local Elections and
# 2014 Parliamentary Elections

## WOMEN AND MEN IN 2015 GENERAL LOCAL ELECTIONS

Average share of votes received by mayors



INDEPENDENT CANDIDATES

TOTAL 71% 65%
ROUND II 57% 57%
ROUND I 61% 71%

CANDIDATES OF POLITICAL PARTIES

TOTAL 46% 67%
ROUND II 57% 57%
ROUND I 46% 46%

Source: CEC
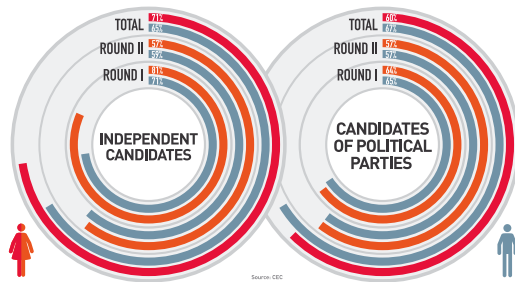
Share of women councilors elected in case a 40 % quota is applied without any requirements on the placement of either genders on the list of candidates

Actual percentage of women candidates
Actual percentage of elected women
Projected share of elected women in case the 40% quota is applied

Local — 24.9% 29.1% 36.0%

District/Municipal — 23.0% 18.8% 28.0%

Source: Calculations performed by CBS-AXA based on CEC data
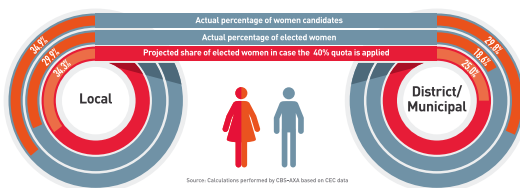
## WOMEN AND MEN VOTERS IN 2014 PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS



46.54%   53.46%

Source: CEC
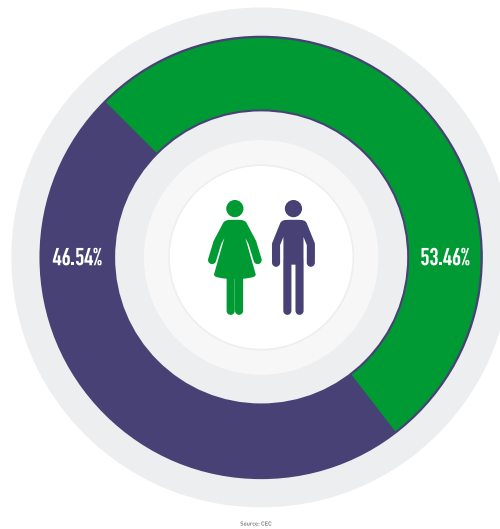
## WOMEN AND MEN IN 2014 PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS

Positioning of **women** on the lists of candidates, by deciles

| Place on the List | Positioning of women for the 2014 Parliamentary Elections | Initial List versus Final Lists — All parties | Initial List versus Final Lists — Parliamentary parties |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1–10 | 28.7% | 24.5% / 24.5% | 26% / 26% |
| 10–20 | 21.4% | 23.6% / 21.8% | 18% / 20% |
| 20–30 | 26.4% | 28.6% / 26.4% | 26% / 24% |
| 30–40 | 24.2% | 24.5% / 26.8% | 16% / 16% |
| 40–50 | 27.9% | 27.4% / 26.8% | 22% / 24% |
| 50–60 | 35.3% | 36.6% / 37.3% | 32% / 34% |
| 60–70 | 35.1% | 35.3% / 36% | 28% / 32% |
| 70–80 | 40.2% | 40% / 40% | 48% / 40% |
| 80–90 | 35.4% | 32.8% / 37.6% | 34% / 38% |
| 90–100 | 37.9% | 42.9% / 44.8% | 48.5% / 50% |
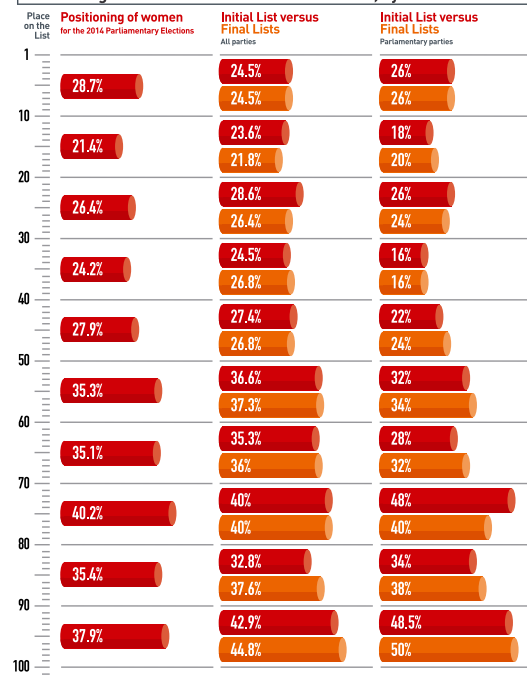
## WOMEN AND MEN IN 2014 PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS

**If a 40% quota would be applied for the Parliamentary Elections, without any requirements on the placement of either gender on the list of candidates, the result would be 27% elected women**

Actual percentage of women candidates
Actual percentage of elected women MPs
Projected share of women MPs in case the 40% quota is applied



30.5% 20.8% 27.0%

Source: Calculations performed by CBS-AXA based on CEC data

Gender gains/ losses

● Candidates  ● MPs  ● Gender gains/ losses

PCRM +1.4%  27.2% / 28.6%
PDM −14.6%  37.5% / 21.1%
PLDM −19.2%  36.6% / 17.4%
PL −16.6%  32.0% / 15.4%
PSRM −1.4%  21.4% / 20.0%
TOTAL −9.7%  30.5% / 20.8%

Source: Calculations performed by CBS-AXA based on CEC data

# Empowering Youth and Democracy in Bhutan

Democracy is a form of government providing people with the right to choose representatives through a secret ballot. It is an inclusive form of government where people from all walks of life participate in the electoral process for better representation. However, there are a large number of voters abstaining from exercising their right and participating in the democratic process.

Wolfinger and Rosenstone in Burden (2009, p. 542) from the study of 'transcendent power of education' (1980, p.102) revealed that several attitudinal and demographic variables influenced the likelihood of voting but the most influential was education. Therefore, imparting civic education from a very young age has become crucial for evolving a better democracy ahead. It is in this pursuit, that Bhutan started preparing the future voters way before they converted into eligible electors by introducing Democracy Clubs in some schools and institutions in 2013. Since the maximum groups of voters are bound to be young and are enrolled in schools and institutes, the Democracy Clubs in Bhutan have proved their importance and exhibit a huge potential in preparing active and responsible future voters for our country. As of 2017, Bhutan has a total of 202 democracy clubs with 7166 democracy club members. These clubs were introduced at the behest of the students and the school management since it is purely based on the principle of volunteerism. The aim of every Democracy Club is to strengthen Bhutanese democracy through youth engagement in various electoral activities. Democracy Clubs in Bhutan functions within the circle of its 'Guidelines for Introduction of Democracy Clubs in Schools and Educational Institutes in Bhutan' that bars students from politicizing. Election Commission of Bhutan (ECB, 2015) believes that the 'Democracy Clubs established in schools and educational institutes act as mini-Election Commissions to conduct elections, organize activities to promote understanding of the Bhutanese electoral system and processes, democratic governance and institutions, and encourage student participation in the decision-making process'.

To inspire a more inquisitive public participation in the electoral process, one has to be comfortable with the process itself and understand the mechanism behind the conduct of a free and fair election. This includes the understanding of polling procedure, secrecy of the ballot and how a polling station looks like on the real poll day. The young voters of Bhutan are made aware of how the country's election system works as well as about the poll procedures.

Before democracy clubs were introduced, the school captains and councilors in the institutes were selected, not elected. However, this practice has changed over time with the introduction of Democracy Clubs. The captain selections that were done by school management were practically replaced by election coordinated by Democracy Club in the schools/institutes. On invitation from democracy club coordinator, Election Officials supervise the conduct of elections in schools and institutes with the use of EVM. This also provides the election officials an important platform to directly engage with the students and talk to them about the general electoral system of the country apart from the

election process held at the institution itself. Demonstration of EVM showing its functions and accuracy is a part of the program during these elections. The students are also evaluated on how much they have learned with simple questions asked at the end of the talk.

An interesting feature of the school/institute elections is that the students perform the duties of the polling personnel that preside for the election including the operation of the EVM for voting. At the same time teachers are also being educated and made aware of electoral system and procedures and they are reminded of the importance of taking active participation in electoral democracy.

club activities where they engage themselves in awareness programs for electoral literacy. On the captain/councilor Election Day, slogans and inspiring words adorn the walls of the campus where almost all the students get the opportunity to read and get motivated to participate in the electoral activities.

The National Voters' Day (NVD) celebration on 15th of September every year is another way employed by Democracy Clubs to involve young voters in schools. The day is celebrated with the main objective of creating awareness amongst general public on participation in a democracy. The National Voters' Day is also a reminder to all voters of their roles and



Voluntary members extend their help to enhance the understanding of Bhutanese electoral system and process, effective operation of democratic governance and institutions amongst the students through various activities in the schools. The linear flow of electoral education happens through a training program for democracy club coordinators conducted by the ECB which covers all aspects of electoral system and process. The election material such as Election Acts, Bhutan Voter Guides and Rules and Regulations is shared with the schools and educational institutions. These materials are used to impart electoral literacy to the club members in specified periods assigned for

responsibilities in a democratic society. The day's key highlight is the message delivered by the Hon'ble Chief Election Commissioner of Bhutan to all the general voters reminding them the value of their vote, the importance of exercising their right to vote and inspiring them to take part in the Bhutanese electoral process. The celebration is highly engaging and features the reading out of the Voters' Pledge followed by various electoral advocacy and participation programs which are presented to the students and convey important messages of electoral participation. The schools conduct essay, quiz and poster making competitions along with cultural programs to further impart voter education to the people of Bhutan.

Democracy Club members not only create electoral awareness and inspire students within schools and institutions but also propagate electoral education to the general public. In the recent Local Government (LG) Election, voluntary members played an active role in reaching their parents and relatives through a felicitation card from ECB to enthuse voters to vote. The felicitation card explained them (Parents/Relatives) about how the institution (Local Government) is important not only to them but for general public in the country. Moreover, aware students who go about disseminating information on secrecy of ballot and importance of every vote have proved to be really effective in inspiring people around them. They most definitely have a greater impact on building a harmonious and vibrant democracy.

Democracy Clubs or club members not only take part in electoral advocacy but also in decision making processes. The very crucial roles in decision making process are their decision to vote and take part in electoral awareness and motivating other voters. The major decision making process happened after the initiation of Bhutan Children's Parliament (BCP) in 2015. The Bhutan Children's Parliament (BCP) empowers the youth by presenting them with an opportunity to build Source: ECB (BCP, 2015) their leadership skills and learn to voice their ideas, thoughts and feelings tactfully.

ECB also believes that this platform offers hands-on-experience for children, the future leaders, who are expected to play a very strong and positive role in shaping the social and political landscape of the country. The representatives of BCP-National Assembly (BCP-NA) and BCP-National Council (BCP-NC) are elected members from democracy

club members from a constituency and district (Dzongkhag) respectively. The BCP-NA and BCP-NC are separate houses that deliberate on pertinent issues gathered from different schools. BCP-NA session is headed by the Speaker and/or Deputy Speaker while Chairperson and/or Deputy Chairperson head BCP-NC session. The deliberations on agendas are documented and resolutions are submitted to higher authorities for information and suggestion. The resolutions are also presented by representatives to the schools or institutes and shared to other schools, consequently building enthusiasm among students for partaking in electoral process. The students' representation not only inspires other students to participate in electoral democracy but also encourages the parents and relatives of the representing students that appreciate him/her resulting in instant incursion of democratic values in their mind. This (BCP) will contribute to achieving national goal of sustaining a harmonious and vibrant Democracy in Kingdom of Bhutan as envisioned by our Beloved Monarchs.

Therefore, the introduction and growing number of Democracy Clubs will have positive impact on youth engagement in Bhutanese democratic process. The knowledge and practice earned overtime is the prerequisite that will help in building a strong degree of enthusiasm regarding the Bhutanese electoral process, thus, making concrete the strong base of democracy in Bhutan.



*Tshering Wangdi*
*Assistant Election Officer*
*Election Commission of Bhutan*

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# ECI enters the world of QuizUp

## *'Indian Elections - Everything under the Electoral-Sun'*

Ever wondered on the location of India's highest polling station or who has been the only woman Chief Election Commissioner of India? Find the answers to all, even as you challenge your friends for a game of QuizUp on the topic- 'Indian Elections- Everything under the Electoral-Sun'.
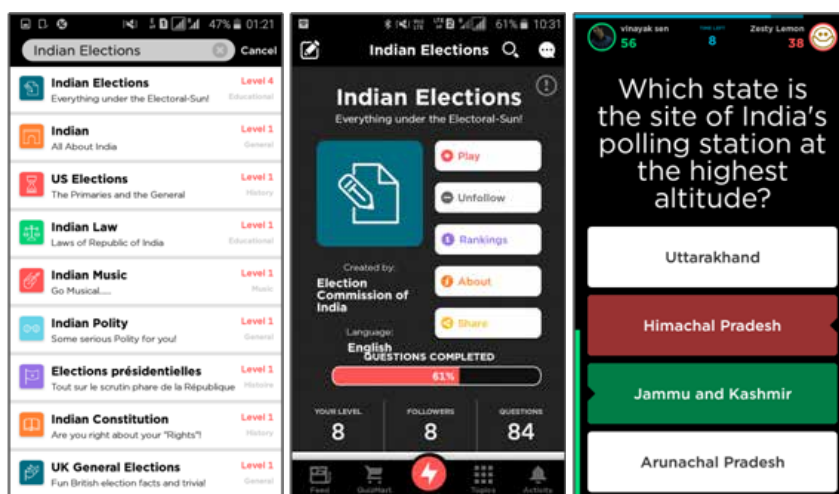
'Indian Elections'- the QuizUp topic, created and managed by the Election Commission of India, was launched by Dr. Nasim Zaidi, the Chief Election Commissioner of India (now former CEC) recently. An initiative of the Systematic Voters' Education and Electoral Participation (SVEEP) programme, presence on the world's biggest trivia gaming app, QuizUp, has enabled in gamifying voter education for several focus areas, like- the youth, the NRIs, prospective voters/ young students and the urban population. Moreover, presence on such an interactive and hugely popular forum would aid in achieving the broader goal of enhancing engagement, participation, awareness and literacy with the target groups.

The questions on QuizUp pertain to essential details concerning the regular voter as well as to unique facts, general knowledge, and distinctive information on elections in India. QuizUp's feature of randomizing questions provides players a more fascinating gaming experience where the participant answers a question on Form 6A interspersed with questions on psephology and Delimitation Commission. The randomization feature and diversity in terms of content ensures a holistic dissemination of knowledge and information to the users, apart from generating higher engagement levels.

Developed by the Iceland-based Plain Vanilla Games and presently controlled by the San Francisco-based developer and publisher of mobile games for smartphones and tablets- Glu Mobile, Inc, QuizUp took the world by storm when it was launched in 2013. Declared as the fastest growing Android/iPhone game in history, the app currently has 40 million+ registered users across 197 countries with more than 1200 topics and 6,00,000+ questions on its database.

Access the 'Indian Elections' topic by downloading QuizUp from Google Play Store or, Apple Store, search the topic, start following, begin playing, challenge friends, gather as many XPs or experience points you can, redeem them across topics and share your rankings and achievements on social media. Don't forget to use #ECI, #ElectionCommissionOfIndia, #QuizUp!

# Signing-up Haryana's Young Voters through Geo-Fence Technology

A geo-fence is a perimeter for a real-world geographic area. A geo-fence could be dynamically generated as in a radius around a store or point location using the latitude and longitude, or a geo-fence can be a predefined set of boundaries, like constituency, school attendance zones or neighborhood residential/Office boundaries.

**Results:** During the pilot project as many as 642 new voters were registered within 48 hours in an area of two kilometres in Panchkula City, Haryana.

The youths were identified on the basis of their data usage patterns and subsequently sent messages, in which they were asked whether they were eligible and interested in getting themselves enrolled on the voters' list.
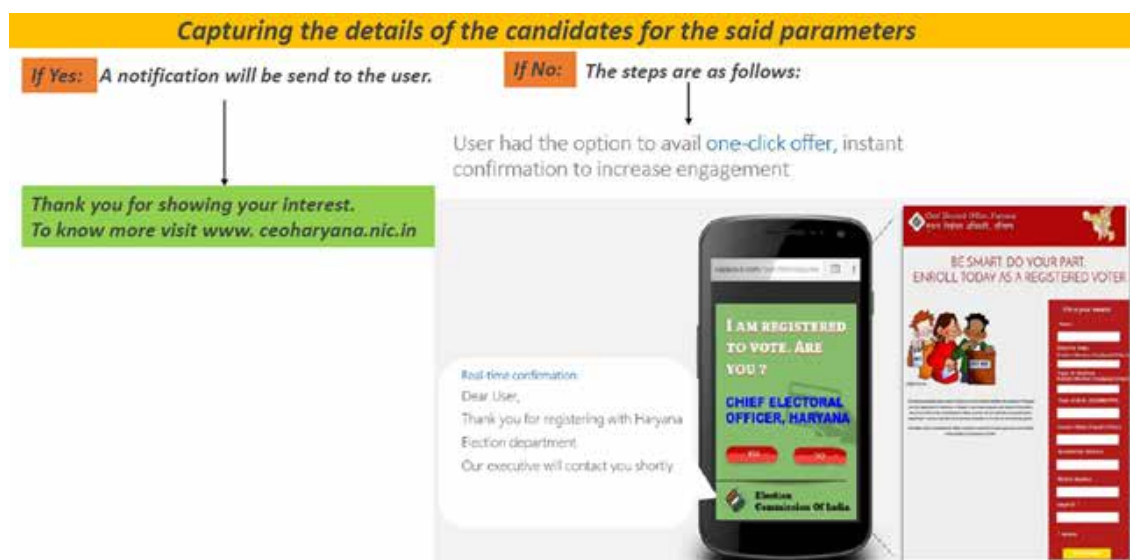


The use of a geo-fence is called geo-fencing, and one example of usage involves a location - aware device of a Location-Based Service (LBS) user entering or exiting a geo-fence. This activity could trigger an alert to the device's user as well as notification to the geo-fence perimeter. This information, which could contain the stats of the device, can be used to send advertisements to a mobile device or an email account or through SMS.

**Campaign:** To identify young voters (in the age group of 19 to 21 years) with in the state of Haryana.

Then the department officials personally approached them and facilitated their enrolment.

Last year in 2016 around May, the election department was able to enrol only about 60 new voters using the traditional method of disseminating information (such as advertisements) in the district in 30 days. But this year, with the help of geo-fencing, which was done for just 48 hours within an area of two kilo-meters, we got over 642 new candidates.

**1**



**2**

**…with a clear strategy to focus on Geo-coordinates at various Installations of Haryana diaspora**



**3**

Filtration and Targeted audience reach at your finger tips



**4**

Targeting all the NRI's from Haryana living abroad



**5**

Current Election campaign Demo process

**Step 1:**

*Selected a Geo Fenced Coordinate of Panchkula sector 6 for a radius of 2 KMS.*



**6**

**Step 2:**

*Filtered and Segregated our target candidates from Age Group 17 years to 22 years using our proprietary analytics algorithm*



**7**

Step 3:

*Various Platform agnostic advertisements was displayed on several mobile application within the geo-fenced areas and candidates were prompted to enroll themselves.*



**8**

Step 4:

*Informative Advertisements was displayed on several mobile application within the geo-fenced areas and candidates were directed on the microsite where they submitted their details within the form. The Ad form parameters are listed below:*

**Form Parameters:**

**Name**
**Date of Birth**
**Contact Number**
**Address\*\***
**Aadhaar Card\*\***

**\*\*(Optional)**

**9**

## Razor sharp analytics
Proprietary algorithms built to profile users based on location footprints

HOTEL | CAFE | MALL
TRAIN | LIBRARY | HOME
CINEMA | BUSSTOP | MALL
AIRPORT | COLLEGE | HOME

BUSINESS TRAVELLER | COLLEGE STUDENT | HOME-MAKER
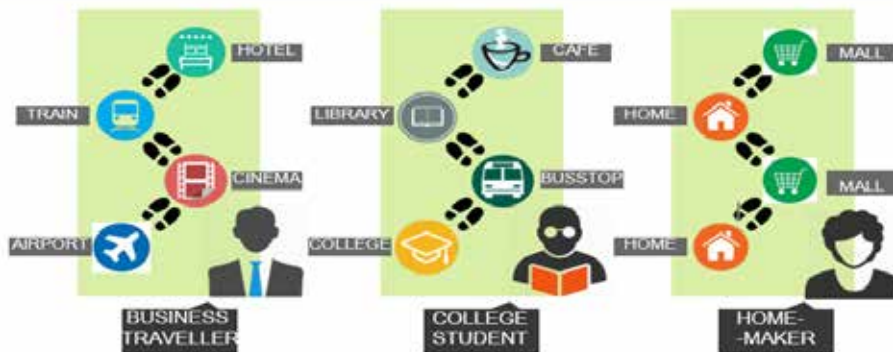
**10**

| 1. Increase Uptake | 2. Identify Prospects | 3. Build Relevant Ads | 4. Multiple Platform | 5. Actionable Insights |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Product recommendation engine to predict the update of exisitng customers | Similarity algorithms to identify potential customers | Prospects & customers targeted with relevant ads | Multiple ad formats for each platform | In-depth Data Analytics for optimizing response |

**11**

## Local and relevant
Local ads relevant to candidates with specific reach & local presence

Retail Outlets:
Purchase from nearby retailers | Place order from food delivery outlets, Show Enrolment Ads

Automotive players
Book test drive at a nearby auto dealer, Show Enrolment Ads

Real Estate players
Book a site visit | Download site brochure, Show Enrolment Ads

Education & Healthcare
Enroll for a test | Book a health checkup, Show Enrolment Ads

Travel players:
Drive last minute hotel/car bookings at Airports, Show Enrolment Ads

**12**

A Lookup at the current stats:

231
Enrolled
31 Days
744 hours
All Age Groups
Entire Constituency
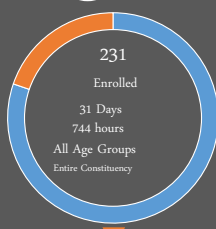
**Manual Initiative**
Area: Assembly Constituency
Date: 1st March to 31st March 2016
Response: 231 Electors

646
Applicants
2 Days
48 Hours
17 -22 Yrs.
2 KMS Radius.
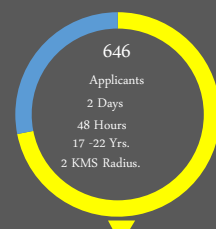
**Geo- Fencing Technology**
Targeted Area: Panchkula Region, Sector: 6,7,14,15,20,21
Date: 6th March & 7th March 2017
Response: 646 Electors

*Ankur Gupta*
*CEO Haryana*
*Election Commission of India*

# ECI goes Social in a New Avatar

How would it feel if India's apex authority in charge of conducting elections reached out thrice daily with interactive posts to 142 million people via the world's biggest social networking service? Unbelievable, but true!

Election Commission of India has decided to leverage the immense potential of social media to ensure voter engagement, awareness and empowerment through its official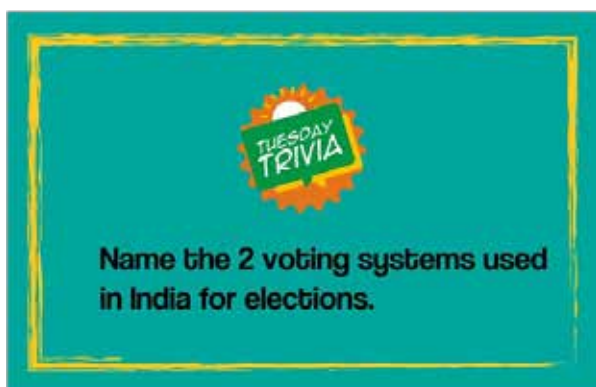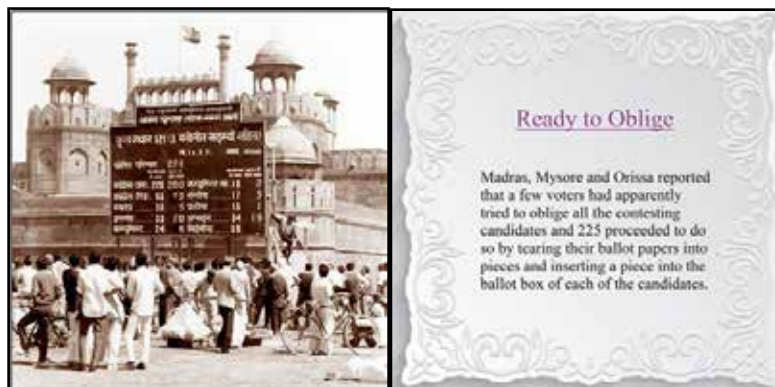 Facebook page *India Votes.* The page will serve on the principle of Information, Education and Communication (IEC) by establishing a direct, two-way contact between the Indian masses and the Election Commission.

Currently managed by the Commission's SVEEP section, *India Votes* informs its audience about recent news and events of the ECI, imparts educative messages in the form of comics, memes, posters, creatives, videos, fun facts and brings forward the human faces behind the election process of the world's largest democracy captured through stories, photos as well as anecdotes.

Keeping in mind the interactive, dynamic and attractive nature of the medium which operates amidst millions of users every day, ECI has entered the Facebook arena with a pre-planned content strategy. Day-wise features are as follows–

**#Monday Memoirs -** Photos of election scenarios from the bygone era of a newly independent India shared with simple, single line captions, anecdotes and facts from elections every Monday.

**Ready to Oblige**

Madras, Mysore and Orissa reported that a few voters had apparently tried to oblige all the contesting candidates and 225 proceeded to do so by tearing their ballot papers into pieces and inserting a piece into the ballot box of each of the candidates.

Name the 2 voting systems used in India for elections.

**#Tuesday Trivia–** A simple challenge to the audience every Tuesday. Tuesday Trivia poses simple quiz-like questions with the purpose of engaging and educating the audience on the election basics.

**#World In A Wednesday -** Fun facts about democracies and elections around the world presented in the form of attractive info-graphics.

Apart from being the founding member of Voter Information, Communication, Education Network (VoICE.NET), the Election Commission of India presently holds the chair for the 20 member-state Association of Asian Election Authorities (AAEA) and the 8 member-state Forum of the Election Management Bodies of South Asia (FEMBoSA).
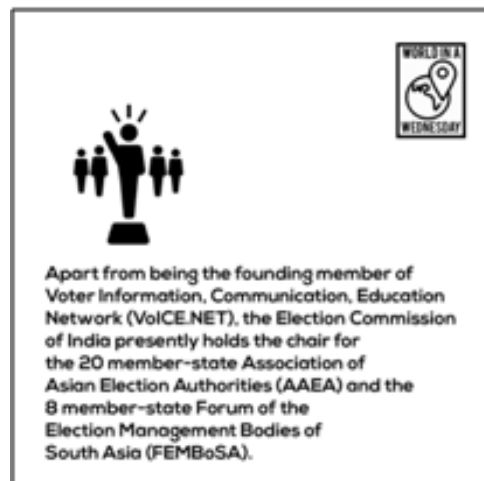


**# Thursday Toons–** Engaging, educative, but most importantly, tongue-in-cheek comic series featuring our Chunaav Toons to tickle the funny bones of the young audiences every Thursday.
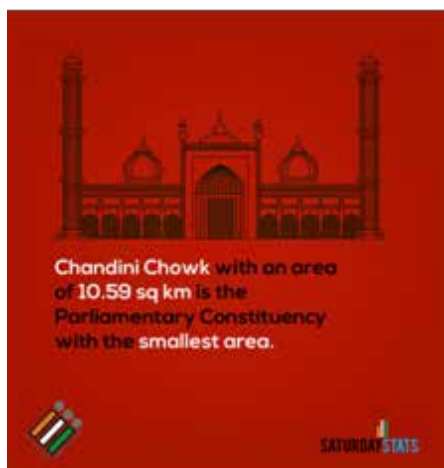
**# Friday Frames** - Visually appealing representative images capturing the human faces as they celebrate the festival of democracy and also showcasing the efforts behind the conduct of elections.





**# Saturday Stats–** Easy to understand, engaging info-graphics with stats representing information related to gender gaps, voter turnout etc. shared with the audience every Saturday.

**# Sunday Stories -** This human interest photo series shares tales of inspiration from the 'Belief in the Ballot - 101 Human Stories from Indian Elections,' published by Election Commission of India and Publications Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India.



With its presence being gradually felt on Facebook and exciting prospects in future, ECI is gearing up to the challenge of communicating the importance of the elections in India-a country that harbours the biggest fraction of youth in the whole world.

# Inclusion for Persons with Disabilities (PwDs) in Odisha

According to the 2011 census, India has around 70 million people with disabilities. Election commission made special efforts in provincial elections since 2013 and the national elections to make the elections inclusive and extended extra facilitation for people with disabilities and also for old and infirm.

**Brief Description of Best Practice:** In 2013-14, the Cuttack administration took the challenge of main-streaming PwD electors and enhancing their participation in the electoral process. A survey of PwDs, conducted through Anganwadi Workers (AWWs) in October-November 2013 wherein 46,989 numbers of PwDs including children, had been enlisted. Out of the above list, PwDs aged above 18 years were shortlisted which numbered 20,208. Single Window Camps for PwDs were conducted in all the Blocks and Urban bodies. In all these camps, an exclusive counter was set up to enrol PwDs in the Electoral Roll.

A special meeting was conducted by District Election Officer, Cuttack on March 11, 2014 to draw up an action plan for arrangements to be made for electors with disability. Representatives from Association of PwDs were also present. Strategy was evolved with clear tasks & targets, assigned to officers. The District Election Office unanimously set a goal to achieve 100 % voting by PwD electors as a matter of their right. One district level unit and 14 block level monitoring controls rooms were opened for the purpose. The block level control room acted as a Call-Centre. Every PwD voter was called at least thrice over his phone & explained the facilities made available at booths. It was decided to provide at least two volunteers to every polling booth to assist PwDs.

Measures like barrier free access to each of the polling stations with construction of permanent or temporary ramps, deployment of wheel chairs at all 2171 booths, disabled friendly furniture in polling booths, provision of signature guide, special queue for priority casting of votes, layout design for people with hearing-impairment, engagement of sign language interpreter for the same and printing of Braille ballot papers were undertaken.

Awareness generation was undertaken through various methods & media. Voters' Guide in vernacular language, on the voting rights and facilities for PwD voters were distributed. To motivate PwD electors & boost the morale of their family members, Household Contact Programme was conducted for 10 days in March- April 2014. The Anganwadi workers visited the household of PwD voters & handed over awareness material. The family members were explained regarding the arrangements made to boost their morale. 9800 polling staffs including Presiding Officers and first Polling Officers were trained for hassle-free polling for PwDs.

**Challenges:** Gathering information about PwDs in the district posed to be one of the huge challenges. The task of reaching out to PwD voters for awareness purposes with a 100% accuracy and efficiency proved to be a tough task. Moreover means of awareness used themselves posed a challenge as the same medium couldn't be used for every PwD voter.

**Outcome:** The Cuttack administration was able to reach 88.30% of the total PwD population in its district, the highest ever.

**Tools Used:** Awareness campaigns, Audio/Video, Print media, Posters, special logistics at the polling booths for the convenience of voters.

*Office of CEO, Odihsa*

# Accessing Democracy: Washington State's Website Team Empowers Voters with Disabilities

During July, as the EAC continues to highlight election innovations in accessibility, we caught up with Washington State's Lori Augino, Director of Elections for the Office of the Secretary of State.

In spring of 2016, a focused team of Washington State election administrators set out to produce a highly accessible website for voters with disabilities and those with language needs. The final result was one of the nation's leading elections websites for people with disabilities and other access requirements. Washington State's MyVote portal is an excellent model of how providing fully accessible websites must be at the top of every election official's to-do list.

This week is the second annual National Disability Voter Registration Week and this month is the 27th anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). It is with these milestones in mind that we feature the MyVote portal and the tips and best practices learned by the Washington State website team.

**EAC:** Please tell us about your MyVote portal effort and some of the site's accessibility features.

**Lori Augino:** The new version of MyVote was developed in collaboration with the Statewide Disability Advisory Committee, which includes voters who are blind or have sight impairment; the Washington Talking Book & Braille Library; election experts in Washington and other states; and designers and application developers.

MyVote was independently tested for usability, using 14 different combinations of internet browsers and screen readers and is available in English, Spanish, Chinese, and Vietnamese.

MyVote and supporting web pages are compliant with Section 508 of the United States Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, the ADA, Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0 Level AA, and other accessibility best practices and recommendations.



Introducing the all new MyVote

AN IMPROVED AND SEAMLESS VOTER TOOL THAT IS **FULLY ACCESSIBLE** AND RESPONSIVE.

**EAC:** Since launching the new MyVote in spring of 2016, how has the response been from voters with disabilities?

**Lori Augino:** Since launching the new MyVote it has received 1.8 million views and peaked with over 217,000 page views on October 9th alone. Voters from all walks of life, media, election professionals, disability advocates and outreach organizations have commended the increased accessibility and access to information.

**EAC:** In news articles about your website modernization initiative, you mentioned challenges in finding independent third party accessibility testers during the development phase. As election officials modernize their website, what recommendations can you share in this area?

**Lori Augino:** Finding an experienced and qualified vendor was not easy. Procurement timelines took longer than we anticipated. However, our contract specialists helped us keep the vendor procurement process as quick as possible. Once identified, the independent testing vendor was extremely quick and helpful. Not only did they identify and recommend changes but they included simple and easy to understand explanations on how they could be accomplished. Additionally, they provided accessible web design training opportunities for our web team.

We not only hired an independent testing vendor but we collaborated with the Washington State Talking Book and Braille Library who tested the tool with voters living with disabilities.

**EAC:** What role did your Disability Advisory Committee and other advocacy groups play in the website modernization effort?

**Lori Augino:** The Disability Advisory Committee was a critical partner on this project and there is no way we could have done this without their expertise and insight. They challenged us to provide the best solution possible and by the end of the project were celebrating our accomplishment.

MyVote is used as more than a tool by voters. Voter outreach and registration drive organizations use this tool to educate and register voters. Also, state agencies use MyVote to offer voter registration to their customers. It was very important to us to include feedback and features that allowed for them to be successful in their mission.

**EAC:** What were the primary resources that made this a successful project?

**Lori Augino:** This project was a true 'team effort'. Without any piece of the team, we would not have been successful. Our Disability Advisory Committee, Web & Application Developers, County Elections Departments, Communications and Executive Leadership were all working together with a unified goal while under an aggressive timeline.

**EAC:** Please describe a few tips or best practices for election officials looking to make their site more accessible.

**Lori Augino:** The best advice we can give is to think 'accessibility' first, where 'accessibility' includes voters using assistive technology or mobile devices and voters who'd prefer to view the content in another language. It is much harder to 'build-in' accessibility later, while it is very easy to include it from the beginning.

Don't provide a separate 'accessible' document or page. All voters, no matter what technology they are using, should access the same page. This will simplify updating your website and ensure consistent messaging.

Check and validate any assumptions. Work closely with your communities of voters who have a disability and work with them to see how they use your application or website. Additionally, you yourself should understand how each piece of assistive technology works. Take it out for a spin! Many tools have a trial period or a free license.

We would like to thank Director Augino and her team for their outstanding commitment to elections accessibility and voters with

disabilities. The EAC will continue to showcase best practices throughout July in hopes of helping election officials meet the promise of accessible elections for all voters. In keeping with July as accessibility month, earlier this week the EAC conducted a panel discussion on serving veterans with disabilities in the voting process.



*A U.S. Election Assistance Commission blog written by EAC Senior Advisor Patrick Leahy about the importance of accessibility for Voters with Disabilities, Jul 21, 2017*
*https://www.eac.gov/accessing-democracy-washington-states-website-team-empowers-voters-with-disabilities/*

Persons with Disabilities (PwDs)

**SPECIAL INITIATIVES**  General Election Commission of the Republic of Indonesia

# Indonesia's Strategy for
# Inclusive Election

**B**rief Description of Best Practice: Giving affirmative action to voters with disabilities, for example by ensuring Braille template ballot papers and polling stations that are accessible to voters with disabilities.

**Challenges:** KPU is supported by a CSO that works on the area of disability to design Braille ballot papers and furnishing technical guidance in the polling station for providing affirmative action to voters with disabilities. With numbers being so great, there are difficulties in distributing Braille templates to every polling station. If the problem of limited facilities is not solved, it can weaken the resolve of PwD voters to participate in elections.

# SPECIAL INITIATIVES

International Foundation for Electoral Systems

# IFES Disability Rights Resources

The International Foundation for Electoral Systems has developed several resources on disability-inclusive elections that can be useful for government and civil society. The tools are based on good practices learned from IFES' international comparative experience in over 60 countries around the world.



ElectionAccess.org, the world's first clearing house for resources on disability inclusion in elections, contains examples of voter education posters, radio shows, videos, and flyers from around the world.

IFES has developed the first Building Resources in Democracy, Governance and Elections (BRIDGE) module on disability rights and elections. The module, which uses BRIDGE's interactive adult learning methodology, includes lessons on access of persons with disabilities throughout the electoral cycle as voters, candidates, election officials and observers. Activities in the new BRIDGE module highlight disability inclusion as a key component of credible and inclusive elections.

*Equal Access: How to Include People with Disabilities in Elections and Political Processes,* published by IFES and the National Democratic Institute in 2014, contains practical examples of disability inclusion throughout the electoral cycle.



It is intended for use by election officials, DPOs, and other electoral stakeholders.

*Equal Access* is available in ten languages, including Arabic, Bahasa Indonesian, English, French, Nepali, Russian, Serbo-Croatian, Spanish, Urdu, and Uzbek.

AEC
Australian Electoral Commission
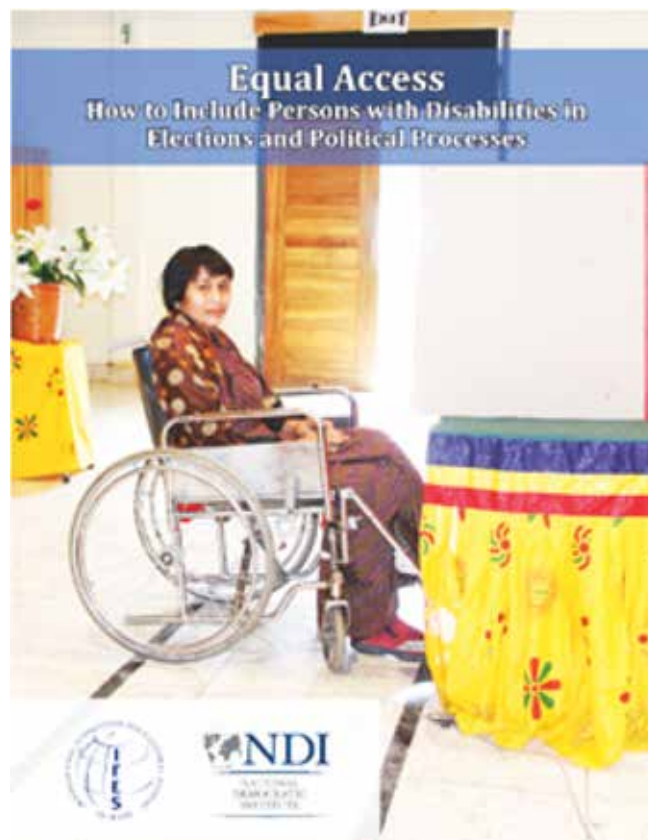
# National Indigenous Youth Parliament (NIYP) 2017

Indigenous youth parliamentarians for the National Indigenous Youth Parliament (NIYP) 2017 met at Canberra, Australia.

There are six participants from each state and territory and two from the Torres Strait. To reach Canberra their combined travel will be over 82,000 kms, from Tully in tropical far north Queensland, the Torres Strait Islands off the northern tip of Australia, Milingimbi Island off Arnhem Land, the Tiwi Islands off Darwin, Tennant Creek, the Kimberley in the north-west, Albany in the south-west, Kalgoorlie in the goldfields, Encounter Bay on the south central coast of South Australia and Nubeena on the Tasman Peninsula and many points between.

The NIYP was held over two days (May 27-28, 2017) in the former House of Representatives chamber at Old Parliament House Canberra.

The parliament debated Bills on:
- Restorative Intervention for Indigenous Young Offenders
- Indigenous Youth Mental Health
- Improving Access to Alcohol & Drug Rehabilitation Services in Rural and Remote Areas Bill
- Indigenous Human Rights and Race Discrimination

In the Adjournment debate the youth parliamentarians spoke on issues important to their community.

The parliament was presided over by Federal Members of Parliament, including the Speaker of the House of Representatives, the Hon Tony Smith MP.

Further highlights of the week long program of Indigenous youth parliamentarians for the National Indigenous Youth Parliament (NIYP) 2017 included:

- A reception at Government House with the Governor-General and Lady Cosgrove
- A parliamentary reception with the Prime Minister, Leader of the Opposition, Members of Parliament, campaigners and family members from the 1967 referendum and Mabo decision
- Meetings with the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition
- Dinner with the Hon Ken Wyatt MP and Senator Malarndirri McCarthy
- Visit to the Aboriginal Tent Embassy
- Tours of the 3rd National Indigenous Art Triennial at the National Gallery of Australia and Indigenous military service at the Australian War Memorial

## NIYP elects first female Prime Minister

Aretha Stewart-Brown, aged 16 from Williamstown in Melbourne, is the elected youth Prime Minister for the National Indigenous Youth Parliament 2017.

Aretha fought off 17 contenders for the prime ministership with a spirited campaign speech and the promise to faithfully and energetically represent the parliament.

Aretha is a Gumbaynggirr woman and is currently in Year 11. In 2015 Aretha attended the 100th anniversary of the Gallipoli landings in Turkey as the Indigenous representative for the Victorian Government.

Aretha is active in NAIDOC activities at her school and has taken on leadership roles in the community. She acknowledges that these opportunities were not available to older members of her family and she strives to be a role model and to make her family and community proud.

Lane Brookes, aged 22 from Roma in south-west Queensland, is the elected Leader of the Opposition.

Lane's nation is the Mandandanji and Kangoulu in the western districts of Queensland. He has forged a strong reputation in his home town of Roma, where he has organised activities that raised over $50,000 to benefit local people.

Lane was motivated to encourage community members to strive to look after each other and those less fortunate. He sees it as a way to enable youth volunteers to develop pride in their culture and community.

In 2016 Lane was awarded Young Legend of the Year for Australian Tidy Towns on the strength of his commitment and community spirit.

Lane lives on his traditional land and aspires to be the youngest councillor, first Aboriginal Mayor for Roma and Member of Parliament for Maranoa.

FIJIAN ELECTIONS OFFICE
*My Election, My Fiji*

# 200,000 Fijians served in the Nationwide Voter Registration Drive

The Fijian Elections Office (FEO) conducted a nationwide registration drive which started from May 23, 2017 and was originally proposed to end on July 1, 2017.

The registration drive did not have a single focus on enrolling unregistered eligible electors but also was an opportunity for the registered citizens to get their details corrected if required and seek replacements. Updating of the National Register of Voters was also a major component of this national registration drive.



By May 31, 2017, the FEO had assisted 35,433 voters through the registration drive under which 3,113 citizens were enrolled as new electors. In its final 10 days of the original duration of the drive, the FEO sent out mobile Voter Registration teams to business houses employing large numbers of people in all major urban locations to ensure that voters who haven't been able to access FEO's services during work hours are not left out from the drive. These mobile registration teams, which were present in all four divisions of the country, were deployed to business and corporate offices as per the convenience of the employer and employees.

Eventually the drive was extended by another week as a result of positive interest shown by the citizens. The Registration Drive had been well received by voters and it was thus befitting to extend the drive for an additional week to ensure all eligible Fijian citizens could take advantage of the services that were being offered for enrollment.

The drive finally concluded on July 8, 2017 by when 200,475 voters were assisted. In a final count it was found out that 13,198 citizens registered themselves as new voters. 29,388 electors got their details corrected while another 61,028 got their Voter Cards replaced.

The voter drive was especially significant for Fijians who wanted to apply for the position of Election Official for the 2018 General Elections that is to be held in the country. The recruitment process is scheduled to begin on July 28, 2017 and a key requirement for any applicant is to be a registered voter.

# ECI reaches out through NIOS Community Radio

Election Commission of India widens its reach through NIOS Community Radio through a series named *'Mat evam Matdan, kare Loktantra nirman'.* This series on elections is a joint initiative of ECI and NIOS-CR where different aspects of elections and the election processes would be explored.

The first programme was broadcast live with Mr. Umesh Sinha, Deputy Election Commissioner, Election Commission of India, answering the queries on voter enrolment and registration on 'NIOS-CR' FM 91.2 MHz on June 23, 2017. The next programme dealing with 'Systematic Voters' Education & Electoral Participation (SVEEP), a flagship programme of Election Commission of India that spreads awareness on elections, was broadcast live on July 20, 2017.

This one-hour programme, to be aired monthly, incorporates interview/ panel discussion with expert(s) along with small snippets of different creatives developed by ECI to spread awareness on importance of elections such as songs, jingles, audio/ video plays, statements by icons, advertisements etc. This makes the radio programme even more informative and interesting. Moreover, a question is posed at the end of each programme and first 25 correct entries are given a prize by Election Commission of India.

National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS) is an autonomous institution under Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) Government of India and caters to the educational requirements of out of school youth of India. With 2.3 million learners on rolls, NIOS has emerged as the largest open schooling organization in the world.

The Community Radio Station of NIOS, known as NIOS-CR FM 91.2 MHz, covers approximately more than 10 lakh people, as it reaches out to listeners up to a radius of 8-10 kms of area. It works with 14+ years old school dropouts, where over 75% of learners fall in the age group of 14-25 years. ECI has taken this new initiative on NIOS-CR with an aim to spread awareness on issues related to elections among these young adults.

The series *'Mat evam Matdan, kare Loktantra nirman'* produced in collaboration with ECI would also be aired from 167 community radios pan India through Federation of Community Radio Association (FCRS).

# Cricket for Awareness in Gujarat



A theme based Cricket Tournament was organized for spreading voters' awareness in Dahod district of Gujarat. Six teams were formed by integrating other flagship programmes of the Government which required proper outreach. The team representing the office of District Election Officer (DEO) was named *Democratic India XI*, while the team comprising young and future voters was christened *Youth on Booth XI*. Booth Level Officers (BLOs) play a pivotal role in the enrolment of voters, revision of electoral roll, house to house visit for collection of data, distribution of voters' slips/ Electoral Photo Identity Cards and combating various other challenges. Pitching-in within the cricket field as well, the team comprising BLOs was named *BLO XI.*

The District Police plays a crucial role in the maintenance of law & order and to aid in increasing turnout in low voters' turnout polling station areas. Keeping in line with their core spirit, value and duty, their team was named *Suraksha Setu* (Security bridge) *XI.* Following the step of demonetization by the Government, bankers had been promoting digital payment system and hence, their team was named as *Digital India XI.* For promoting *Swachh Bharat* Mission (Clean India Mission), the team representing the District Panchayat was called *Swachh Bharat XI.*

The two-day tournament was organized in a T-20 format. Theme-based live commentary added flavour to the keenly contested event while also serving as an innovative and effective medium for communicating the message of voter awareness. Extending their whole-hearted support to the awareness campaign, the spectators as well as all the team members pledged to enroll all their family members in the Electoral Roll and participate in the voting process in an ethical manner.

Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission, Kenya

# Kenyan Delegation from Judiciary Committee on Elections Visit Election Commission of India

On June 28, 2017, a 12-member delegation from the Judiciary Committee on Elections (JCE) in Kenya visited the Election Commission of India. The main focus of the visit was to learn about India's election dispute resolution mechanisms including mode of operation, legislative and administrative frameworks, in preparation for August 2017 General Elections in Kenya.

Led by Hon. Justice Paul Kihara Kariuki, President of the Court of Appeal in Kenya, the delegation comprised Hon. Justice David Majanja, Vice-Chairman, JCE, Hon. Justice Smokin Wanjala, Judge, Supreme Court of Kenya and Hon. Justice Richard Mwongo, Principal Judge, High Court of Kenya along with other officials of the JCE. The High Commissioner of Kenya to India, H.E. Mrs. Florence Imisa Wechetoo accompanied the delegation that met the then Chief Election Commissioner of India, Dr. Nasim Zaidi and Election Commissioners, A. K. Joti and O. P. Rawat.

On a pre-election visit, the Kenyan delegation conferred upon issues of dispute resolution, voter turnout, gender equality and role of media. A fruitful, knowledge-sharing exercise for both the Commissions, the meet discussed issues of mode of operations as well as legislative and administrative matters.

Speaking about the close cooperation between the Election Commission of India (ECI) and the Independent Election and Boundaries Commission (IEBC) of Kenya, Chief Election Commissioner of India, Dr. Nasim Zaidi traced the roots of Africa and India's strong relationship to the time of Mahatma Gandhi's sojourn in Africa. He briefed the Kenyan delegation about the Constitutional provisions and the strong support provided by the judiciary in India to ECI in electoral management. He expressed ECI's desire for further strengthening of the cooperation with IEBC through continued exchange of experiences and skills.

The course of the meeting moved onto discussions on dispute resolution which is considered an important part of India's electoral management where the judiciary is an active participant. The visiting delegation was briefed about the innovations and initiatives introduced by the ECI in managing the Indian

Elections including the evolution of India's voting system from paper ballot cast manually in 1950s to the Electronic Voting Machines (EVM) being used in India now for more than thirty years and the introduction of Voter Verifiable Paper Audit Trail (VVPAT). Election Commissioner A.K. Joti emphasized on the role of Information Technology in elections stating that EVMs have been successfully used during the last several decades and their reliability, authenticity and stability has been proven beyond doubt.

Election Commissioner, O. P. Rawat, greeted the delegation by outlining the differences and similarities between the electoral systems in India and Kenya. In the past recent years, Kenya has been successful in curbing electoral violence in Kenyan elections, with better administrative and security arrangements made by the JCE. Lauding Kenya's efforts, O.P. Rawat mentioned the Indian Constitution's Article 329 which states that the courts in India cannot interfere in the election process and all dispute resolution during elections rests with the ECI.

In his welcome remarks, Umesh Sinha, Deputy Election Commissioner conveyed warm felicitations to the JCE delegation and stated that ECI and IEBC enjoy good bilateral interaction and senior officials from both sides have exchanged visits regularly in the past. He referred to the recent visit of Ahmed Issack Hassan, former Chairman, IEBC and Advisor to Cambridge Conference on Electoral Democracy in the Commonwealth as Visiting Faculty for the training course on 'Voter Education' organised by IIIDEM, ECI for election officials from South Asian countries from June 19- 23, 2017. Following the DEC's welcome remarks, a power-point presentation discussed the structure, role and work of ECI in managing the largest election exercise in the world, with the Kenyan delegation.

S. K. Mendiratta, Legal Advisor for ECI, briefed the delegation about the legal framework in place for dispute resolution mechanisms in India. This was followed by a Question and Answer session wherein queries from JCE delegates relating to gender equality, appointment of CEC/EC, voter turnout, role of media etc. were answered. Recognising the success achieved by ECI in conducting free, fair and credible elections consistently for the past decades the Kenyan delegation conveyed their appreciation to the Election Commission of India.

# Papua New Guinea Elections

Since 2015, IFES has worked with the Papua New Guinea Electoral Commission (PNGEC) to bolster electoral capacity, improve operations and assist preparations ahead of the 2017 national election and the 2018 local-level government elections.

IFES focuses on building PNGEC capacity and increasing local ownership around electoral planning and operations, providing support to empower and include women in electoral processes, assisting in developing more effective voter education and messaging, increasing electoral security and updating information and communication technology (ICT) tools to encourage effective and transparent electoral processes.

With IFES' assistance, the PNGEC organized the first 'PNG National Women's Day' and released its first-ever election theme song and music video ahead of the 2017 national election. IFES staff was deployed throughout Papua New Guinea to observe the implementation of the election during the polling period from June 24 to July 8, 2017 and the counting which precedes the Return of the Writs which was scheduled for July 24, 2017.



Communities in the Central Province of Papua New Guinea come out in force to watch polling on Election Day. *(IFES/Ryan Bennett)*

IFES Chief of Party Pablo Galarce checks ballot boxes collected outside a counting center in the Papua New Guinea capital of Port Moresby. *(IFES/Ryan Bennett)*





Election officials verify the receipt of ballot boxes collected outside a counting center in the Papua New Guinea capital of Port Moresby. *(IFES/Ryan Bennett)*

Election officials taking a break during the process of reviewing ballot boxes outside a counting center in the Papua New Guinea capital of Port Moresby. *(IFES/Ryan Bennett)*

Election officials dump out a ballot box for counting in Goroka, Papua New Guinea. *(IFES/Robert Irish)*

Election officials prepare for counting using the limited preferential vote system in Goroka, Papua New Guinea. *(IFES/Robert Irish)*





The Presiding Officer at a polling location in the highlands of Papua New Guinea makes an announcement to the assembled crowd of voters. *(IFES/Robert Irish)*

Voters check their names against the voter roll at a polling location in Goroka, Papua New Guinea. *(IFES/Robert Irish)*





Election officials check for voters' names on the voter roll before inking their fingers in Goroka, Papua New Guinea. *(IFES/Robert Irish)*

An elderly voter prepares to cast her ballot in Goroka, Papua New Guinea. *(IFES/Robert Irish)*





Voters mark their ballots in Goroka, Papua New Guinea. *(IFES/Robert Irish)*

# COMELEC, International IDEA and IIIDEM Share Best Practices on Electoral Risk Management

Manila-Commission on elections (COMELEC) and International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA) tackled issues on Electoral Risk management (ERM) and shared best practices and experiences during the Manila leg of the International IDEA Asia Tour on ERM at the COMELEC Main Office in Intramuros on May 24, 2017.



*Photo courtesy : Adhy Aman/International IDEA*

In view of the midterm polls scheduled in Philippines in 2019, electoral risk management is a topic that COMELEC felt needed to be discussed due to diversified concerns relative to automated elections. The Comelec senior officials participated in the forum where policy options for institutionalizing ERM were discussed. International IDEA experts Sead Alihodzic and Adhy Aman shared case studies from across the globe where International IDEA's ERM tools

were utilized. The activity also serves as an opportunity for International IDEA to learn from the Philippines experience in past the seven years and a way for COMELEC to update its risk assessment.

COMELEC Chairman Andre Bautista in his end note said, "As a matter of policy, we ensure that COMELEC follows internationally accepted best practices by adjusting it to our local contexts and unique challenges. We are constantly on the lookout for new information in respect of handling elections, like in the area of ERM. That is something that Election Management Bodies (EMBs) such as ourselves can assist each other with, by providing inputs from our respective experiences".

The activity was targetted to update EMBs on the new standards related to ERMs. The Manila leg was one of the six stops of the Asia tour that was slated for May 15 to 26, 2017. The International IDEA is an inter-governmental organization that supports sustainable democracy worldwide.
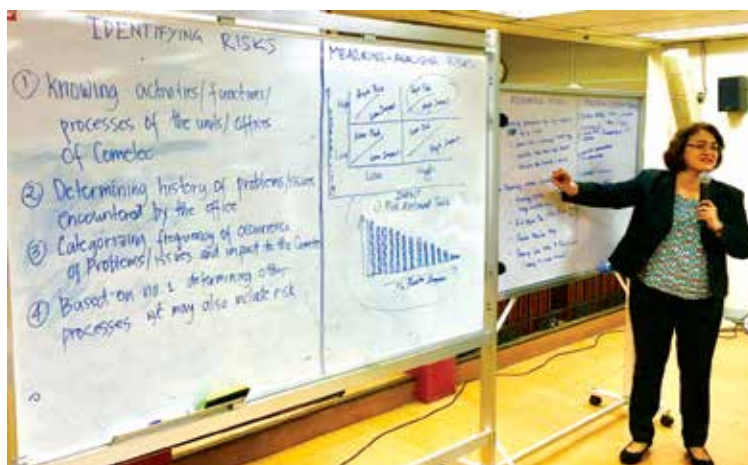


*Photo courtesy : Adhy Aman/International IDEA*

# Expanding Access to Political and Electoral Processes for Persons with Disabilities (PwDs)

How Establishing Partnerships with Multiple Types of Stakeholders Helps to Increase Access to the Political Process, was organized by International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) and the Mission of Sri Lanka to the United Nations on June 15, 2017 as a part of the Conference of States Parties to the United Nations (UN) Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD).

Referring to the CRPD Article 29 on political and public life and Sustainable Development Goal 16 on peace, justice and strong institutions and, their role and position in guaranteeing meaningful participation of Persons with Disabilities (PwDs) in his opening address, the Deputy Permanent Representative of Sri Lanka to the United Nations' A.S. Khan set the proceedings of the event into motion.

Virginia Atkinson, Senior Access and Inclusion Specialist, IFES elaborated on international examples of collaboration from Philippines, Kosovo and the Dominican Republic, where interventions from IFES in the form of country-wide voter registration projects, establishment of call centers (geared to address election related queries) manned by differently-abled voters and, PwD dedicated sensitization campaigns aided in initiating a dialogue, build awareness and reach out to the larger community.

While Senarath Attanayake (provincial councilor from Sri Lanka) highlighted upon the need and ways in which political parties can involve and engage the PwD community, the Secretary General of the Egyptian National Council for Disability Affairs (NCDA) Ashraf

Marei spoke about the country's first National Conference on Electoral Access.

International Disability Alliance's Silvia Quan drew attention to the major leadership gap that continues to persist between men and women with disabilities and involvement of women with disabilities in key women movements. Talking about the brief history of Pakistan's initiatives undertaken in association with Disabled Peoples' Organizations (DPOs) to include PwDs in electoral processes through interventions by the Ministry of Human Rights and Information, the session was concluded by the President of the Special Talent and Exchange Program of Pakistan, Mohammed Atif Sheikh.

# Conference on Mainstreaming Persons with Disabilities (PwDs) in Political Life

National Assembly of Persons with Disabilities (NAPD), Ukraine in collaboration with the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) hosted a conference on June 12 and 13, 2017 at Kiev, Ukraine on initiatives undertaken in the recent past to integrate persons with disabilities to mainstream political life.

Supported by the Government of the United Kingdom, United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and Global Affairs Canada, the conference on 'Equal Access: Strengthening and Safeguarding Human Rights' witnessed participation from over 100 representatives from entities as diverse as Election Management Bodies (EMBs), Disabled People's Organizations (DPOs), Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and the Media.

Focusing on the recent Draft Law #5559 and Draft Law #6031, new measures directed and adopted towards ensuring meaningful participation of Persons with Disabilities (PwDs) within the political and electoral spheres were discussed in detail during the course of the event.

A recommendation statement was forwarded by the participants on improving electoral inclusion and accessibility pertaining to voters with disabilities, like- implementing and bringing into force existing laws and international agreements, simplifying the polling procedures, increasing accessibility and guaranteeing equal access irrespective of sex and, forming an official working group comprising the CEC, DPOs and concerned ministries dedicated to the cause of integrating and involving differently-abled citizens to political mainstream.

# Workshop on Electoral Risk Management Tool

*International IDEA and ECI officials gather for an exchange on ERMT*



*Photo Courtesy : Election Commission of India*

Strategic Plan (2016-2025) prepared by Election Commission of India (ECI) has envisaged Electoral Risk Management as its 15th Pillar for implementation for which a committee constituted by the Commission drafted an Electoral Risk Management Manual. In furtherance of the Risk Management objectives, IIIDEM facilitated a one day workshop at ECI premises with representatives from International IDEA and senior ECI officials on May 15, 2017.

Former Chief Election Commissioner Dr. Nasim Zaidi, and the then Election Commissioners A.K. Joti and O. P. Rawat along with other elections officials from ECI participated. Adhy Aman and Sead Alihodzic participated on behalf of International IDEA.

In addition, Chief Electoral Officers (CEOs) of Karnataka, Uttar Pradesh, Delhi, Odisha,

Uttarakhand, Punjab, Manipur, Goa and West Bengal also attended the workshop and shared the theoretical and practical considerations for Risk Management during elections.

Welcoming the initiative, Election Commissioner O.P. Rawat said "Since Risk Management in Elections is continuously evolving, visualizing risks also needs to be a continuous process." He elaborated that "even the smallest of slips here and there, during election management can lead to major debacles, hence it is important to sharpen such tools that can help mitigate any future risks in election management".

In his address, Election Commissioner A.K. Joti commended that India has traversed a journey of 67 years in conducting successful elections. It is during this 67 year journey that ECI has established itself globally for being

a transparent body wherein no voter is left behind. However it is imperative to adhere to innovative methods for adopting technology and mitigating risks since there are a large number of stakeholders involved such as political parties, candidates, media and civil societies et al.  He congratulated the Manual Drafting Committee and International IDEA for their efforts in bringing out the ERM manual by assimilating the various risks that pose a threat to Indian election management.

In his inaugural address, former Chief Election Commissioner Dr. Nasim Zaidi explained that "Risk Management is necessary to ensure that elections conducted are free and fair. This ensures the trust and confidence of people in the election management process." He said that with close to 180 risks in election management being mentioned in the ERM manual, it is now important to study the risks carefully for appropriate identification and mitigation so that these risks or the new ones that may arise can be tackled accordingly.

Dr. Zaidi further advised IIIDEM to incorporate targeted courses on Electoral Risk Management in its annual work plan wherein customized training is conducted for all officers even at the basic level. These are to be held right before any Parliamentary or Assembly Elections to ensure that all the staff involved in conduct of elections is abreast with electoral risks in an appropriate and timely manner.

Later, Adhy Aman and Sead Alihodzic talked about how International IDEA began their work on developing the ERM tool in 2009 but formally launched it in 2013. They mentioned that despite the tool being generic it is customizable. International IDEA, in collaboration with ECI, is interested in developing the tool further for appropriate Electoral Risk Management. It was pointed out that ERM Manual published by the ECI is the first document on ERM, outside International IDEA and will go a long way for other EMBs of the world to replicate it.

C.B. Prasad, CEO Delhi made a presentation on the ERM Manual prepared by the ECI and Umesh Sinha, Deputy Election Commissioner, ECI made a presentation on vulnerability exercise undertaken by ECI before every election. Participants made valuable contributions by their inputs. Attention of the participants was invited to the recommendation made in the manual to create appropriate IT tools to make ERM more effective to which Sead Alihodzic offered sharing of the source code of their ERMT free of cost in case ECI is interested. The ECI can customize the tool to the local requirements as necessary. He also offered to train a team of experts in International IDEA headquarters for taking the customization forward.

# Voter Education for Electoral Officers from FEMBoSA

With the intent of ensuring that elections can be, and should be, truly transparent and democratic wherein each voter is able to understand his/her role in casting the ballot and their civic responsibility of participating in an election, the India International Institute of Democracy and Election Management (IIIDEM) in collaboration with the Malaysian Commonwealth Study Centre (MCSC), Cambridge University, United Kingdom conducted a five-day Capacity Building Training on Voter Education for electoral officers from the Federation of Election Management Bodies of South Asia (FEMBoSA) from June 19, 2017 to June 23, 2017.

At the inauguration ceremony, Hon'ble Chief Election Commissioner (now former Chief Election Commissioner), Dr. Nasim Zaidi reiterated the importance of electoral training in ensuring the conduct of free, fair and peaceful election. The necessity for all EMBs to undertake specific and targeted steps towards addressing electoral deficiencies that occur in electoral processes was set as the theme for the entire course.

On this note, the five-day training with 15 delegates from the member EMBs of the Forum of the Election Management Bodies of South Asia (Nepal, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Sri Lanka, Afghanistan, Maldives and India) commenced with various sessions explaining the principles of voter education and inclusion, determining the needs of stakeholders involved in voter registration and education processes, steps of a voter education programme, a foray into electoral literacy (Indian experience), utilizing technology and social media for voter outreach, and international practices on students engagement. Sessions were taken by reputed resource personnel such as Sudhir Kumar Rakesh (former CEO of Bihar), Lalit Padalia (Addl. CEO of Gujarat), Padma Angmo (Director of SVEEP, ECI), Amitjyoti Bhattacharya (Deputy CEO of West Bengal) and S.D. Sharma (Senior Fellow of ECI).

In addition to this, each country was given the opportunity to present the scope and present status of its voter education programmes and voter registration status. It had been unanimously agreed that universal suffrage is crucial to ensure transparent democratic practices. The Indian experience is one such instance of reducing the upheaval that occurs among political parties to ensure a solid voter turnout. The distribution of a photo voter list has also helped in improving participation over the years and ensuring a high rate of voter registration and turnout accordingly.

With a visit to the Voter Facilitation Centre in New Delhi, the officers were introduced to voter registration practices and processes in India. With 77.8% of the participants rating the overall content delivery and training materials used in the programme as 'excellent' and another 11% as 'good' during the feedback collected, the Capacity Building Training was deemed successful.



*Photo Courtesy : Election Commission of India*

# IIIDEM and International IDEA Co-host International Consultative Workshop on Electoral Training for Capacity Building Globally

An International Consultative Workshop on 'Leveraging Electoral Training Facilities for Global Democracies' was organized by India International Institute of Democracy and Election Management (IIIDEM) in partnership with International IDEA on July 24-25, 2017. Referring to the participation of international delegates, experts and election officials from India in the two-day workshop, Chief Election Commissioner of India A. K. Joti in his opening remarks said, "Collective wisdom is better for the purpose of implementation." He stressed on holistic approach for capacity development of all stakeholders. A.K. Joti called the New Delhi Statement as a good document which would help in guiding global democracies to move ahead. He added that it is not sufficient to have a plan of action only, since implementation of any statement/declaration is imperative.

Members from the Election Management Bodies (EMBs) of Australia, Nepal, Bulgaria, Nigeria and Georgia, delegates from International Organizations such as Association of World Election Bodies (A-WEB) United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and United Nations Electoral Assistance Division (UNEAD) along with other Indian Directors from Administrative Training Institutes participated in this workshop.

*The delegates at the International Consultative Workshop on 'Leveraging Electoral Training Facilities for Global Democracies' , New Delhi, India. Photo Courtesy : Election Commission of India*

The second day of the programme commenced with representatives of different EMBs and International Organizations sharing their experience on providing training to various electoral stakeholders such as political parties, security personnel, observers, media and civil society organizations (CSOs). Representatives from UNEAD, Election Commissions of Bulgaria, Georgia and Nigeria among others explained the unique practices that their host organizations have adopted along with the challenges rising from electoral trainings. Additionally, the speakers shared details on the training modules and supplementary learning material prepared by their respective institutions with the participants.

In the next session, representatives from International IDEA, UNDP, IIIDEM, A-Web and Scytl deliberated on the use of technology in electoral training and distance learning. The speakers discussed the possibilities of using technology to improve quality of electoral training, e-learning as a potent tool to impart continuous learning, and the challenges faced by their countries or organizations in implementing technology in election training to various stakeholders.

In the third and last session, the delegates were divided into groups to have a deliberation on the New Delhi Statement for Electoral Capacity Development. Four broad categories were laid down for discussion – Meeting Emerging Challenges and Concerns in Electoral Capacity Development, Sustainability of the Training Facilities, Democracy/ Electoral Education and Capacity Building (ensuring inclusion particularly of women, youth, persons with disabilities and minorities), and finally, the



Capacity Building of Stakeholders including electors, political parties, security personnel, observers, media and civil society organizations (CSOs). The participants, thereafter, jointly deliberated on these points and made valuable recommendations which were presented and adopted by the participating electoral training institutes and organizations.

The workshop recommended setting up of a forum to ensure continuous interaction and peer-to-peer exchange among all the institutions engaged in electoral capacity development with a view to improve the quality and content of training and research on democracy and election management.



*Launch of the 'New Delhi Statement' by A.K. Joti, Chief Election Commissioner of India*



*Photo Courtesy : Election Commission of India*

General Election Commission of Mongolia

# Mongolia Presidential Elections 2017 concludes- Khaltmaa Battulga Elected

After the first round failed to conclusively throw up a winner with a clear majority, the run-off decided the Democratic Party's candidate and former martial artist- Khaltmaa Battulga as the 5th President of Mongolia. As per the General Election Commission's data, Battulga garnered over 50% of total votes cast while his closest contender Miyeegombo Enkhbold- candidate of the Mongolian People's Party secured slightly above 40% of votes. The recorded voter turnout remained around 60.9%.

Sources:

*https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2017-07-07/nationalist-candidate-battulga-wins-mongolian-election-in-runoff*
*http://uk.reuters.com/article/uk-mongolia-election-idUKKBN19T063*


*File Photo*
*Photo Courtesy : Xinhua/Zheng Chuang*

Cuban National Election Commission

# Cuban Elections scheduled for October 2017

With October 22, 2017 being locked as the day of municipal elections- the process of electing 612 members to the National Assembly of People's Power is underway. 24, 360 polling stations are currently being prepared for 12,515 districts across the country. Presently engaged in revising the Voting Registry, publishing and verifying voters' lists, the Cuban National Election Commission plans on establishing dedicated special electoral commissions in case districts don't have a winning candidate with a clear majority.


*Photo Courtesy : Local10.com*

Sources:

*http://en.escambray.cu/2017/over-20-thousand-polling-stations-ready-for-next-cuban-elections/*
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Central Election Commission of Georgia

# Georgia Launches 'Electoral Development Schools' in 23 Municipalities of the Country

Georgia's Central Election Commission has launched 'Electoral Development Schools' in 23 of the country's municipalities where more than 500 youngsters will have an opportunity to gain knowledge on important issues related to the election systems, election administration, democratic electoral principles, and elective bodies in Georgia, electoral stakeholders, gender equality and elections of European Parliament.

Tamar Zhvania, Chairperson of the Central Election Commission (CEC) of Georgia talked about how the Electoral Development School is being conducted for the first time in Tserovani as well as Akhmeta where youth from Pankisi gorge will have the opportunity to participate in the project. The project aims at promoting elections among the youth by encouraging and increasing civic participation amongst them. The project also intends to enable election administration representatives to share their own professional experience with the young citizens.

'Electoral Development School' was piloted in 2015 in 10 election districts. Due to the increasing interest towards the project, the number of 'Electoral Development School' was stepped up to 20 municipalities in 2016. This year the number of Electoral Development Schools has been further scaled up to 23 municipalities.

The project is being implemented by the support of Council of Europe (CoE). The CEC, for the second time, received direct grant from the CoE for the implementation of the project which is being conducted by the CEC and its training centre in cooperation with the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES).

The learning course was held from July 17 until July 28, 2017.

Elections Canada

# By-election to take place in Sturgeon River–Parkland

- On Tuesday July 4, 2017, the Acting Chief Electoral Officer of Canada, Stéphane Perrault, received official notice from the Speaker of the House of Commons that the seat for Sturgeon River–Parkland (Alberta) is vacant. A by-election will take place to fill the vacant seat.

- The date of the by-election must be announced between July 15, 2017 and December 31, 2017. This announcement signals the start of the by-election period.

- The by-election period must last at least 36 days, and the by-election must be held on a Monday. Therefore, the earliest date that the Sturgeon River–Parkland by-election can be held is Monday August 21, 2017.

- The Canada Elections Act does not prescribe a maximum length of time for a by-election period.

GATINEAU, Wednesday, July 5, 2017

# Ram Nath Kovind declared the President of India following the 15th Presidential Election

As the term of office of Pranab Mukherjee, President of India, neared its expiration on July 24, 2017, an election was conducted by the Election Commission of India on July 17, 2017 following which, Ram Nath Kovind was declared as the President-elect on July 20, 2017. The ECI, mandated by the constitution of the country, ensured a free and fair election to the office of the President of India.

The President was elected by the members of the Electoral College consisting of elected members of the two Houses of Indian Parliament, and the elected members of the Legislative Assemblies of all States including National Capital Territory of Delhi and the Union Territory of Puducherry.

The election was held in accordance with the system of Proportional Representation by means of Single Transferable Vote and the voting was conducted by secret ballot. For marking the vote, the Commission supplied special pens which were given to the electors in the polling station by the designated official when the ballot paper was handed over.



The Secretary General, Lok Sabha (House of the People) was appointed as the Returning Officer for the election. Poll for the election was taken in the Parliament House and in the premises of the State Legislative Assemblies.

Counting of votes was held in New Delhi under the supervision of the Returning Officer. Formal announcement of election of the President was made by the Commission. The Elections were contested by two candidates, Meira Kumar, ex-Speaker of the Lok Sabha and Ram Nath Kovind, the former Governor of Bihar who began his term as President on July 25, 2017.
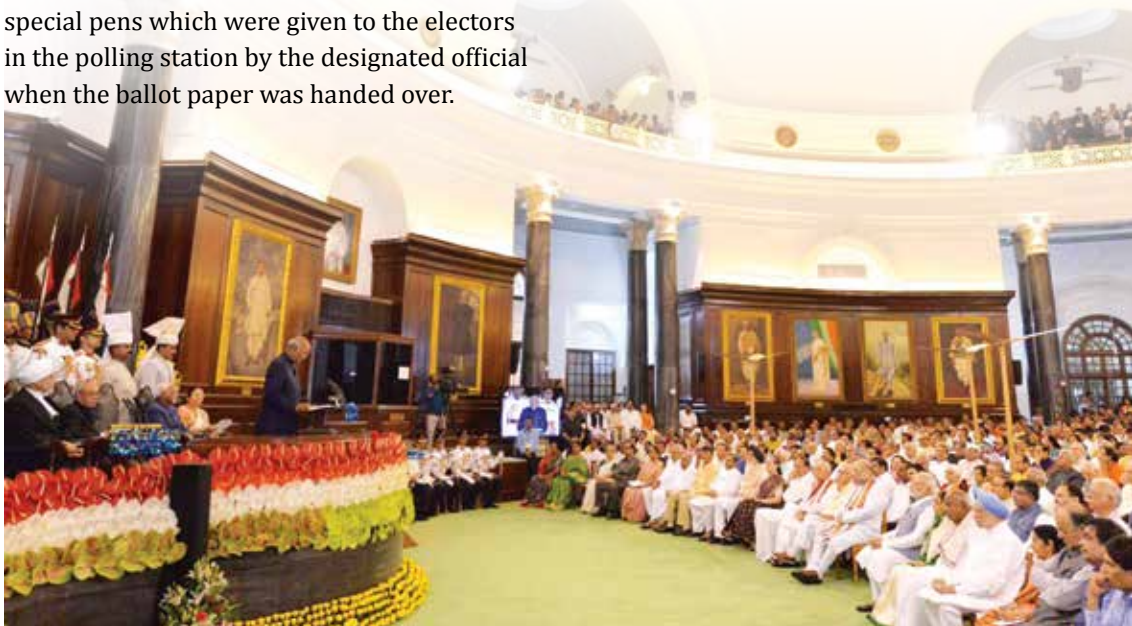
# Achal Kumar Joti takes over as the New Chief Election Commissioner of India



Achal Kumar Joti assumed charge as the 21st Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) of India, succeeding Dr. Nasim Zaidi on July 6, 2017. Dr. Nasim Zaidi demitted office on July 5, 2017 after completing his tenure.

A.K. Joti has served as Election Commissioner since May 13, 2015. During his tenure as Election Commissioner, State Assembly elections were successfully conducted in 11 Indian States. Some of the initiatives undertaken during these elections were IT initiatives including - one for service voters through Electronically Transmitted Postal Ballot System (ETPBS) along with National Voters' Service Portal (NVSP) – an e-portal for easy registration of eligible voters, voter awareness and educational initiatives and stringent expenditure monitoring mechanism etc.

Before joining the Election Commission of India, A.K. Joti served the nation as a long time civil servant of Indian Administrative Service. He brings with him a rich experience of Public Administration of 42 years. After the assumption of charge, A.K. Joti spoke about the priorities of the Commission and said that the Commission shall pursue vigorously its commitment to hold free, fair, inclusive and credible elections throughout the country and ensure the success of its mission - *'No Voter to be Left Behind'.*

# ECI rolls out its Game Plan for
# Future Voters

An important population segment for the Systematic Voters' Education and Electoral Participation (SVEEP) programme of the ECI is the 'Future Voters' which comprises youngsters in the age group of 15-17 years. It is said that participation at first one or two elections of an elector's lifetime helps to inculcate the habit of voting and make participation in future elections more likely. ECI is thus reaching out to future voters and interactive school engagement is one of the components under this initiative.
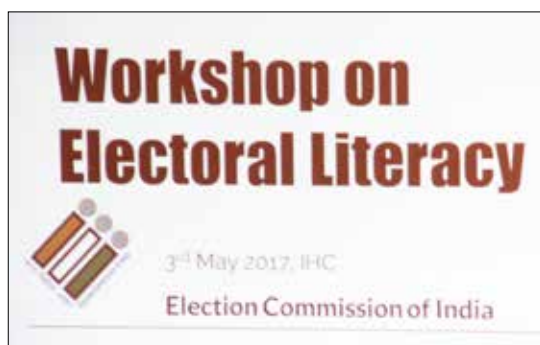


The commission is all set to introduce voter education in the formal schooling system by establishing Electoral Literacy Clubs (ELCs) which have been visualized as a pan-Indian network of school clubs dedicated to the cause of spreading and disseminating awareness, knowledge and information pertaining to electoral education. The idea is to facilitate suitable exposure to substantive and well-designed electoral literacy curriculum supported by co-curricular and extra-curricular activities.

Working towards this purpose, the Commission involved Chief Electoral Officers of various states as well as representatives from educational organizations such as NCERT, CBSE, ICSC, AHSEC, Shiv Nadar School and Azim Prem Ji University who were subsequently organized into a working group to deliberate on this novel venture. The working group was also joined by UNFP as well as IIIDEM and a total of three meetings were held in the past year for the same.

The third and final meeting of the working group was organized as a workshop on May 3, 2017 at the India Habitat Centre. The crux of the meeting was to identify gaps in the present curriculum, suggest modifications, bring out and define key learnings that a student belonging to the target segment is expected to be acquainted with and develop tools for imparting the same. The working group divided into 5 sub-groups was each assigned one grade for perusal and they developed a Glossary of Words, Word Games, Quizzes & FAQs, Activities and Pedagogy Approach as deemed fit for the grade concerned.

The proposed date for rolling out the plan throughout the country is January 25, 2018 i.e. National Voters' Day 2018. With the first ELC already launched on May 19, 2017 at Noida's Shiv Nadar School, ECI's SVEEP programme is leaving no stone unturned in its commitment to the cause of leaving no voter behind.

Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission Kenya

# Kenya's General Elections
## on August 8, 2017

Kenya's Independent Electoral Boundaries Commission (IEBC) is all set to conduct the country's General Election on August 8, 2017. Promising a free and fair election to Kenyan citizens, the IEBC has taken various steps to ensure a credible electoral process.

The Commission's Chief Executive Officer Ezra Chiloba talked about the measures taken by IEBC for ensuring a smooth conduct of the upcoming General Elections. 45,000 election gadgets are set to be deployed in the 40,883 polling stations across the country in a bid to have an effective election. To ensure efficiency, no polling station will have more than 700 voters. It would be impossible to have the deceased voting as by means of the election gadget an individual will have to present themselves in person at the polling station to cast their vote. On transmission of results, the same technology will be used citing network challenge as the only setback they foresee and satellite technology is being explored to overcome the same. The results will be transmitted both by text as well as a scanned copy of the read results from the polling station to tallying centres.

Apart from ensuring a free and fair election, the IEBC has also joined hands with IFES to roll out a campaign under the banner Y-VOTE (Youth Vote) to educate, engage and motivate the youth to participate in the August 2017 General Election.

Election Commission of India

# Vice-Presidential Election
## conducted in India

To fill the vacancy that was caused by the expiration of the term of office of the outgoing Vice-President of India, Mohd. Hamid Ansari, an election was conducted by the Election Commission of India on August 5, 2017. The ECI is mandated by the constitution of the country to ensure that the election to the office of the Vice-President of India is a free and fair election.

The Vice-President was elected by the members of the Electoral College consisting of the members of both Houses of Parliament in accordance with the system of proportional representation by means of the single transferable vote. The nominated Members of Rajya Sabha (Council of States) as well as of Lok Sabha (House of the people) are eligible to be included in the Electoral College and, therefore, are entitled to participate in the election.

The Electoral College for the recent election of the Vice-President consisted of 790 members. The Elections were contested by two candidates namely, Venkaiah Naidu, who was serving as the Minister of Information and Broadcasting and Gopalkrishna Gandhi, an ex-governor of the State of West Bengal. Post the counting of votes, Venkaiah Naidu was declared as the elected Vice-President of India.

# Liberia Elections Body says 20 Candidates will Vie for President

***Liberia's National Elections Commission said 20 candidates will contest to succeed President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf in polls that are scheduled for October.***



*Vice-President Joseph Boakai will run on the ticket of the ruling Unity Party in a vote that will also be contested by former soccer World Player of the Year George Weah, pictured.*

Vice-President Joseph Boakai will run on the ticket of the ruling Unity Party in a vote that will also be contested by former soccer World Player of the Year George Weah, the candidate for the main opposition Coalition for Democratic Change, NEC Chairman Jerome Korkoya told reporters on Sunday in the capital, Monrovia.

The elections body also certified 986 candidates standing for the West African nation of 4.6 million's House of Representatives, which has 73 seats.

The country will vote to replace Nobel laureate Johnson-Sirleaf, who won Liberia's first democratic elections after a protracted civil war ended in 2003. Her government is struggling to revive an economy after an outbreak of Ebola in 2014 lasted for more than a year while prices of iron ore, the country's largest source of foreign currency, slumped.

*Festus Poquie, July 31, 2017*



*Ellen Johnson Sirleaf*

# Second Edition of VoICE International Launched



*Chief Election Commissioner A.K. Joti, former Chief Election Commissioner Dr. Nasim Zaidi and other officials from ECI release the second issue of VoICE International (Photo Courtesy : ECI)*

Second edition of the VoICE International was released by the Commission at Nirvachan Sadan, New Delhi on May 26, 2017. VoICE International is an e-publication of VoICE. NET, Voter Information, Communication & Education Network, a global knowledge network for sharing knowledge, resources and expertise on Voter Education. An ECI initiative, it comprises 23 member Election Management Bodies (EMBs) across the world along with international organizations like UNDP, IFES and International IDEA.

VoICE.NET was launched during the International Conference on Voter Education for Inclusive, Informed & Ethical participation held at New Delhi in October 2016 as a part of New Delhi Declaration. VoICE International is the quarterly global magazine for Voter Information, Communication and Education at VoICE.NET portal.

The launch of second issue (April- June 2017) of VoICE International commenced with a welcome address by Deputy Election Commissioner, Umesh Sinha who informed that the first quarterly issue (Jan- March 2017)

of VoICE International focused on the theme 'Empowering Young and Future Voters'. The second and present issue is based on the theme 'Voter education for Enhancing Gender Participation'. Subsequent issues will work on themes around Persons with Disabilities (PwDs), Service Voters and NRIs.

After the e-launch of the magazine, the then Chief Election Commissioner, Dr. Nasim Zaidi addressed the audience. "ECI holds a central place in the global EMBs community. It is a position we have reached after much hard work, and one that we need to maintain", said Dr. Zaidi. He appreciated the significance of VoICE.NET as a platform for sharing information and encouraging international participation. He advised on providing a platform at VoICE.NET for discussions and also information on the structure/organization of each EMB, emerging legal trends in the electoral process, electoral reforms and technology amongst others.  He asked the officials of Election Commission of India, Chief Electoral Officers (CEOs) and District Election Officers (DEOs) to enrich VoICE International through their vast experiences. He

*The e-launch of Second Edition of VoICE International, a VoICE.NET e-publication*

congratulated the team of VoICE International and hoped that this issue of VoICE International would serve as a reference guide for gender related good practices in elections.

The then Election Commissioner -now Chief Election Commissioner - A.K. Joti complimented the team of VoICE International for taking up themes such as youth, gender, PwDs, NRI and service voters. He stressed upon working towards adopting and adapting good practices in the field. "VoICE International should not remain as just a research document. Along with voters, the political parties, CEOs and DEOs of different regions too need to be involved in implementing the good practices in voter education. The aim is to transform learning into practice", he said.

## Bazelon Center Guide to Voting Rights of People with Mental Disabilities

The Guide to Voting Rights of People with Mental Disabilities, published by the Bazelon Center in 2016, includes a review of the laws that protect or restrict voting rights of persons with psychosocial or intellectual disabilities in the United States. It also provides suggestions for advocating to change restrctive laws.
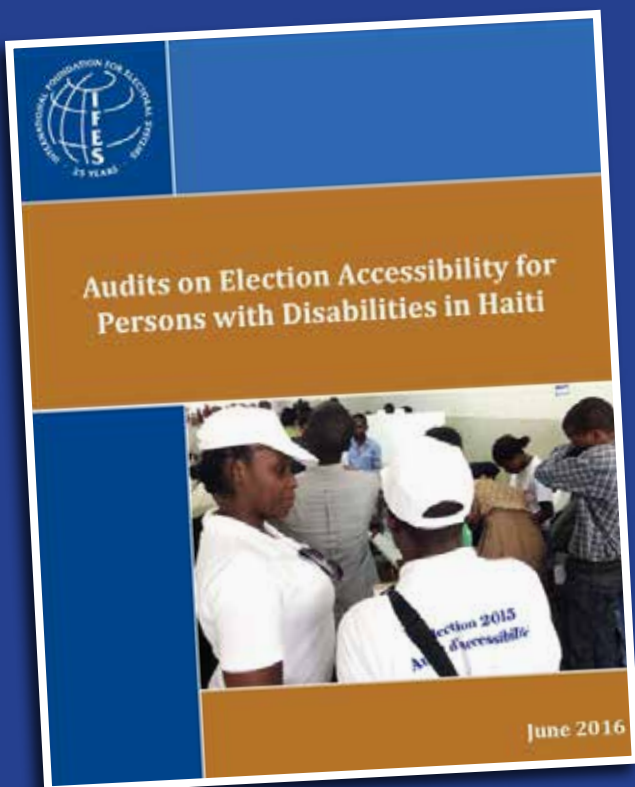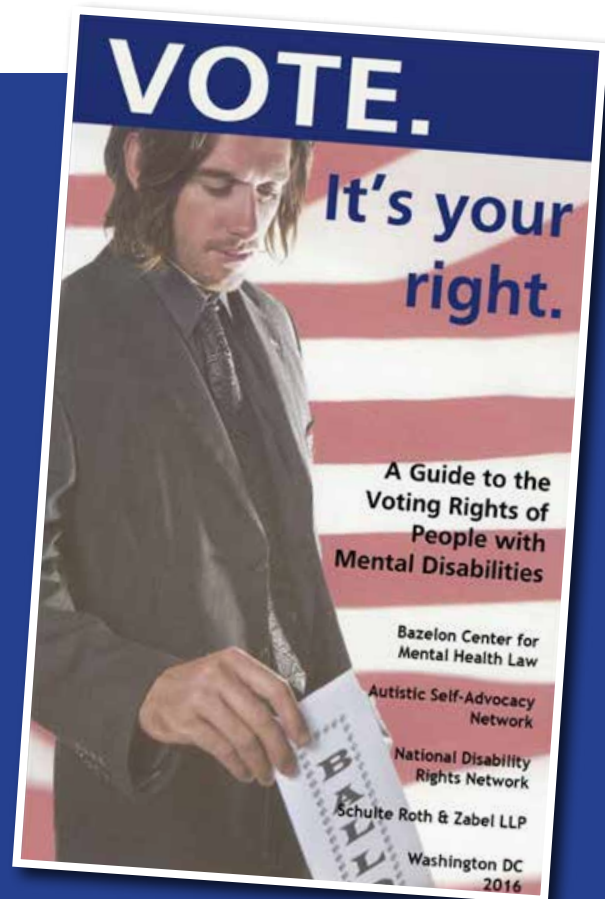


## Audits on Election Accessibility for Persons with Disabilities in Haiti



In 2014 and 2015, the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) trained disabled people's organizations (DPOs) in Haiti to conduct a number of election access observations, with the support of the US Agency for International Development (USAID).

# Accessible Elections for Persons with Disabilities in Five Southeast Asian Countries
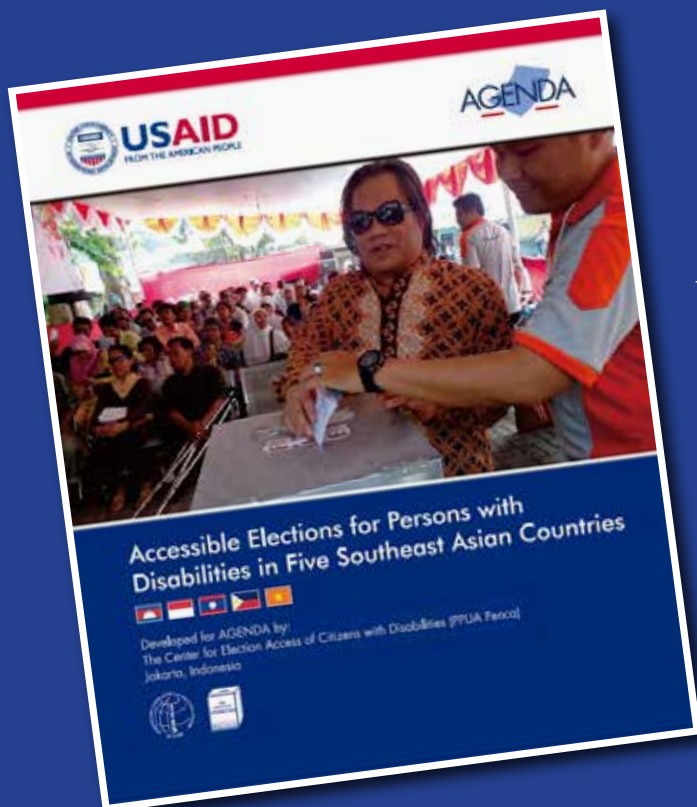


*Developed for AGENDA by the Center for Election Access of Citizens with Disabilities (PPUA Penca) in Jakarta, Indonesia*

*Countries: Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, the Philippines, Vietnam*

# International Language Guidelines on Disability

In February 2017, the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) released 'International Language Guidelines on Disability,' a document that includes terminology related to electoral access and inclusion in seven languages. IFES compiled standard disability terminology after working with disabled people's organizations around the world to empower them to participate in inclusive elections. The language provided within the guidelines follow the principles of person-first language, which emphasizes that persons with disabilities have equal rights as others. In some countries, local disability rights advocates might prefer terms different from those referenced in this guide. The terminology that is included in these guidelines can be used as a starting point for beginning discussions on disability rights with civil society and government advocates.
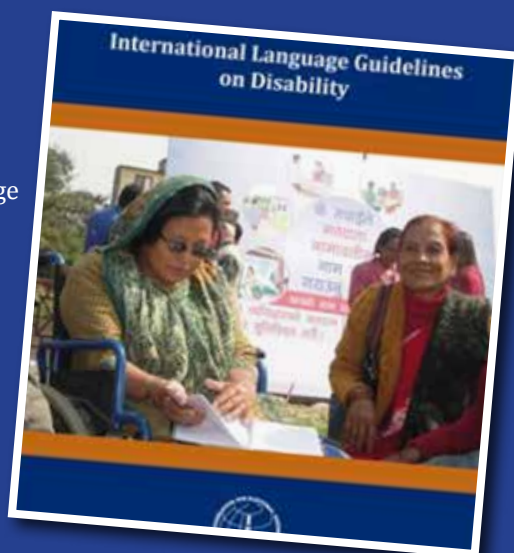


The publication also includes definitions of common election access vocabulary such as accessible formats, reasonable accommodations, and universal design. The new tool is intended to serve as an easy-to-use resource to facilitate discussions on disability inclusion in political processes.

'International Language Guidelines on Disability' is available in Arabic, Bahasa Indonesian, English, French, Kyrgyz, Russian, and Spanish.

## Sentinels of Democracy - A Unique Comic Book on Voter Education



The Election Commission of India has always been emphasizing on developing innovative tools to generate awareness and educate all categories of voters, especially youth, regarding informed and inclusive participation in the electoral process. While heading a technical committee appointed for such purpose by the ECI, CEO Gujarat came up with the unique idea of telling stories through cartoons for fun filled education to the voters. The 'LAWTOONs' for voter education were developed by Research Foundation for Governance in India (RFGI), an Ahmedabad based expert agency. The agency was provided with proper understanding of the content and various experiences and illustrations were shared which were relatable and realistic. It ranged from Gujarat in the West to Mizoram in the North East, Kamala in the South to Rajasthan in the North highlighting exemplary works done by the election machinery in spite of geographical, cultural and socio-economic diversities.

The book contains interesting stories told through cartoons which include importance of enrolment as a voter, ethical voting, dedicated work by election personnel amidst various challenges and involvement of young volunteers. All stories have been narrated in a simple and lucid way that makes the book interesting and effective for the citizens and voters of all age groups.

The LAWTOONs, first of its kinds, is appropriately titled 'Sentinels of Democracy.' It has been receiving accolades from all quarters and it is aimed at making available to all through the platform of Social Media. The ECI is planning to upload stories on Facebook one by one in the near future.

## Introducing Biometric Technology in Elections

A credible voter register gives legitimacy to the electoral process and helps prevent electoral fraud.

However, voter registration remains a complex and contested task. It is one of the most important activities that an electoral management body needs to conduct, but it is also one of the most costly in terms of both time and resources.

Many countries that face challenges in creating an accurate voter register are considering reforming their voter registration systems through the introduction of biometric technologies. The drive towards biometrics has been facilitated by its largely apolitical nature. Investing in high-tech solutions allows stakeholders to demonstrate their commitment to resolving electoral problems. At the same time, expectations on biometric solutions may be exaggerated.

This guide provides an overview of key concepts and considerations for all stakeholders involved in discussions about the application of biometrics in elections, both for voter registration before an election and for voter verification at polling stations on election day.
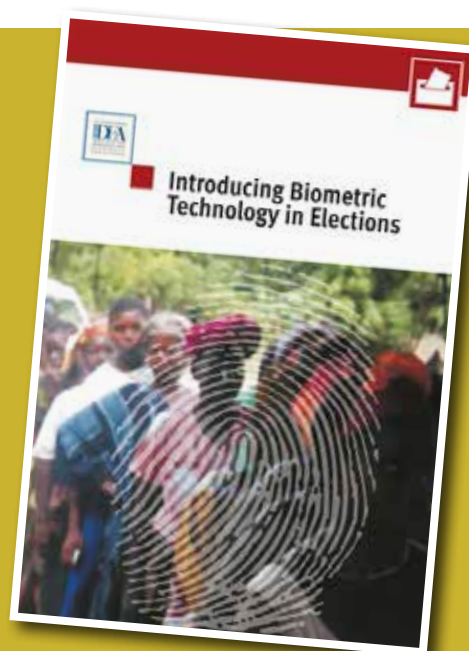
Published    : 20 June 2017
Language    : English
Pages        : 77
ISBN         : 978-91-7671-098-2
Author(s)   : Peter Wolf, Adbul Alim, Brown Kasaro, Pontius Namugera, Mohammed Saneem, Tamir Zorigt

## Democratic Accountability in Service Delivery: Lessons from the Pacific

On September 25, 2015 the United Nations General Assembly adopted 'Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development' (the 2030 Agenda) as an outcome of the UN Sustainable Development Summit. Since the adoption of the 2030 Agenda, development experts, statisticians and organizations have discussed the follow-up and review mechanisms for monitoring implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

In MY World, a UN survey conducted prior to the adoption of the 2030 Agenda, people voted for 'an honest and responsive government' as the fourth most important priority after education, health care and employment. These results reflect people's aspirational expectations for the world they want through the SDGs.

This Policy Brief focuses on Pacific island states and argues that accountability to citizens, in particular through democratic political processes, is a crucial enabler of the SDGs. In order for the SDG monitoring process to be accountable, it is essential that the SDG indicators include peoples' own assessments of the availability, accessibility and quality of services.

Published    : 21 July 2017
Language    : English
Pages        : 4

## Southern Africa Policy Dialogue: Money in Electoral Processes

The overarching objective of this workshop was to assess the causes and patterns of money influencing elections in Southern Africa and the impact on the quality of democracy in the region.

It sought to help identify the key electoral finance reform interventions that will require the attention of political leaders, EMBs, civil society and regional organizations such as the Southern African Development Community (SADC).

The Regional Policy Dialogue for Southern Africa on the theme 'Money in Electoral Processes' was jointly organized by the Electoral Commission of Namibia (ECN) and the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA). The dialogue brought together 65 experts from 11 Southern African countries. Among the participants were representatives from Election Management Bodies (EMBs), political parties, parliaments, civil society, academia, diplomatic missions, the African Union (AU) and International IDEA.

Published : 23 May 2017
Language : English
Pages : 32
Author(s) : Sean Molloy

## Sub-State Constitutions in Fragile and Conflict-Affected Settings

Sub-state constitutions serve similar purposes as central-state constitutions. They define the system of governance of the sub-state entity, outline its institutions and define the responsibilities of those institutions. They also explain the separation of powers between sub-state institutions, and may codify citizens' rights vis-à-vis the sub-state entity.

The constitutional space can be forged in a number of ways. In some settings it is created by peace agreements between sub-state and central-state elites. In other cases, the space accorded to the sub-state entity is the result of bargains that occur outside formal peace processes but which are nevertheless the result of negotiations over how political power is held and exercised. The space may also be dictated from the top with few (or no) negotiations with the sub-state entity.

This report documents a workshop held on December 9–10, 2016 at the University of Edinburgh hosted by International IDEA, the Edinburgh Centre for Constitutional Law and the Global Justice Academy.

The workshop explored the process and design of sub-state constitutions in fragile and conflict-affected settings, and their role in the broader political settlement and/or peacebuilding process.

# Open Data in Electoral Administration

In recent years, the concept has taken root as an increasingly accepted practice for public and government produced data, with data seen as a public good, and data infrastructure as the key to accessing it.

Publishing election data as open data has numerous benefits: it provides civil society, citizen journalists, electoral observers and citizens access to the same detailed information that was previously only available to selected stakeholders such as large media outlets. In doing so, open data allows all interested stakeholders to follow and understand the electoral process and can enable more inclusive, transparent and trusted elections.

In spite of the potential benefits of open data, election data is often not available in government open-data platforms and election data that is published often does not comply with open-data principles.

The aim of this publication is to encourage electoral management bodies to increase the application of open-data principles. It provides guidance for improving the practice of data publication towards a more open approach.

Published    : 3 April 2017
Language    : English
Pages        : 62
Author(s)    : Liz Carolan, Peter Wolf

# Voter Turnout Trends around the World

Voter turnout is an important indicator of how citizens participate in the governance of their country.

Higher voter turnout is often a sign of the vitality of democracy, while lower turnout is usually associated with voter apathy and mistrust of the political process.

This report highlights key trends and recent developments on voter turnout. By reviewing the factors that affect voter turnout, the report provides insights into how to understand complex voter behaviour. In addition, it addresses the critical need to improve how voter turnout statistics are collected, mainly referring to the need for disaggregation of voter turnout data by gender, age and other key characteristics of voters.

Data in this report is extracted from International IDEA's Voter Turnout database, which was developed in 1999 and has been continually updated. Through the database, International IDEA provide a resource that not only creates awareness about the extent of people's participation in elections, but also helps electoral stakeholders to make informed policy decisions and programmatic choices to improve the legitimacy of the electoral process.

Published    : 31 December 2016
Language    : English
Pages        : 54
Author(s)    : Abdurashid Solijonov

# Modules Designed by IIIDEM for Trainings

India International Institute of Democracy and Election Management aims to work as an Advanced Resource Centre of learning, research and capacity building in collaboration with the democratic world as well as prepare and groom a new generation of well-trained electoral managers. It also provides technical support to Election Management Bodies (EMBs) and authorities around the world on request.



Hence IIIDEM organizes a number of national and international training programmes and for the same purpose they have developed five modules for both national and the international trainees.

**Module 1** – *Introduction to Election Management* module introduces the basics of democracy, criteria and conduct of free and fair elections, EMBs and various electoral systems.

**Module 2** – *Planning for Elections* module is centred on strategic plans, risk management and evaluation of the election process.

**Module 3** – *Voter Registration* module is a guide to all processes and operational steps involved in collecting and maintaining voter data.

**Module 4** – *Political Finance & Expenditure Control* module is all about use of money by political parties and candidates in the election process as well as the standards and principles regarding the same.

**Module 5** – *Inclusion* module helps the trainees understand the various facets and importance of inclusion in a democratic process.

## The Effect of Violence on Women's Electoral and Political Participation in Bangladesh

Women in Bangladesh are uniquely impacted by pervasive violence in the country's electoral process, as voters, candidates, political party supporters and activists. To explore the effect of electoral violence on women's meaningful participation, the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) convened seven focus groups of Bangladeshi women in 2013 and 2015 to discuss electoral violence they have experienced both in the home and in the public sphere.

Under the 'Bangladesh Election Support Activities' (BESA) Program, IFES has worked through two key channels to engage interested stakeholders in preventing electoral violence, sharing information on the causes of conflict and promoting peaceful political processes:

The **Women Against Violence in Elections (WAVE) Advisory Group,** which has worked to identify ways to mitigate electoral and political violence against women as well as ways to engage their networks and utilize their expertise to promote peaceful, violence-free elections and encourage women's participation and leadership.

The **Electoral Conflict and Security Working Group,** which serves as a platform to discuss successes of and lessons learned from grassroots initiatives that address electoral violence and improve electoral security, and strategies for new interventions in this area.

## Unfair Advantage: The Abuse of State Resources in Elections

The abuse of state resources can be a major corruptive force in the electoral process, as it can introduce or exacerbate power inequalities, give unfair electoral advantage to incumbents, compromise the integrity of an election, and reduce public trust in the legitimacy of the process and its outcomes. In many countries, the abuse of state resources is not sufficiently regulated, or there are disparities between what is written in the law and what happens in practice. These gaps leave the electoral system vulnerable to manipulation by those in positions of power.

The International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) publication 'Unfair Advantage: The Abuse of State Resources in Elections,' co-authored by former Political Finance Specialist Megan Ritchie and Center for Applied Research and Learning Deputy Director Erica Shein, represents the first step in a comprehensive effort to fill that gap. The research team reviewed the legal and regulatory frameworks of a range of countries and specifically focused on provisions related to the appropriate use of a state's institutional and financial resources, including restrictions on state personnel, state media and official government communications to the public, and the use of state funds and physical resources.

## IFES Annual Report 2016

The International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) supports citizens' rights to participate in free and fair elections. Its independent expertise strengthens electoral systems and builds local capacity to deliver sustainable solutions. IFES has worked in over 145 countries – from developing democracies, to mature democracies.

From organizing global elections organizations conference to engaging in key elections around the world, 2016 has been a jam-packed year for the organization. The IFES Annual Report 2016 documents all its efforts of the bygone year, discusses its various projects and recognizes the support of its partners for their efforts to help IFES advance its democratic mission to give a vote to every voice.

## First Universal Democratic Elections in Independent Georgia

First Universal Democratic Elections in Independent Georgia offers a detailed overview of the first national democratic elections conducted in the Republic of Georgia in 1919. These elections served as an acknowledgement of Georgia's independence, which gave it autonomy for the next three years. The book portrays the spirit of multiculturalism being practiced in the lead up to and during the elections, through the development of campaign materials in several languages, such as Georgian, Farsi, Armenian and Russian, as well as allocating special quotas. It also reflects on how various ethnic groups were encouraged to represent their respective communities, with the participation of the Greek's Democratic Party in elections offered as an example.

The first democratic elections proved to be successful in creating gender parity for women and men of Georgia. Other impressive aspects of these elections were how well structured reimbursement procedures were developed for parties and other procedures were conducted professionally, practicing the principles of equality, accessibility and accountability.

# Tête-à-tête with Dr. Nasim Zaidi

*The recently retired Chief Election Commissioner of India, talks about his rendezvous with elections, views on voter education, PwDs and more....*

**Q–How do you perceive the role of an Election Management Body in a democracy?**

A– The universal adult suffrage, periodic, free and fair elections and an independent election management body constitute the bedrock of a democracy. The significance of an EMB lies in its role in superintendence, direction and control of elections free from any influence in addition to maintenance of electoral rolls. An EMB acts as a regulator and facilitator to voters for encouraging their participation. Around the world, different countries have different kinds of EMBs. Some are truly independent and autonomous. In some countries, they are constitutionally created while in others, they are not. Hence, the role and the effectiveness of the EMBs depends upon their status. In the Indian context, the EMB is constitutionally created, is independent, autonomous and insulated from the executive – the government of the day. Such an EMB can play a very effective role in conducting elections in a free and fair manner, and to the fullest extent.

If an EMB is perceived to be impartial, neutral and uninfluenced by the political parties, and the ruling party in particular, that EMB commands a larger trust and confidence amongst the people- and that is what matters. All of this comes from the status of the EMB and also from the persons who are manning these EMBs. This is where the importance of the appointment process of election commissioners, their independence, the protection to their services and all related matters arise.

In a nutshell, I can say that for a healthy democracy, a fair and free democratic setup is essential and to facilitate the process, you need these Election Management Bodies that are independent, neutral, impartial and equidistant from all political parties.

**Q- How do you see the change in Election Management in India since you were a District Election Officer (DEO) vis-à-vis your tenure in Election Commission of India?**

A-I started my career as a District Magistrate & DEO in 1982. My first two major election related tasks included conduct of Lok Sabha Elections of 1984 and thereafter elections to the Uttar Pradesh (largest province of the country) State Legislative Assembly.

Going back, I can recall that as DEOs, we never felt the presence of the Election Commission of India because the Commission was not as active compared to later decades. For us, the Commission's presence was restricted to the laws, rules and instructions which were passed down to us for implementation. We were trained to organize and conduct elections in a free and fair manner in order to

ensure that voters are able to exercise their voting rights freely without any intimidation. Although there used to be some sporadic instances of distribution of gifts or liquor, the role of money was limited. Technology wasn't as prevalent as it is today. Electoral processes were largely paper-based. Limited means of communication, efficiency and productivity made the conduct of elections far more challenging than the present times. Regardless of the absence of certain elements that are available to us today, elections then were still conducted efficiently and in a clean manner. I remember, we had cyclostyle printing machines- one would have to cut a stencil first of a circular to be issued, then feed it to the machine and churn out copies. The quality of printing was also poor. In those days, there were no Booth Level Officers (BLOs). Maintenance of electoral rolls left a lot of scope for improvement.

If I compare that to my tenure as the Election Commissioner and then, as the Chief Election Commissioner of ECI, a lot of changes have taken place, with most of them occurring in the last two decades. The management of electoral roll has improved. Secondly, from the management of electoral roll to webcasting, the role of Information Technology in every aspect of electoral management has brought about a lot of transparency, efficiency and speed. Another major change that I have noticed pertains to the aspect of voter education and awareness. In our time, there wasn't any subject or, focus on electoral education and awareness. It has now come up in a big way. The Commission has an existing programme on voter education and participation. It has brought about great improvement in people's participation contributing to the vibrancy of electoral democracy. The fourth significant change pertains to the total control of muscle men and limiting their influence in elections. Greater focus on inclusive elections has been another key development. Nowadays, there is great emphasis to ensure that all sections of the society participate including, but not limited to, women, youth, persons with disabilities, the homeless persons, transgenders, senior citizens, etc.

On the negative side, the increasing role and abuse of money in general, and black money in particular in elections has been an undesirable development of the recent past.

**Q–Sir, you just mentioned how voter education is one of the big changes that happened on our election system. How important, in your opinion, is voter education in election management?**

A– As I mentioned earlier, democracy has meaning only if

its constituents, that is, the citizens participate. The most important means for a citizen to participate in the setup of the democratic process is elections or what we call as electoral democracy. The Indian Constitution directs that every eligible citizen's name should be on the electoral rolls, and every citizen should have an opportunity to participate as also contest in the elections. We have noted over a period of time that there used to be a big gap in the enrolment of citizens. That means all eligible citizens, as per the census, were not registered. And if people are not registered in the voters' list, they cannot participate in the electoral process. Therefore, one of the big challenges before the ECI was to ensure that eligible citizens are enrolled. They need to be informed about the procedures involved in the registration process as in many parts of the country; people are not even aware how to get registered. This is one part.

The second part is of course, that once registered, voters should also be enabled i.e. they should be encouraged and facilitated to come to the polling station to cast their vote; and do so ethically- this is the third aspect. The voters must apply their mind, have their rationale, employ their political choice and then cast their vote to choose their representatives.

Another thing that we noted in many states was that the enrolment and participation of women was very less. In general the enrolment and participation of youth was very dismal, trans-genders' enrolment and participation was nil, the homeless did not get the opportunity to get registered, and likewise many sections of the society were left out. There was no focus on disabled people either. Thus, inclusion in election was not satisfactory.

An important aspect was also that it was presumed that it was not the Election Commission's function to get citizens to the polling station. It was thought to be the political parties' function to encourage and mobilise citizens to participate. Therefore, when the Commission decided a few years ago to execute this function, it was a significant paradigm shift. I remember many political parties objected to this saying that ECI should not get into mobilising voters to participate. But under the Constitution, universal adult suffrage, with each and every person above the age of 18 from all sections of society enabled to vote, is a Constitutional obligation cast upon the ECI, and therefore the Commission was fully justified in encouraging people to vote to fulfil this Constitutional obligation.

Voter education and electoral participation programme was initially conceived in 2010, but the initial ad hoc approach was changed to institutionalise this programme, make it scientific and document its various experiences and learnings. This programme of voter education acquired a name- Systematic Voter Education and Electoral Participation or SVEEP- and proper documentation, budgeting, was ensured. Sustainability of the programme was also taken in consideration so that the programme did not end abruptly, but runs on its own steam. Recognising the importance of surveys

for voter education programme,we started knowledge, attitude, beliefs and practices surveys, based on which, interventions were designed. In past 7-8 years, the programme has played an effective role. Our election machinery and election officers have been very creative, extremely innovative, and have come up with outstanding programmes for voter participation working in a targeted manner. As a result, registration of voters has improved and voter participation has increased. Almost in all states, the voter turnout has significantly increased. Women's turnout can now be seen as surpassing men's; gender gap has reduced.

An EMB should ensure that voter participation is also ethical. Thus, ethical voter education and awareness was also added in our programme. Citing the example of Tamil Nadu elections last year, I recall how candidates filing their nomination too were made to swear an oath that they will not indulge in bribing or encourage others to do so. In one day, over 1 crore (10 million) voters took an oath for ethical voting, spreading the message for ethical participation. In the voting compartment itself, a quotation on ethical participation was put up. Voter education can play a vital role in ensuring inclusive, informed and ethical participation of voters.

**Q- Do you think voter education can play an important role in preventing controversies like those surrounding Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs) in the recent past?**

A- The Election Commission functions on the trust and confidence of people along with perceptions that are formed as a result of its interventions and processes. Also attached to this is the principle of transparency that has been one of the core foci of the Commission. I feel that not only voters, but political parties and all stakeholders in general, should be able to see transparently the various electoral processes that the ECI is, and has been undertaking. The ECI, as a part of its voter education programme has brought out information literature for voters. There are information booklets for various segments of the society pertaining particularly to electoral rolls, specific dos and don'ts as well as interactive communication material. General information is also provided regarding specific subjects like that of Electronic Voting Machines. If voters are given proper education with regard to subjects like voting machines, it would definitely help in removing and dispelling wrong perceptions.

I remember, when electronic voting was introduced

in India around 1998 on large scale, a huge campaign was launched to educate voters. EVMs were taken from village to village and people were explained the processes and various aspects of the machine. Now with the introduction of 100% Voter Verifiable Paper Audit Trails (VVPATs) with EVMs, the Commission has already planned the launch of a nationwide voter education programme on the subject. This, however, shouldn't be a one-time affair. It has to be a sustained programme. I'm of the firm view that voter education on such sensitive subjects for all stakeholders in general, and voters in particular is extremely essential. It would aid in strengthening the trust and confidence that people have in the Commission.

**Q– The election process was made significantly more efficient and convenient with the use of IT applications. Please tell us about any one that, according to you, is the most significant?**

A– One of the constitutional obligations cast upon the commission is to ensure that every eligible citizen is enrolled and that is where the role of maintenance, updating and revision of electoral roll arises. As I mentioned, in our country, in the first general election in 1952, we began with paper based electoral roll. Before that our electoral roll used to be handwritten. So we used to have handwritten ballot papers before printing arrived. I would say, one of the most significant roles of IT has been in the area of electoral roll management.

Few years ago, election machinery used state specific Electoral Roll Management System (ERMS) but two years ago we launched the National Voters' Service Portal (NVSP). Launched in 2015, this IT initiative provides 6 voter oriented services including registration, deletion, transposition, knowing your polling station etc. NVSP consists of the largest database on the earth of about 860 million voters.

The ECI has a motto 'No Voter to be left Behind'. In that mission, we launched a special campaign for left behind voters. Again talking about intervention of IT, here we collaborated with Facebook where every eligible elector was given an alert of whether he or she is registered or not registered. If an eligible citizen was registered then they shared so with their friends, if they weren't, Facebook led them to NVSP where they could apply online. I think NVSP is the most important IT initiative and I wish that ECI runs this service portal in the most sustainable and the most efficient manner.

**Q- Numerous initiatives have been undertaken by ECI for the Persons with Disabilities (PwDs). Which one, according to you, stands out as the most effective initiative?**

A- The very fact that the Commission has started focusing on Persons with Disabilities (PwDs) can be regarded as a significant shift. The ECI has started collaborating with various disability organizations and groups working in the area of disability. I would say that in the recent past, the most important initiative was the polling

station-wise mapping of disabled voters. It enabled every polling station to have information regarding PwD voters- according to which the polling staff could organize resources. I remember many election officials mobilized wheelchairs, volunteers etc. In many polling stations, they provided magnifying lenses and special illumination. The initiative was widely appreciated by organizations working on disability.

**Q- How do you see the role of ECI as an emerging leader in global scenario?**

A– At present, world over a majority of the countries have democracy in one form or the other and electoral democracy is the most important part of a democracy. Our country is the largest democracy in the world and a vibrant democracy too. The US is the oldest democracy and yet we remain the largest. Therefore, it is very natural that various countries look up to India as an important example.

Our Constitution has given eminent importance to our Election Commission to trans-mediate the process of electoral democracy. In-fact a whole chapter has been dedicated to this. Several important constitutional obligations have been assigned to the ECI, there are certain unique features of ECI which aren't there for other EMBs. The Commission has worked very effectively. Since 1990s, every successive Commission has played a great role in fulfilling the constitutional mandate in an extremely independent manner - totally uninfluenced and unbiased. ECI has been running the process every time and on time in a regular manner for almost seven decades. Every time, the election delivered by the commission has been accepted by people as credible election.

All of these aspects have impressed the world. Therefore, the world's democracies have started looking upon the ECI as a role model. And that is where the role of the ECI as a global leader arises. True to its spirit, the Commission has been fulfilling that role in terms of providing its best practices and learnings to other democracies. In this regard I must mention the setting up of the India International Institute of Democracy & Election Management (IIIDEM) which will become the nucleus of activities where officials from various democracies will be invited and trained. Also, information and best practises will be shared. So ECI has become a stronger leader in the electoral democracy.

**Q- VoICE.NET has been one of your major initiatives towards knowledge sharing among EMBs. How do you envisage the role of VoICE.NET in present and in future?**

A- I am happy that VoICE.NET, which was formed following the New Delhi Declaration on voter education of October 2016, now has more than 23 members. It was envisioned as a cost effective, real time platform where Election Management Bodies from various democracies could share, exchange best practices and learnings as also contribute to the processes of voter

education. The very fact that more than 23 EMBs and reputed organisations are now its members, shows the importance of VoICE.NET and I'm sure as the message spreads, VoICE.NET will become a more effective platform for sharing of experiences.

**Q– Any specific voter outreach programme carried out by an Election Management Body (apart from the ECI), that you found really remarkable?**

A– We have been visiting various countries during their election period. I happened to visit Australia in 2016 and there I noticed that the EMB was distributing a voter guide to every citizen. Since their numbers are small they were distributing the guide to every voter. This voter guide contained all important information pertaining to elections, what voters should and should not do, how to vote etc. This is one important intervention to educate voters that I found remarkable and introduced it in the recent elections held from January to March 2017. Considering the large size of the electorate, we printed and distributed one guide per family. As per the feedback, the initiative made a positive impact and helped voters at each step.

**Q- Sir, what would you regard as your most satisfying endeavour in your long prolific career?**

A- Throughout my career I have been associated with regulatory work. Professionally, there have been two key areas- one, with the Directorate General of Civil Aviation. Bringing about safe aviation operations has been one of the most crucial and fulfilling experiences in this regard. The second would be my work at the Commission, first as Election Commissioner and subsequently as the Chief Election Commissioner. I'm very happy, satisfied, feel privileged and honoured that I could contribute to the strengthening of electoral democracy and could command the trust and confidence of people.

**Q- Any unfulfilled endeavour that you wish should have seen its fruition?**

A- It can be viewed relatively. Most of the activities that I had planned were fulfilled. In certain areas, there's an element of continuity- many initiatives that I had undertaken would continue. I don't have a particular sense of regret that something or the other was left unfulfilled. We were able to implement whatever we had planned. I planned e-Governance of Election Management or EGEM where services to internal and external stakeholders will be provided on IT platform. This is an area which I wish had gathered speed. Our officials have done lot of spadework and I hope that the vision will be translated into reality in near future.

**Q– Sir, if you would please share with our readers, a few interesting experiences from your career of four decades.**

A– I think it will go with my experience while working with aviation particularly, having had the honour of working as the permanent representative of India in the International Civil Aviation Organisation, specialised UN



agency, in Montreal and to participate in the governing council of that organisation and particularly, from an experience point of view, working with 36 nationalities in the governing council, each member coming from a different country, having a different culture, different thought process, different interests – to reconcile those differences and to come up with a consensus was a very challenging experience. Another fascinating experience was the process of setting up new airports in India. How to structure these airports, how to frame their concession agreements – it was hugely interesting. Third is, of course, to be associated with the mammoth exercise of conducting parliamentary elections of 2014. There was another big experience of running the process for over two and a half months in a free and fair manner, to deal with political challenges, to deal with challenges of muscle power, money power and security challenges of law and order, of conflict in Jammu & Kashmir, of Naxalites in Naxal affected areas (Left Wing Extremism). They were all very memorable experiences.

**Q- Finally Sir, any parting words for VoICE.NET global community?**

A- I would say that sustainability of the programme is of crucial importance. This would follow from the institutionalization of VoICE.NET. Sustainability, continuity and participation of Election Management Bodies (EMBs) to keep their interest alive is important. Therefore, the key task is that contents of the network should be interesting not only to EMBs but also their voters and other stakeholders. Over time, if VoICE.NET is managed well, I feel this would be a very significant vehicle of voters' information, communication and education. I wish this programme all the success in future.

*As told to Simran Sachdeva and Vinayak Sen, Executives, Systematic Voters' Education & Electoral Participation (SVEEP) Division, ECI.*

# Human Stories from Indian Elections

## Conjoined Sisters

"We have voted because we want to play our part in the formation of the next government," exuded the twins Saba and Farah, outside a polling station in Patna. So what's special about them? Well, they are conjoined twins, now joining hands in strengthening the democratic fabric of their state.

"It was a moment of great pride for us. We decided to vote this time to send a message that people, particularly the youth, should come and cast their vote", said Saba.

The famous twins, who are joined at their heads, turned eighteen in 2015. Although they are two individuals, the Commission recognizes them as 'one' voter. They have been issued a common voter identity card by the Election Commission of India. The card also has their names clubbed as "Saba Farah."

## Messengers with Magic

Working on an idea by the District Election Officer of Sitapur, Uttar Pradesh, 3000 differently-abled persons were selected as booth ambassadors to represent each of the polling stations of the district. Crowned as the *Loktantra-doots* (messengers of democracy), each of them rallied on motorcycles - *'Loktantra- vahan'* (vehicle of democracy) and were given identity cards. The *Loktantra-doots* were icons who encouraged one and all to exercise their franchise.

The election officials also organized a painting/ poster making competition that witnessed a participation of more than 4,000 differently-abled persons. This confidence building enterprise bolstered the spirits of the electors of the district who came forward in strong numbers to cast their vote in the elections.

## Different Strength

The Delhi Elections of 2015 was fortunate to witness a different kind of strength. Sixty year-old Ram Lal, reeled forward on a wheelchair escorted by a youth, flaunted his inked finger after casting his ballot at a polling station in Okhla. "I want a party to come to power which increases facilities for people like us," said Lal, whose lower body was paralysed thirty eight years back in an accident.

Eighty seven-year old Mohammed Taquil, who relies on a walking stick for moving about, praised the arrangements at polling stations for PwDs. Election Commission had arranged for around 400 wheelchairs for physically challenged persons. Volunteers too were deployed at voter assistance booths to escort them.

Wheelchair-bound eighty two-year-old Jitender Singh was seen taking a selfie as he came out of a polling booth in the Vikaspuri area. "Why should the youngsters have all the fun! Voting is not only trendy but very important to maintain the sanctity of our democratic system," Singh said.

## The Man in a Baby Cart



Belonging to village Ratnal of Anjar Taluka, Gujarat, Dhanjibhai Ahir has the reputation of voting in every elections - from Gram Panchayat to Lok Sabha. However he suffers from a peculiar disease – his bones break very easily. Over 30 years in age, he never went to school due to his condition and is totally illiterate. Today, he stands at a height of only 2.5 feet.

Dhanjibhai is totally bedridden and the only way he can commute is by using a baby cart, and that too when assisted. His 12-year-old nephew, Satish Valji Chhanga, enthusiastically accompanies him everywhere.

With every election, Dhanjibhai with an unwavering resolve arrives at the polling station in his baby cart without fail and casts his vote. With every election, Dhanjibhai reinforces every ones belief in the ballot.

## Nidhi gives Voting a Voice

Differently-abled Nidhi, a young girl born deaf and mute turned into an immensely popular Election Icon in Gaya in Bihar. Unbelievable but true! With the tagline "Vote is my Voice", she gave a new impetus and momentum to the voter education and electoral participation campaign in the district. The talented Nidhi was noticed by the district administration through her brilliant paintings at Bihar Divas celebration.

Her hoardings were installed across the district and soon she became a popular champion for electoral participation. She also actively participated in every activity for voters' awareness and education in the district. She became an instrument of empowerment for silent voters and gave voting a voice that would echo in our hearts for years to come.

## Voting Against all Odds

Edward Moorthy, one of India's brave citizens, got his foot inked at a poll booth in Orlem, Malad, Mumbai on 24th April, 2014. Moorthy lost his arms in a train accident while going to his workplace a couple of years ago.



When asked to share his experience, he said, "The staff members were very cooperative and I used the stump of my arm to press the button. I think the staff members were awed, judging by the way they were gaping at me." Moorthy had his foot inked to show that he had voted. He placed his foot on the table with some help and an officer applied the ink while others in the polling booth looked on with a mix of curiosity and admiration.

## I vote with my mouth!

Venkatesan (30), a teacher in Government High School at Mookanahalli, Tamil Nadu, lost both his hands in an accident and uses his legs and mouth for writing and performing other daily activities proficiently. Never has his disability deterred him from casting a vote. How does he cast his vote? He puts a pen in his mouth and uses it to press the EVM button.

A special citizen, Venkatesan is focused on teaching the youth the importance of their vote and he continually inspires them to exercise their right.

## First Polling Station Manned by PwDs

In the 2017 Goa Assembly Elections, the state witnessed its first-ever polling station manned entirely by physically challenged officials. The polling station at Sao Pedro, Goa was turned into a 'Divyang' polling station, under a special initiative of the Election Commission (ECI). On the eve of the polling day, the EC had transported officials, all of whom had orthopaedic disabilities, in a specially modified vehicle to the polling station. They spent the night there. The preparations were complete with appropriately designed sleeping and bathroom facilities, made especially for their benefit.

All staff from the presiding officer to the peon drawn from various state government departments were physically challenged. Even the officers kept on call were PwDs. Despite the booth being manned entirely by physically challenged officials, it did not have any challenged voters. The officials did their job well, guiding 778 voters, showing them the way to the EVM and guiding them out once they exercised their franchise.

## Steadfast ex-serviceman

Venkatesan (30), a teacher in N Elangovan (65) never misses to cast his vote. Though a quadriplegic, he is so steadfast in his commitment to nurture democracy that he has never failed to cast his vote in any of the parliamentary, assembly or local body elections till this date. He has the habit of reaching the polling station early to vote, and inspire others to turn out on polling day to cast their vote.

An ex-serviceman, he served 230 Signal Unit of the Indian Air Force in the 1971 Indo-Pak war. It was in the year 1975, that he met with a cruel accident and sustained grievous injuries to his spinal cord resulting in the loss of sensation and motor functions below his neck. However, his physical constraint has never come in the way of exercising his democratic rights. Elangovan is an inspiration to all.

# Glossary

**Gerrymandering**: A process of changing/ redrawing the physical boundaries of electoral districts in a way which creates an advantage for a particular party during elections.

First used by the Boston Gazette as a reaction to Governor Elbridge Gerry's decision to redraw Massachusetts state senate election districts, the portmanteau alludes to the shape of one of the newly carved districts of Boston which resembled that of a salamander.

**Borda Count:** Included as an ordinal or, ranked electoral system, it is a single winner voting system in which voters rank the given options in order of preference. Named after the French mathematician, physicist, political scientist and sailor- Jean-Charles de Borda, it is presently used for certain elections in Nauru, Slovenia, Iceland and Kiribati.

**Electocracy:** A political system in which citizens have the ability to elect governments but cannot participate directly in the decision making process. Power-sharing on behalf of the government remains minimal or, almost nil.

**Assured Minimum Facilities (AMF):** Mandatory provisions (as identified by the Election Commission of India) to be rendered at every polling station. It includes- provision for ramp, provision for drinking water, adequate furniture, proper lighting, help desk, proper signage, and toilet.

**Psephology:** The statistical study of voting, voting patterns and trends. It is a branch of political science.

# Quiz

1. Which popular electoral system connects the following-

   a) Thomas Wright Hill, an 18th-19th century British mathematician
   b) Thomas Hare, a 19th century British barrister and political reformer
   c) Andrew Inglis Clark, one of Australia's Founding Fathers and the principal author of the Australian Constitution
   d) John Stuart Mill, noted English philosopher, political economist and essayist
   e) Carl Andrae, a 19th century Danish mathematician and politician?

2. Before being extended to mean 'votes' in the 17th century, which word (extensively used in the electoral context) of Germanic origin, initially stood for 'a head'?

3. Which iconic, 1964 Disney movie starring Julie Andrews featured the song Sister Suffragette (performed by Glynis Johns)

celebrating the suffrage movement and its early champions, including- Emmeline Pankhurst?

4. Iceland holds the distinction of having the oldest running Parliament (established in 930 CE) in the world. What is it called?

5. The following is an excerpt from a 1916 speech on women's rights by which famous personality?
"We have prayed, we have coaxed, we have begged, for the vote, with the hope that men, out of chivalry, would bestow equal rights upon women and take them into partnership in the affairs of the state. We hoped that their common sense would triumph over prejudices and stupidity. We thought their boasted sense of justice would overcome the errors that so often fetter the human spirit; but we have always gone away empty handed. We shall beg no more."

1. Single Transferable Vote 2. Poll 3. Mary Poppins 4. Althing 5. Helen Keller
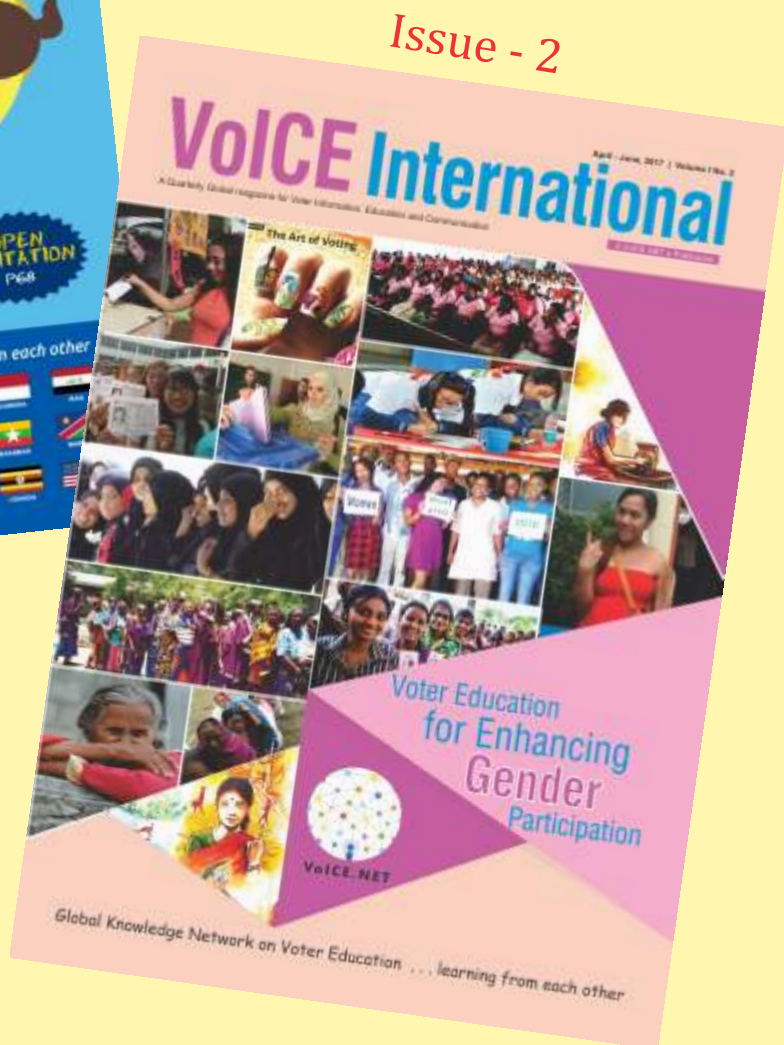
# "MY ABILITY IS STRONGER THAN MY DISABILITY

'Theresa Sheridan, 49 Leicestershire'

# Previous Issues of VoICE International (Volume I)



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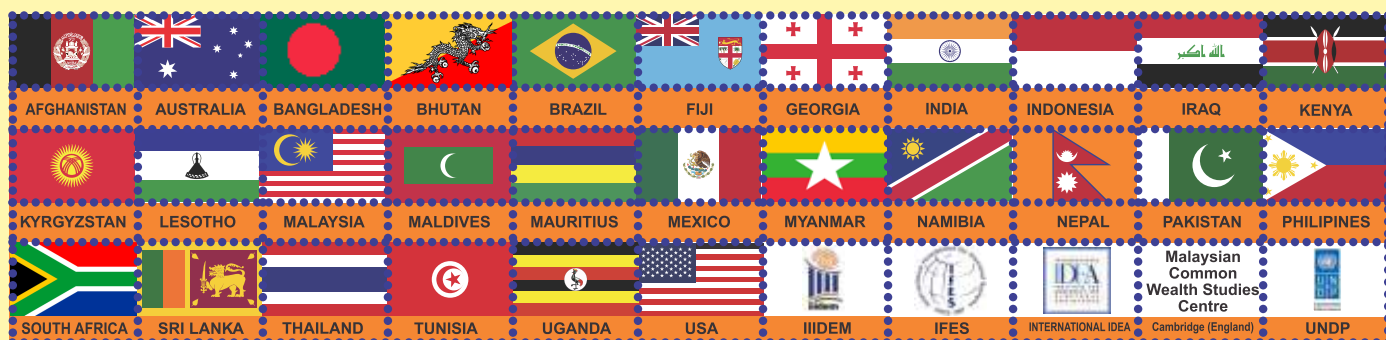
# Voter Information, Communication & Education Network

**V**oter **I**nformation, **C**ommunication, **E**ducation Network (VoICE.NET)is a Global Knowledge Network for sharing knowledge, resources and expertise on **Voter Education**.

**VoICE.NET** was launched on October 20, 2016 at the International Conference on Voter Education for Inclusive, Informed and Ethical Participation held at New Delhi. The Global Knowledge Network is a part of the New Delhi Declaration adopted at the Conference by the 25 Election Management Bodies 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.