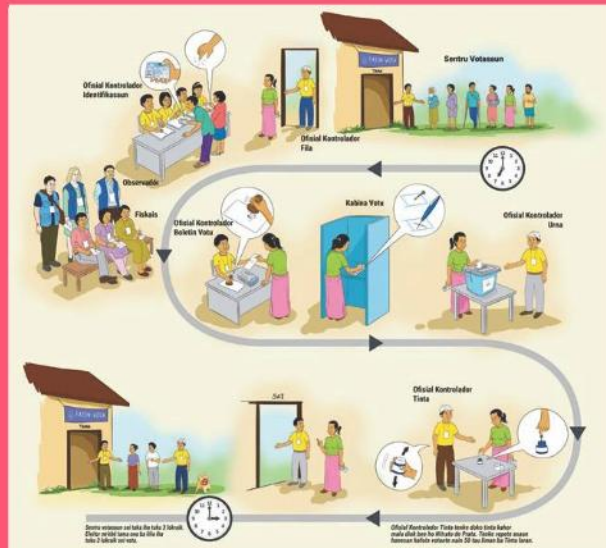
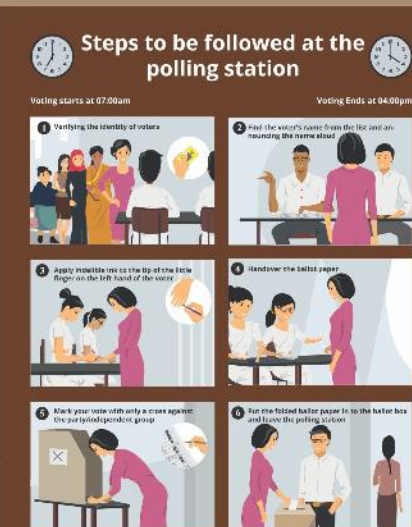
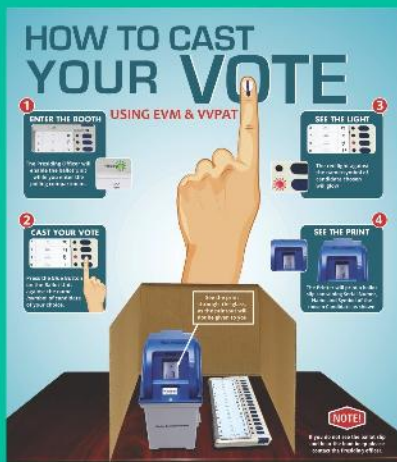
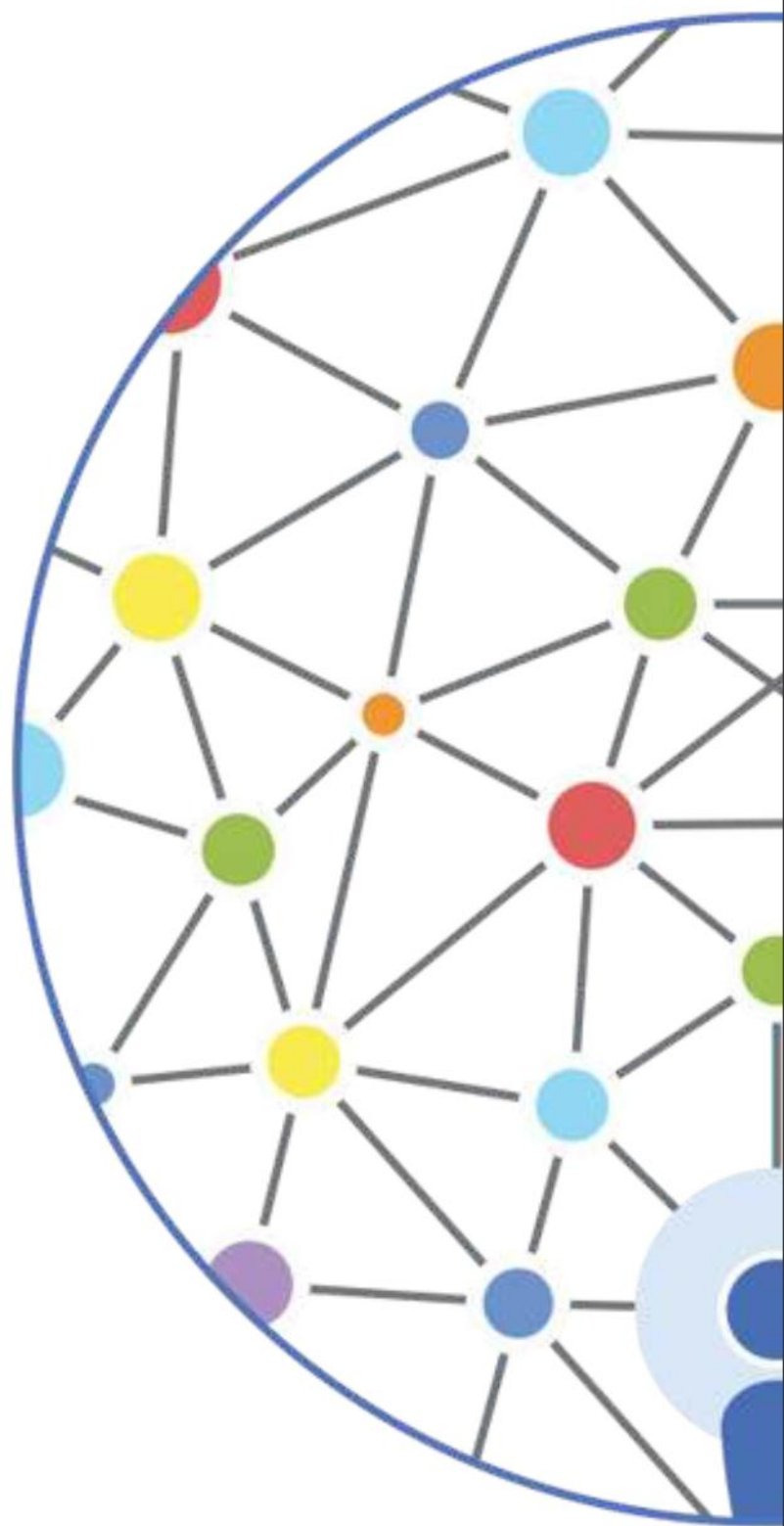


## MAKING POLLING STATIONS ACCESSIBLE AND VOTER FRIENDLY

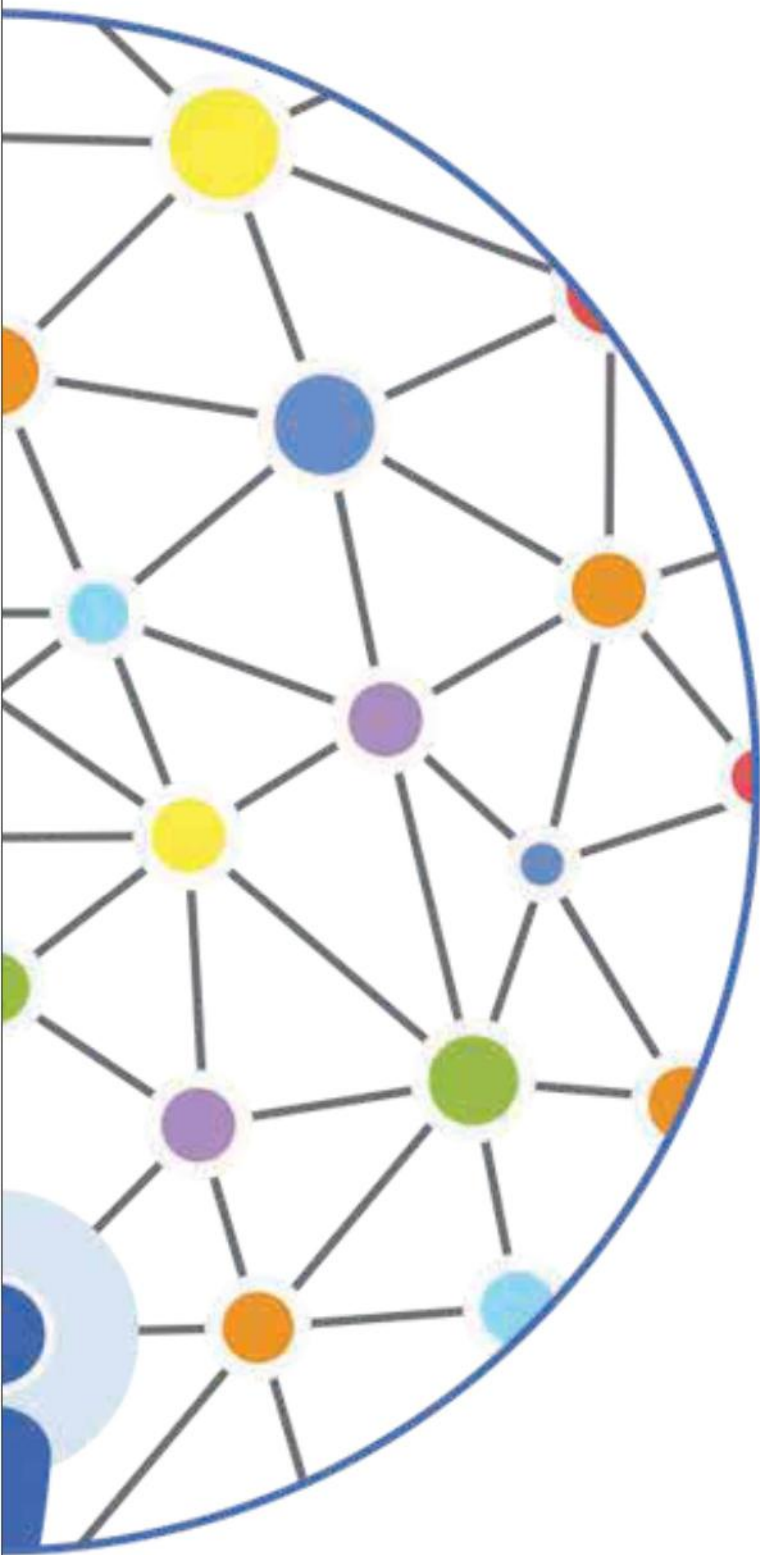




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# EDITORIAL

**D**ear Reader,  
To begin with, let me wish you a very Happy New Year 2019, I welcome you to the fourth issue of Volume II of VOICE International. In this Issue, we bring to you experiences of different EMBs on 'Making Polling Stations Accessible and Voter Friendly' besides some articles on 'Inclusion and Equal Access' and much more in interesting presentations.

Admittedly, a polling station is the home to the poll process and acts as a critical point for expression of free and fair choice in a secure, secret manner to demonstrate universal equal suffrage. In this context, the theme essentially focuses on making the elector experience at the polling station pleasant and memorable to encourage and attract more and more voters to electoral participation. Needs of different categories of voters are different and need to be addressed suitably so as to obliterate barriers in with efficiency and efficacy to achieve inclusion in real terms. In this backdrop, I have the pleasure of presenting articles to you from the EMB's of Ecuador, Iraq, Fiji and of course the Indian Experience in this Issue. We have two more articles from IFES on good practices in Ukraine; and experiences in equal access.

This Issue is being released during International Conference on 'Making our Elections Inclusive and Accessible', on the eve of the 9<sup>th</sup> National Voters' Day celebrations of India. In this context we have included some articles from the previous Issues of VOICE International to revisit and share the good practices on the theme for larger readership on 'Inclusion and Equal Access' especially when the ECI has adopted the NVD theme for year as 'No Voter to be Left Behind'. I am sure the articles would find interest with the Readers.

The Issue further brings to you interesting snippets, international events and announcements of interest.

I heartily thank the authors for making valuable contribution and look forward to their continued support to the magazine through more and more contributory papers for knowledge sharing.

I dedicate the Issue to the cause of enhancing electoral participation from all categories of voters.

**Umesh Sinha**

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



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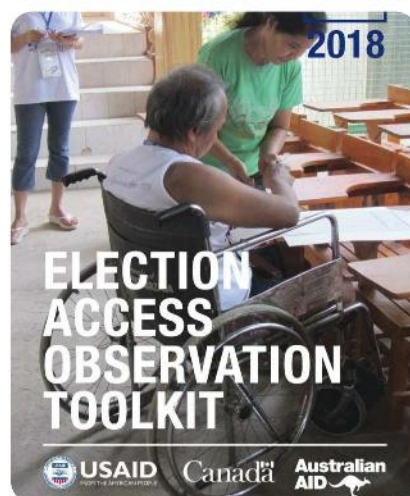
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# Access and Security in the Polling Places

To every citizen, every political organization and, in general, every political subject that intervene in the electoral chores in our countries, please receive a warm greeting and the commitment of the Institute for Democracy-IDD to cooperate with the academic and research work on democracy and electoral events that can contribute for the improvement of electoral and democratic processes in our countries.

Unlike natural and formal sciences, political and philosophical sciences are not characterized by an accumulative and linear nature, but rather by a configuration around recurring thematic axes which have been debated for centuries, without expecting to reach a definition. Bobbio (1993) has achieved some consensus in establishing the fundamental topics that make up the study of politics are concentrated in the forms of government, the legitimacy of the authority, the duty of obedience, the role of the State, and the very concept of politics.

Regarding the active right of suffrage, it is a recurring topic that the determination for it, is mandatory or facultative nature. In the first case, its defenders advocate for a system in which the electoral body assumes an unwavering position of a collegiate body, which compels it to elect an authority or a position. This line of thought is based on the necessity to legitimize, in a democratic manner, the elected authority, whose designation is responsibility of the totality of qualified citizens, rather than of a faction that kindly went to the polling stations.

Those who defend the contrary position, support their point of view by arguing the subjective nature of the right to vote, according to Farrajoli (2013), is an available right that

belongs exclusively to the people with the capacity to act, and concedes to every qualified person the possibility to decide either to pronounce or abstain themselves, which would transfer the possibility to decide the rest of the citizens, but also a political position of disinterest or rejection to the system.

It is worth to say that no matter which model is adopted, it will necessarily require an adequate institutional design. Mandatory vote accomplishes its goal when the citizenry can count on technical, physical and logistical facilities that allow their access to the polling stations, but mainly when a substantial political debate exists that involves the community in public deliberations.

Apathy distances us from those public spaces in which we are free and equal, where we present our ideas to be rebutted, where we feed ourselves from everyone's thoughts and where we contribute to the development of a common life project. In the words of Hannah Arendt (2003), apathy, life apart from the rest, dehumanizes us, allowing the public space to be occupied by particular interests, as the precursor for the establishment of authoritarian models (Bunge, 2009).

## The quality of debate as a mechanism to encourage participation

The most effective tool to attract the citizens to the polling stations is to arouse their spontaneous interest and engagement in the electoral events. The quality of the information provided by the electoral authority, the media, the political organizations and the candidates constitute a fundamental source to arouse

interest and understand the significance of participation in the configuration of the general will.

The quality of government plans, and the equitable promotion through public funding in communicational spaces allow the citizenry to get to know the different proposals and witness the debates on governmental axes, bringing the political discussions to the streets, the universities, the offices and the homes, which are the places where democracy must be sowed. In this way, an effective and sustainable participation can be guaranteed, even in the context of facultative vote.

*The most effective tool to attract the citizens to the polling stations is to arouse their spontaneous interest and engagement in the electoral events.*

### The instrumental aspect

A policy that promotes massive electoral participation, in addition to bring the citizenry to the polling places, must bring the polling places closer to the citizenry. Thus, a collective motivated by the quality of the political debate needs simple, comfortable and reliable roads in order to exercise their right to vote, without this implying a bigger effort.

An aggressive process of decentralization of the polling stations is essential, but not enough. In 2007, Guatemala allowed its percentage of participation to rise in 2.6% that year, going from 57.9% in 2003 to 60.5% in 2007; and in 2011 rising to 69.34%, this being the highest attendance to the polling stations since 1985, when 69.28% of the registered citizens participated (Ortiz: 2015, 362).

Additionally, models such as online voting, postal voting and electronic voting through units located in any establishment of sale of

first need products favor citizen participation. However, we also require biometric technological developments and reliable

information systems that prevent a person from voting more than once and hinder electoral identity theft.

Regarding online services, the financial system network could make a great contribution, especially with regard to the security of the system in order to guarantee that only the voter can access the virtual voting module, unless, under their own responsibility, they share password and necessary data to act on their representation. This is, perhaps, the most critical

aspect that given the importance of the role of "correctness, transparency and authenticity of the first count of cast votes..." (Sottoli, 2007: 881) that the polling stations have in an electoral process.

To sum up, and as a conclusion, we can say that the goal of making the polling places accessible and adequate for voter requires from the electoral authority, not only to enjoy popular confidence, but to be able to motivate interest on the programmatic proposals of the candidates and to develop the necessary technical capabilities, to implement decentralized technological tools for every person. So that they can exercise their right to vote with total freedom and confidence.



**Diego A. Zambrano Álvarez**  
Executive Director  
National Electoral Council

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# Polling Centers in IRAQ

**E**lection Commission ensures the participation of all voters in an electoral process in Iraq, whether local or parliamentary election. For logistical preparations in any electoral process, there is a wide spectrum of tasks that must be accomplished from voter registration and the training of electoral staff as well as to specify and design the polling stations. On the last mission, the Iraqi Commission has committed since 2005 with special criteria in the selection and design of the polling stations in all provinces and cities and rural areas in Iraq, and perhaps the most important of these criteria are:

- Polling centers are selected in schools in every city, and if not enough in some other buildings that could be used as polling stations.
- Distribution of voters in each region to these centers by voter residence proximity of polling centers.
- The maximum capacity for each polling station is about 500 voters, and for each polling center about 2500-3000 voters.
- The roads leading to the polling centers are open and accessible, so that voters can reach easily.
- The presence of signs of significance for each polling center and signs on the roads are clear to everyone.
- Private polling stations are located on the ground floor for older persons and for those with special needs for easy access.
- Each station is planned to ensure the smooth flow of voters alternately without any delay to enter, vote and exit from the station.
- The staff of each station consists of five employees: the station manager, the administrator of the definition, the administrator of given ballot papers, boxer monitor, queue monitor, and the center staff complex is mostly limited to 35 employees.
- Guidance posters should be placed outside and inside the center for the purpose of guiding voters for the stations whose names are based on the alphabetical manner, as well as decorations and raise national flags in the centers and stations to bring joy to the

souls of voters and motivate them to participate.

- Special parking is determined for cars, bicycles and vehicles with disabilities.
- Polling stations are classified as special voting centers for military personnel that are usually selected outside military units and are voted two days before the general vote, public polling stations where civilian voters vote, and voting centers, or centers the vote of voters outside the country are in the special centers, have been chosen for this purpose outside of the buildings of embassies and consulates.

In general, voters are not a homogeneous group in all countries, also the EMB is charged with taking into account the status of voting centers for some categories of voters as special needs.

In Iraq, the number of voters who were eligible to participate in the last parliamentary elections, held in May this year was around 23 million and 500 thousands, and the participation rate was about 44% which was less than previous participation, given the tendency of most voters to pressure some political parties to improve their political performance.

The recent elections also saw some of the challenges facing the Iraqi EMB in determining polling stations for some categories of voters who faced difficult circumstances because of the security situation in their areas and forced to flee their cities to other cities, where the EMB ensured the opening of some polling stations close to their camps where they are located with the same technical standards.

The number of polling centers in Iraq is currently more than 10,000 and the number of stations are more than 60,000 and each voter has an electronic voting card by which they can vote, and the method of sorting and counting was to use the electronic ballot box for the purpose of speeding the announcement of results.

---

*Dr. Safaa Ibrahim Jasim Al- Musawry*  
Electoral expert  
Former member of the Board of IHEC



*My Election, My Fiji*

# Accessible Polling Stations for Persons with Disabilities

Taking historic steps towards promoting franchise, the Fijian Elections Office [FEO] has extended its focus towards making polling venues and elections in general accessible to Persons with Disabilities. The steps or leaps that have been undertaken in the last three years have been through genuine commitment of the Fijian Elections Office to ensure that the 2018 General Election has greater levels of involvement, participation and ownership by Persons with Disabilities.

Whilst persons living with disabilities are by far a minority in the country, the FEO took positive steps in engaging with representative organizations to bring about changes in the electoral process and procedures that would promote persons with disabilities achieving high levels of involvement in the General Election. The FEO actively believes that there are neither drawbacks nor waste of any resources when it comes to promoting the accessibility for voters with disabilities and we believe that the outcome, however small, is worth the value of every dollar spent, every hour dedicated and every vote cast.

## Positive Steps from 2014

The FEO was established in 2014 and had very little time in the 2014 General Election to undertake the massive steps it was able to in 2018. However, the FEO in 2014, in a bid to ensure active participation, employed various means for the inclusion of voters living with disabilities in the electoral process for the 2014 General Election. This resulted in 84.60 per cent voter turnout and Fiji's lowest ever recorded invalid vote count – 0.75 per cent.

The Multinational Observer Group [MOG] in 2014 General Election report found that: "The FEO made some Polling Venues accessible by

building ramps for wheelchair access, during training; Presiding Officers were taught how to assist voters with disabilities. 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."

Post-election, the Supervisor of Election, Mohammed Saneem, actively promoted and pursued maximum inclusiveness in the electoral process. The FEO when developing 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.

## Pacific Regional Disability Rights Dialogue

In 2015, the FEO was invited by the International Foundation for Electoral Systems [IFES], to participate in an election disability BRIDGE workshop in Indonesia. The lessons from the workshop enabled the FEO to hold



Banner of Fiji National Council for Disabled Persons and FVTTCPD



the first ever Pacific Regional Disability Rights Dialogue [PRDRD] 2016, with support from Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, PIANZEA Network and the Pacific Islands Forum which was attended by disability organization representatives from around the Pacific and heads of Election Management Bodies from the region.

Saneem described the event on August 31, 2016, as a historic occasion which saw the formalization of one of the key working groups to enhance electoral practices for future elections in Fiji – the Election Disability Access Working Group [EDAWG]. “At the PRDRD, the FEO undertook this commitment that we would formalize an actual Election Disability Access Working Group,” he said. “We also indicated that the FEO wanted to create a platform where there would be direct involvement of DPO’s in assisting the FEO to make services more inclusive. The [EDAWG] will be formed by all disabled organization representatives together with Pacific Disability Forum and the Fiji National Council for Disabled Persons.”



*Supervisor of Elections Mohammed Saneem speaking with a participant at the PRDRD.*

The move enabled frequent and more collective discussions and workshops on how the election process could be further refined to make it more inclusive.

### Signing of Terms of Reference

On the same day, a Terms of Reference [ToR] was signed between the FEO and the Pacific Disability Forum, the Fiji National Council for Disabled Persons, Fiji Society for the Blind, Fiji Association of the Deaf, Spinal Injuries Association of Fiji, Counterstroke Fiji, Fiji Disabled Peoples Federation, Fiji Vocational Technical Training Centre for Persons with Disabilities, Psychiatric Survivors Association, Fiji Paralympics Committee, Fiji Crippled Children’s Society, United Blind Persons of Fiji and the Western Disabled Persons Association.

The ToR outlined the roles and responsibilities of the Election Disability Access Working Group (EDAWG) stating that it shall ensure that persons with disabilities have equal access and are included in all aspects of the electoral process in Fiji by:

1. Ensuring persons with disabilities get an opportunity to access a voter registration card:
  - (a) Persons with disabilities may request for mobile registration to the extent possible in order to be registered and get a card.
2. Selecting accessible voter registration and polling station locations:
  - (a) All voter registrations and polling station locations should be accessible to all voters with disabilities to the extent possible.
3. Conducting civic and voter education in all accessible formats:
  - (a) All civic and voter education materials should be understood by all voters with disabilities.
4. Mechanisms shall be in place on alternative voting methods such as postal vote.
5. Voters with disabilities should be able to the extent possible access the FEO website.
6. Election results shall be provided in as many mediums as possible so, as to allow voters with disabilities to be informed.



7. All polling venue/polling station layouts shall be designed to the extent possible in an accessible manner to cater for voters with disabilities.
8. To the extent possible we shall allow voters with disabilities the opportunity to take part in voter education programs.
9. The EDAWG shall recommend procuring materials suitable for voters with disabilities to the extent possible.



*Participant standing beside Fiji Disabled Peoples Federation banner at ToR signing*

The ToR signed between the FEO and Election Disability Access Working Groups was the first in the Pacific region and the FEO ensured that the ToR were achieved through appropriate funding, dedication on necessary resources and allocation of senior level staff with decision making powers to ensure that the ToR were not only a paper document but a significant asset of the FEO's preparations for the following General Election.



*Participants at the signing of the TOR between FEO and EDAWG*

During the cycle, the FEO actively engaged with disability groups to draw from their views, opinions and ideas on active processes during the cycle as well as for processes on Election Day. This facilitated a greater commitment by all stakeholders in ensuring that the ultimate achievement is inclusivity.



*A visually impaired participant of EDAWG signing the ToR*

The FEO made the first milestone achievement when it developed the website with disability access features including text to speech reading, color changing, font size changing, etc.

Since then the EDWAG has met 18 times and by the 2018 General Election had successfully achieved the goals set out two years earlier.

## Positive Steps in 2018 General Election

Saneem announced in early 2018 that Persons with Disabilities, pregnant women and the elderly were to be given priority at Polling Venues and cardboard voting screens could be taken outside to be placed on the laps of those who were on wheelchairs or could not come inside.

After the announcement, the President of the Fiji Disabled Persons Federation, Josh Wakaniyasi commended the Electoral Commission and the FEO. "In terms of accessibility to the polling venues, we are glad to see that there is accessibility not only for persons with disabilities but also for pregnant women as well as the elderly," he said. "This does not mean we are taking opportunities away from anyone else but it is an added



opportunity to ensure more people are able to access the polling venue. Another approach is resource and support to ensure that polling stations are mobile. This gives confidence to people with disabilities to vote because there is flexibility within the confines of the law that governs the right to vote."

A few months later the Fijian Parliament passed the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act and Fiji also ratified the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities which meant that Fiji was committed to fulfilling its obligations under the Convention. The FEO took the opportunity to further increase participation and accessibility. This meant persons with disabilities may be able to select a person of their own choice who is a registered voter, to assist the person with disabilities to mark their ballot paper inside the polling station on Election Day or during Pre-Poll.

The FEO also expanded the Postal Voting option to the elderly and persons with disabilities who could not leave the vicinity of their homes or the hospital to cast their vote by means of sending their secret envelope which contained the marked ballot paper, back to the FEO for counting. Care facilities such as old people homes and rehabilitation centers were approved for pre-polling allowing convenient and inclusive voting. With Polling scheduled for November 14, 2018 in Fiji, people living with disabilities would be given the same accessibility and opportunities as any other voter.



*A voter on a wheelchair is assisted by the Presiding Officer who is holding a cardboard voting screen.*

Out of the 1436 Polling Venues which the Fijian Elections Office operated during the 2018 General Election, 208 venues had disability access while the remaining venues also

ensured at least some form of access or had the mobile cardboard voting screen which could be taken to whoever needed it outside the polling station. This procedural accommodation helped persons with disabilities to vote in a dignified manner. Procedures that were in place in the 2014 General Election were expanded to allow persons with disabilities to choose freely who would assist them. This simple accommodation can have a huge impact in whether a voter turns up or not.



*A voter places her folded ballot paper into the ballot box.*

## Looking Towards 2022

The FEO has built on its commitment since the 2014 General Election in ensuring that every Fijian is able to cast their vote. The procedures were improved so that persons with disabilities have equal access to the electoral process. Persons with disabilities were provided voting options to accommodate their various needs at all stages of the electoral process.

The FEO is seeking to improve on its services to all Fijians including persons with disabilities. The FEO will continue engaging stakeholders and disability organizations to remain consistent with its service delivery to persons with disabilities. A holistic review of the electoral procedures will ensure inclusivity on all levels for persons with disabilities for the next General Election.



**Darren Hickey**  
Research Officer  
Fijian Elections Office (FEO)





# Making Polling Stations Accessible and Voter Friendly

Nowadays, terms including the words equality, accessibility and user-friendly are mainstreamed and show a big picture of attitude change. Gradually, this attitude change towards Persons with Disabilities (PwD) has been reflected into governments' agendas and then incorporated into respective policies, ultimately leading to more human-oriented approaches and contributing to creating an inclusive environment.

It is worth remembering, that the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons

with Disabilities (CRPD) served as a prerequisite for this paradigm shift when it comes to protecting rights of persons with disabilities. A major instrument intended to protect the rights of persons with disabilities is widespread involving 161 signatories and 177 ratifications. Among ratifications, it should be noted, that in 2014, Georgia ratified the United Nations (UN) Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

What exactly does the UN Convention say? "States Parties shall guarantee to persons with disabilities political rights and the opportunity to enjoy them on an equal basis with others. They shall ensure that voting procedures, facilities, and materials are appropriate, accessible and easy to understand and use". Here comes the role of Election Administration of Georgia, one of the key actors as far as guaranteeing political/civil rights is concerned.

So how is the realization of citizens' voting rights being managed in Georgia? Supreme document guiding the activities of election administration is the Constitution of Georgia, Election Code of Georgia along with documents such as Action Plan and Strategic Plan, adopted annually by Election Administration (EA) of Georgia. EA of Georgia, responsible state agencies and the third sector with its expertise are behind making the electoral environment accessible to everybody.

## Election Administration & Its Initiatives

The story of inclusion and accessibility in the electoral history of Georgia dates back to 2012 when the Central Election Commission (CEC) of Georgia created a standing working group in order to promote the equal voting environment







for PwDs. Through this working group, needs of PwDs are being determined for its future application as well as information is being disseminated about activities of EA; it also serves as the platform for engagement of international and local NGOs, public defender and relevant state agencies to plan future steps in terms of accessibility and beyond. The activities of the group are based on the uniform rules determined by the CEC Chairperson. In addition, the format of cooperation with responsible state agencies was created to facilitate adaptation of polling stations since state agencies and municipal bodies shall provide the electoral precincts with the premises accessible for every voter according to Election Code of Georgia.

### How is Policy Translated into Practice?

To achieve better participation of PwDs in elections, EA took a number of actions to raise awareness of persons with disabilities regarding electoral process, namely, every video footage

prepared by CEC, as well as news briefings held by CEC on the Election Day were available in sign language for deaf and hearing-impaired voters; after having registered on CEC webpage, deaf and hearing-impaired voters had the opportunity to make a video call to the Information/CEC Call Center and receive information from sign language interpreter at the election precinct; blind voters were able to check their data in the unified voters list via the adapted CEC webpage; information for blind voters on using tactile ballot guides was disseminated; more precisely, during elections the EA offered to blind voters a tactile ballot guide for filling in ballots at every election precinct; to voters with vision impairment – two magnifying sheets at every election precinct; to voters using wheelchairs – special voting cabins at adapted election precincts; to deaf, hearing-impaired voters and beneficiaries of support - posters depicting the voting process at every election precinct. Portable (mobile) ramps were





available at certain electoral precincts upon request of voters using a wheelchair. In addition, the CEC raised the qualifications of more than 43,000 members of precinct election commissions about the etiquette of communicating and behavioural norms in Relation with PWDs.

### What are the Statistics?

Speaking of figures, PWD voters' participation in elections in the last five years has seen gradual improvement. The highest number of PWDs participation was observed during 2016 Parliamentary Elections. The number of voters using a wheelchair has gradually increased in the recent five years, the same trend is observed among beneficiaries of support,

whereas figures as far as participation of deaf and hearing impaired voters is concerned showed certain fluctuation. Participation of blind and vision-impaired voters in elections has experienced a steady rise and at times slight decrease leaving room for improvement.

### Future Plan

The CEC of Georgia is a forward-looking organization which is oriented on simplifying electoral procedures for all voters including PWDs. As a part of its 2019 plan, Election Administration intends to promote inclusive electoral environment by taking the following steps: monitoring of polling stations adapted according to the standard in cooperation with the agencies responsible; holding meetings



concerning legislative amendments to enable PWDs to choose an adapted electoral precinct at the territory of the electoral district; offering different services to PWDs at polling stations during By and Extraordinary Elections, namely, for voters with vision impairment – two magnifying sheets; for blind voters – a tactile ballot guide; for voters using wheelchairs – special voting cabins at adapted election precincts; for deaf, hearing-impaired voters and beneficiaries of support – posters depicting the voting process. Also, during the election period, airing promo videos in sign language and on E-day holding news briefings in sign language as well as having sign language interpreter at CEC Information/Call Center.

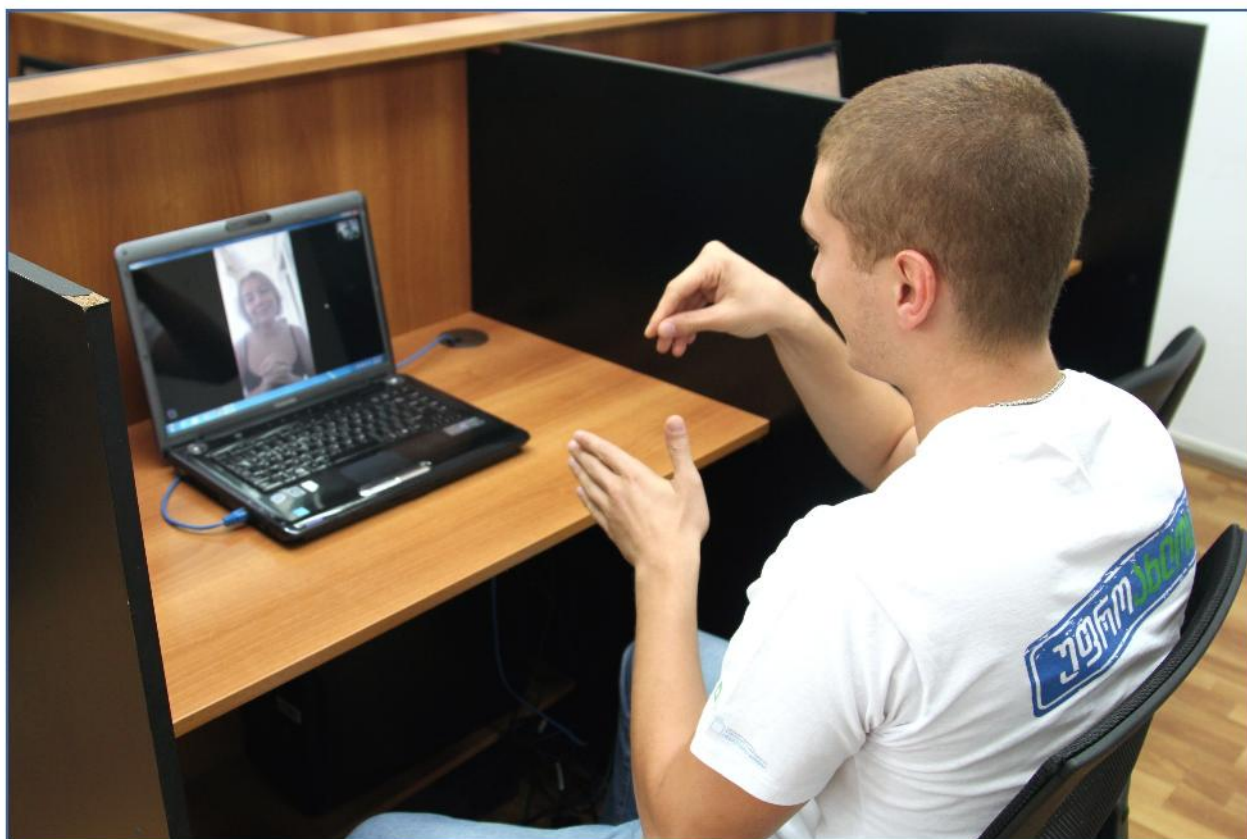
With these and other innovations, CEC together with other stakeholders do their best to eliminate obstacles impeding full participation of PWDs as voters and candidates. When

obstacles are removed, voters with disabilities are afforded their full rights as citizens and have a possibility to make difference and contribute to building just and fair society. Yet, what needs to be remembered, only with full participation of key stakeholders and with comprehensive plan, the greater success can be achieved. Until that, we all, CEC of Georgia, state agencies, and civil society have much left to do to make a real difference and create an inclusive and accessible environment for all.



**Tolordava Kristina**  
International Relations & Protocol Division  
Election Administration of Georgia

<sup>3</sup>United Nations. (2006, December 13).Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Retrieved from <https://bit.ly/1QUdQe4>





# Making Polling Stations Accessible and Voter Friendly: The Indian Experience

A voter is the central figure in democracy and elections. Registration of voters and maintenance of electoral rolls in good health is the first step to accessibility and participation. Article 324 of the Constitution of India empowers the Election Commission for maintenance of electoral rolls and Article 326 of the Constitution provides for universal equal suffrage. Accordingly, every citizen of India, who is not less than eighteen years of age (It was 21 years prior to 1988) except those ineligible by law, has the right to vote.

As India prepared for its first elections of 1952, the work relating to preparation of electoral roll was started much earlier as a matter of abundant caution under the instructions and the guidance of the Constituent Assembly with

the intent of holding elections as early as possible. All persons who were not less than 21 years of age as on 1st March 1950 and who had resided in a constituency for not less than 180 days during the period 1<sup>st</sup> April 1947 to 31<sup>st</sup> December, 1949 were entitled for registration as voters. This marked the beginning of voter facilitation and a demonstration of removal of barriers to participation. Since then the endeavour of ECI has been to make our elections more and more voter friendly and accessible.

The journey of elections in India during the last seven decades has witnessed a remarkable and interesting evolution and transformation of the polling station. Starting with the first general elections of 1952, when a polling station was host to ballot boxes with symbols of candidates to facilitate exercise of franchise, today a polling station hosts electronic voting machine (EVM) and voter verifiable paper audit trail (VVPAT) machines along with many other facilities. The common thread that runs across the journey of a polling station is sanctity and confidentiality of the poll, everlasting trust of the voter, continued endeavor for enhancement of voter facilitation and transforming voting into a pleasant and memorable experience. It helps in enhancing



*Symbols on Ballot Boxes, 1952*

**In the first General Elections in 1952, The Election Commission set up 1,32,560 polling stations with 1,96,084 polling booths to cater to 176 million electors and deployed some two and a half million ballot boxes. About one million Government officials were deputed to supervise the actual voting. The magnitude of election operation was not the only challenge; physical movement presented a larger challenge full of exacting difficulties especially in the remote areas. Elephants, bullock carts, camels were used for transport in difficult tracts. In 2018 we have almost one million polling stations and 887 million voters across the vast expanse of the country including remote hamlets in rural areas and high altitudes.**





*EVM and VVPAT 2018*

voter turnout and deepening of democracy. The article intends to share the Indian experience on the subject.

Setting up of polling stations is a formal and structured process strictly under the superintendence and control of the Election Commission of India (ECI). Directions of the ECI are comprehensive and every detail is meticulously taken care of through standard protocols. Convenience of voter and smooth conduct of poll strictly as per the norms laid down under the law are inter alia important factors.

Generally located at ground floor in permanent buildings as far as possible belonging to government, the polling stations are so located that voters do not have to travel more than 2 Kms. for exercise of their franchise. A polling station generally caters to about 1200 voters, but number may be less in case of special geographical features. The area of 200 meters around polling station is under the control of the Presiding Officer where no political party is allowed to set up their assistance booth. Polling facilitation centers for voters are located in the vicinity of polling stations. Polling party at a polling station comprises of one Presiding Officer with polling officials numbering three to five besides security personnel who guard a polling station from outside. Polling agents of the candidates watch the poll process inside a polling station. Election Observers of the ECI visit polling stations for close watch on the

process. All polling process must proceed in a orderly manner as per the prescribe timings.

### Major Initiatives

Voter facilitation centers near the polling stations are set up to help and facilitate voters. Photo Voter slips are provided to all voters at home in advance to guide them to the polling station. All the voters are provided Elector Photo Identity Cards for convenient identification at the polling stations.

**Systematic Voter Education and Electoral Participation (SVEEP)**, the flagship voter education program of the ECI provides voter education and sets guidance for facilitation of voters. Advance SVEEP plans are prepared in advance for targeted voter populations to ensure informed, inclusive and ethical participation. Voter turnouts have improved substantially because of SVEEP interventions.

### ‘No Voter to be Left Behind’

ECI works on the premise of ‘No Voter to be Left Behind’ as per its constitutional mandate of equal universal suffrage and with the objective of making voting a pleasant experience. In this pursuit, facilities are provided at the polling stations for convenience of every voter and all categories of voters.

### Basic Minimum Facilities (BMF) at polling stations

The Election Commission has directed that voter friendly facilities and amenities should be

## An experience at a Model Polling Station

“Thank you,” says Kumra Maruti, the Village Revenue Officer at Pochamloddi, in Asifabad (ST) Assembly constituency, as he proffers a piece of sweet to the tribal voters coming out after casting their votes at the local polling station housed in Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya which has been designated a Model Polling Station (MPS). The used-to-ill-treatment tribal voters were amused not only by the courtesy, but the use of English word to express gratitude coming from the VRO.

The courtesy of officials and the spruced up MPS at this tribal habitation is perhaps an indicator of the shape of things to come so far as organising elections is concerned.

For the first time, the Election Commission of India has come up with the idea of establishing a few MPS in each of the Assembly constituencies as an experiment in addressing voter apathy and ushering in the much needed change in atmosphere at polling stations.

### Facilities offered

These special polling stations – there are 10 located in as many Assembly constituencies in the district – are well ‘decorated’ to give the small area a festive look. There are all basic facilities like drinking water, tents to accommodate voters, functioning toilets and ramps for the physically disabled and staff to guide voters within the premises etc for the voters’ convenience.

Though the ECI has given certain guidelines and instructions on establishment of Model Polling Stations, they have been changed according to the ethos in Adilabad. For example, all such polling stations have been set up with minimum additional expenditure as the proposed Rs. 60,000 as cost for setting them up was rather unaffordable.

There are many aspects like queue management and priority in voting for the infirm, physically disabled, aged voters or lactating mothers which have been done without spending money. What required additional funds is the external beautification, provision of an air-cooler and purchase of sweets to be offered to voters as they exit after casting their votes.

“The MPS is a welcome experience,” observed Kumra Kamalabai, a visually handicapped voter. “I was provided all the help I needed to cast my vote without encountering the usual rash treatment which I normally get,” she added.

All basic facilities like drinking water, tents to accommodate voters, functioning toilets and ramps for the physically disabled are provided



provided at polling stations. Every District Election Officer has to provide the following Basic Minimum Facilities (BMF) at each polling station:-

- Provision for ramp
- Drinking water
- Adequate furniture
- Proper lighting
- Help Desk
- Proper signage
- Toilet

The guidelines of the Commission envisage adequate shaded area for protection from the sun and rain, a minimum area of 20 sq. meters so that there is no congestion inside the polling station; Halls/rooms should be well-lit and should normally have at least two doors for entry and exit for orderly poll; separate queues for men and women, set up the polling station at the ground floor to facilitate voters with old age and disabled and provide other facilities for PwDs.

### **'Model Polling Station' Conceptual Framework**

The Election Commission of India has introduced the concept of model polling station (MPS) for value addition to the polling station for making the entire experience of voting pleasant and enriching one for the voter. Actual experience of a voter at polling station in terms of the ease and comfort of exercising his franchise and strengthening of his association with the entire process on the day of poll are the key factors. With this objective, some Model Polling Stations were set up at Delhi on pilot basis during last elections to the Legislative Assembly.

The following three broad parameters have been laid down for enhancing voter experience in an MPS :

#### **(i) The physical structure of building and facilities**

- Good condition building with fresh wall painting
- Easy access to the building.
- Good quality furniture for polling personnel and polling agents.

- Voting compartments of fibre glass.
- Display boards, signage for name of polling station, AC, Election Commission logo, National Voters Day (NVD) pledge; signage like 'exit', 'entry', basic facilities etc.
- Provision of basic minimum facilities such as electricity with standby arrangement, separate toilets, drinking water, shades, ramps and wheel chairs for voters with disability.
- Voter assistance booth manned by Booth Level Officer (BLO) with a copy of electoral roll in alphabetical order and undistributed voter's slip
- Other facilities such as red carpet welcome of the voters and flowers being distributed to them.

#### **(ii) Improved queue management**

- Use of queue managers or rope separators
- Assistance of volunteers, distribution of tokens, serving drinking water to voters in queue.
- Priority voting for PwDs, infirm, old voters, pregnant women and lactating mothers etc.
- Sitting arrangements for voters in queue

#### **(iii) The behaviour of the polling staff and volunteers**

- Uniform dress for polling staff
- Dos and Don'ts for voters
- Arrangement of medical / First Aid facilities
- A Feedback Form from the voters.

### **Meghalaya**

Indian electoral system cares for the voter in remotest corners of the country in pursuit of its premise of 'No Voter to be Left Behind'. CEO, Meghalaya reports a unique experiment on locating a polling station in one of remote and inaccessible areas. Tiny hamlet of 'Kamsing' located in Amlarem Constituency of West Jaintia Hills district bordering Bangla Desh, is a remote and isolated hamlet in green riverine area with rather difficult topographic access. It happens to be the State's smallest polling station area with a unique distinction of being the only polling booth in Meghalaya



which is accessible solely by boat. It comes as no surprise, that voting in Kamsing polling station has always been described as “democracy in slow motion”. As it were, voting is always at a leisurely pace, with barely 29 voters: 15 men and 14 women. Kamsing’s total population is 83. The polling station recorded 100% voter turnout, using EVM and VVPAT, in a peaceful manner well in time before the stipulated hour of poll closure. By noon, most of the electors finish casting their votes leaving enough space & time for polling parties to soak in the fresh air & witness the smiling content faces of ‘Kamsing voters’, in conditions that are almost near idyllic for voting, truly a model polling station!

### Provision of Polling Stations for Special Categories of Voters

ECI has taken several steps to ensure that each and every elector gets an opportunity to cast vote in a free and fair environment. As a part of the planning for the Voter Education activities, identification of vulnerable groups of electors and making special arrangements for them to ensure their vote on the poll day. Directions of the Commission include inter alia setting up of the separate, exclusive polling station as may be necessary for these special categories of voters.

### Accessible Elections for PwDs

ECI has given due recognition to the providing facilities for equal access to PwDs ab initio with significant improvement in facilities from time to time and the participation of PwDs has been very encouraging. The facilities included wheel chairs, ramps, permission for attendants, no waiting in queue and facilitation etc.

The theme for the National Voter’s Day 2018 was selected as ‘Accessible



Elections’ and an International Conference was organized by the ECI on the subject in January, 2018. A National Consultation for Inclusion of PwDs was organized to enhance and strengthen their facilitation for equal access and use of technology for facilitation. Strategic Framework for Accessible Elections was unveiled during the Consultation along with announcement of short term additional measures such as:

- Printing of EPIC in Braille for visually impaired persons.
- Accessible Photo Voter Slips.
- Facilities at Polling Stations for all categories of PwDs.
- Preparation of Accessible Communications and Awareness Materials.
- Mobile APP to motivate and educate PwDs.
- Disability Coordinators at different levels.
- Cascaded Training on Accessibility to Poll officials.
- Auxiliary Polling Stations.
- Sign Language Window for audio visual training.
- Free Transport Facility for PwDs and assistants on Poll Day.

Disabilities Data bases have been built into the Electoral Rolls so as to plan accordingly for facilitating the PwDs and provide them with a barrier free electoral participation experience including doorstep service for transport to the polling station. Exclusive polling stations manned by PwDs have also been set up at some places.



### **Polling station for voters of vulnerable sections**

The Election Commission's directions provide for identification of localities predominantly inhabited by weaker sections and locate polling stations in these localities irrespective of the number of electors. Voluntary organizations championing the cause of such weaker sections are also associated in identifying such localities and locating the polling stations.

### **Polling station for voters suffering from leprosy**

A separate polling station may be set up, in case a leprosy sanatorium is located in a constituency, for the inmates alone. The officers, medical and others, working in the sanatorium perform the functions of Presiding and Polling Officers of such polling station.

### **Separate polling stations for men and women**

Generally, common polling stations are provided both for men and women electors. In such cases, separate queues are provided for men and women. However, in case women folk feel inhibited in mingling with male members because of some local custom or social practice and in that case separate polling station for men and women are provided.

### **All Women Polling Stations**

Starting with a new experiment in Lok Sabha Elections 2014 in West Bengal, women managed polling stations have become a major highlight now. During the provincial elections in Bihar in 2015, all women managed booth 'Mahila Booth', also termed as 'Pink Booth' were set up with all women polling officials donning the pink attires. Security persons, polling agents were all women. All women polling stations have become a practice now to enhance gender participation.

### **Special arrangements for burqa-clad women at polling stations**

If sufficiently large number of '*pardanashin*' (burqa-clad) women electors are assigned to a polling station, special arrangements are provided for their identification and

application of indelible ink on the left forefinger by a lady polling officer in a separate enclosure having due regard to privacy, dignity and decency.

### **Special arrangements for old, infirm persons, pregnant women at the polling stations**

Proper facilities are provided to facilitate the movement of old and infirm voters at the polling stations. Normally, the polling stations are set up at ground floor to ensure that such voters do not face problem. Further, such voters do not have to stand in the queue at a polling station.

### **West Bengal Experience: Women managed Polling Stations**

An experiment in West Bengal in 2014 where few Polling Stations were exclusively managed by all women polling officials became a success story and since then the same was escalated to an All Women Polling Station with even the security being managed by women. Besides raising interest in media and gaining accolades from all, the exercise also helped in adding to the participation from among women electors. Since then, the number of all women polling stations has steadily increased with recent elections in 2018 witnessing minimum one all women polling station per assembly constituency. In the process the upcoming national elections are likely to witness the largest number of such polling stations. Let us look at the West Bengal initiative:

### **West Bengal: Lok Sabha Elections, 2014**

An interesting facet of Polling Personnel Management in General Lok Sabha Elections, 2014 was deployment of women polling personnel. In many Polling Stations, the entire team of polling personnel on poll duty comprised women polling personnel. In yet others, women were deployed along with their male counterparts. In the entire State, a total of 2887 women polling personnel were appointed in as many as 575 polling stations. In North



24-Parganas district, 792 women polling personnel were engaged in 150 polling stations. The majority of these Polling stations were located in one sub-division of the district: a commendable feat and policy intervention by the-then SDM. Three districts namely South 24-Parganas, Hooghly, Nadia and Burdwan showed impressive figures of engaging women polling personnel

### West Bengal General Assembly Elections, 2016:

A total of 1147 polling stations were entirely managed by all women polling personnel. The maximum number of all women managed polling stations were located in South 24-Parganas district (258) and Burdwan district (224).

### West Bengal General Assembly Elections, 2011

In 86, Shantipur Assembly Constituency in Nadia district, a special auxiliary polling station was created at Durgamoni Pathshala under the approval of the Commission to facilitate voters who were all sex-workers inhabiting the Polling Station area. There, at the Polling Station, the Voters' Assistance Booth was managed by women. Two lady constables were deployed to look after the situation within the 100 meters periphery of the Polling Station.



### Chhattisgarh

District Election officer's efforts at Jashpur, Chhattisgarh reflect that infrastructure and accessibility at Polling station can be used as a tool to attract Electors to participate in polling experience. Polling stations were provided facilities in the light of the guidelines of the Election Commission on Assured Minimum

Facilities (AMF) and equipped with provision for ramp, drinking water, proper lighting and signage, toilet extended facilities, minimum area of 20 sq mtr. for a polling station. Facilitation was extended to voters such as pregnant women, old, infirm, and PwDs to vote without having to stand in a queue. Assessment of AMF/accessibility of each polling station was conducted to ensure ease of voting to such voters. Random inspections and development



of model polling stations in each 'Janpad' to benchmark the standards of a polling station for AMF/accessibility were facilitated. Pictures of the Model Polling Stations speak for themselves.



The experience of facilitation of voters has encouraged more and more voters to participate in polls and enhance the voter turnout in a substantial manner. The endeavor to improve voter facilitation and informed, inclusive and ethical participation has transformed the voting experience into a festival of the largest democracy of the world.



**Umesh Sinha**  
Sr. Deputy Election Commissioner, ECI  
& Chief Editor, VoICE International





# Assessing the Accessibility of the Electoral Process

According to the World Health Organization, one out of every seven people in the world has a disability, yet citizens with disabilities remain underrepresented in political life as voters, election observers, candidates, and election officials. Mainstream observer groups often do not hire the people with disabilities to serve as observers and only include basic, if any, questions on access for people with disabilities in their checklists. To ensure election observations account for the various barriers that women and men with disabilities encounter, the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES), along with disabled person's organization (DPO) partners around the world, has developed an Election Access Observation Toolkit.

Drawing upon IFES' experience conducting dozens of election access observations in countries around the world, and international and regional standards for inclusive elections, the Election Access Observation Toolkit provides DPOs and election observer groups with the background and tools to effectively incorporate

a disability rights perspective into domestic and international observation missions. The toolkit, supported by the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, United States Agency for International Development and Global Affairs Canada, gathers lessons learned from election access observations conducted by IFES and DPOs in a wide range of country contexts,

including Indonesia, Haiti and Kosovo.

**Legal Foundations for Election Access:** The toolkit provides an overview of the international and regional frameworks that support the political rights of persons with disabilities, such as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and key court decisions, such as Kiss v. Hungary.

**Making Election Observation Accessible:** Providing reasonable accommodations to observers with disabilities is critical, to ensuring their inclusion

in the process. The toolkit has examples of reasonable accommodations so that observation missions can include observers with physical, sensory, intellectual and psychosocial disabilities.

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***"As a person with a disability, my presence as an observer was an unusual experience for those present at polling stations. I think that the members of the election commissions realized that the voting from home option for voters who are unable to move independently is not the only way to create favorable voting conditions. I am convinced that there should be more people with disabilities as observers."***

***LlrynaTverdokhlib, observer in Poltava region, Ukraine, 2017***

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*Cover of IFES' Election Access Observation Toolkit*

### **Election Access Observation Checklists:**

Sample checklists for long and short-term election access observations provided in the toolkit can be contextualized by disability rights advocates. Long-term observation checklists include questions on the inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in voter registration, candidacy, voter education, and in the EMB. Short-term checklists focus on accessibility at polling stations on Election Day. Guidance for contextualizing both long and short-term observation checklists to fit national laws is provided.

### **Case Studies:** The Election Access

Observation Toolkit includes detailed case studies from Haiti, Indonesia and Kosovo to provide examples of how IFES organized observation missions with local DPOs. The case studies also highlight outcomes from the observation missions, such as recommendations in observation reports that were adopted by EMBs.

### **Questions for Mainstream Election Observation:**

The toolkit includes sample questions that can be used by international observer groups so that they can mainstream disability rights into their missions.

*Virginia Atkinson*

*Inclusion Advisor*

*International Foundation for Electoral Systems*







# Sharing Good Practices for Accessible Polling Stations

The World Health Organization estimates that 15 percent of the world's population has a disability. Although the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), an international treaty ratified by over 95 percent of UN member states, calls for all parts of the electoral process, including voting, to be made accessible, Persons with Disabilities encounter numerous barriers while exercising their rights. Physical barriers such as inaccessible polling stations are common in many countries, yet most election management bodies (EMBs) do not have the expertise to identify and mitigate these barriers. Auditing polling stations for accessibility provides the opportunity for disabled people's organizations (DPOs) and other stakeholders to collect data on polling station access and make recommendations on critical updates to ensure all citizens have access on Election Day. Participating in an audit can also empower women and men with disabilities as leaders in their community.

In 2016, the National Assembly of Persons with Disabilities (NAPD), a Ukrainian DPO, conducted the first audit of polling stations for accessibility in Ukraine's Poltava region with the support of the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES). The audit resulted in the creation of recommendations to improve accessibility, which were shared with the Central Election Commission (CEC). NAPD, with IFES' support, trained DPOs across the country to conduct polling station audits and raised awareness of the accessibility audit process with local government officials.

Building upon the success of the Poltava audit and training, NAPD and IFES expanded the checklist to create a comprehensive

accessibility audit methodology, published in 2018 with the support of Global Affairs Canada (GAC), the United Kingdom Department for

International Development (DFID), and the United States Agency for International



NAPD shares accessibility audit techniques with DPOs in several regions in Ukraine in 2018.

***"Actually, we don't just cast our votes. We can work at polling stations, be observers, or even run as candidates. [It's about] moving in small steps – from audit to barrier-free access, from voting to acting as local leaders."***  
***Accessibility audit workshop participant with a disability, Ukraine***

Development (USAID). The methodology includes practical guidance for conducting a polling station audit and focuses on three areas: architectural accessibility, accessible transportation, and accessible information.

The checklist provided in the methodology follows national legal guidelines for access, such as the maximum grade for ramps and minimum door widths, and it can be contextualized to fit local

standards. The methodology also provides detailed, step-by-step instructions for taking measurements while conducting an audit and photographic examples of inaccessible spaces. Recognizing that polling station set up may create additional barriers, the methodology provides recommendations on how to set up an accessible polling station.

The methodology is currently available in Ukrainian. An English version is forthcoming.

**Rebecca Aaberg**  
 Senior Inclusion Officer  
 International Foundation for Electoral Systems

# 'Unusual Polling Stations'

*Here are some unique and unusual polling stations set up during Referendum of 2015 in the United Kingdom. These are the most out-of-the box places where people have exercised their democratic rights. In an attempt to make their elections more accessible and inclusive, polling booths were set up at locations which are frequented often by people.*

Polling Station at a windmill





## INTERESTING SNIPPETS

Polling Booths had been set up in multiple Inns and Pubs



A boxing gym had been adapted as a polling booth



## INTERESTING SNIPPETS

### Multiple Heritage sites had been adapted as polling stations



### A Bus was adapted as a polling booth





## INTERESTING SNIPPETS

In a first, a shipping container and a caravan were used as polling booths



A Church was used as a polling station and a station was also made near a cemetery



## INTERESTING SNIPPETS

Polling booths were set up in a tent and a hair salon



Private Residences were also used as polling stations





## INTERESTING SNIPPETS

Multiple recreational spots had polling stations, a few are given in the picture below



### Hardington Launderette



Cafes were made into polling stations too



Source: <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/gallery/2015/may/07/weird-wonderful-polling-stations-in-pictures>

# Accessible Elections for Persons with Disabilities: Guiding Principles and International Experiences

## 1.1 Introduction

We have already discussed (VoICE International, Volume I Issue 2 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

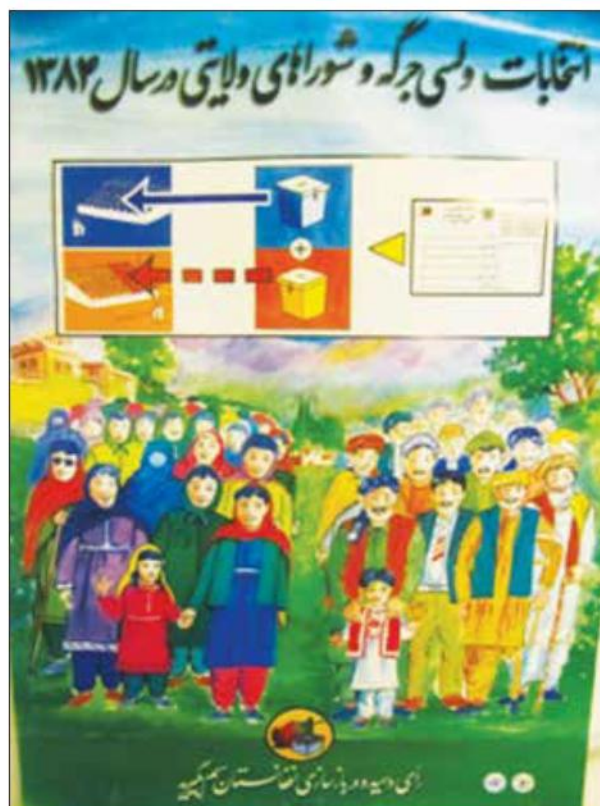
The main aim of voter education is to provide all the requisite information for electoral participation effectively and efficiently to all constituents to achieve the desired objectives of universal adult suffrage. While many categories of voters are covered under the general or formal voter education 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 leaflet. The poster, 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 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 office, 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 Persons 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 voter. EC's helplines 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 voter. 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 Office.

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>*

#### 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



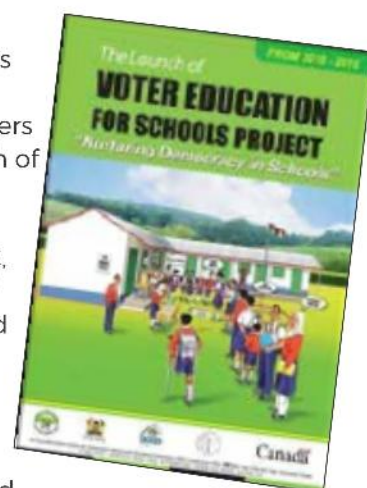
*Voter Education using road shows: A Citizen going through Voter Education materials at the ASK show in Kenya*

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 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 below:

#### 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.





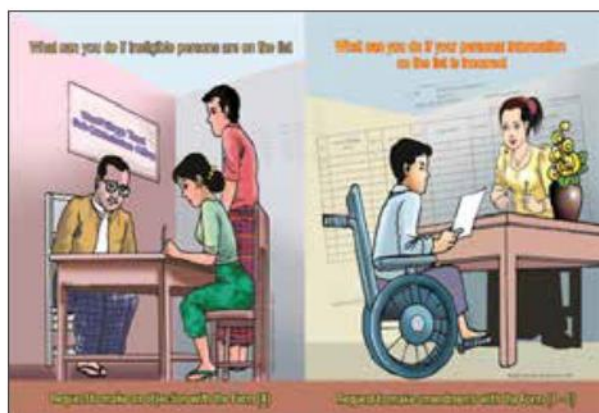
### 5.3.3 Citizens and Voter Registration

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 1 million (as per World Health Organization's 15% estimate). Paraguay ratified the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities on September 03, 2008 and as such recognizes equal access to the Persons with Disability for electoral process including voting rights.

#### 7.2 Accommodations for Voters with Disabilities

The Supreme Tribunal of Electoral Justice (STEJ) has done 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





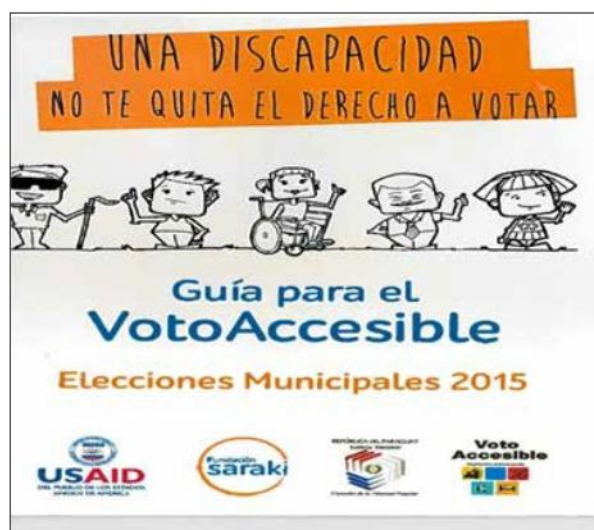


disabilities. It included a magnifying glass for voters with low vision, a Braille template and instructions for using it in Braille, a pencil grip for voters with reduced mobility in their hands, instructions with graphics and in sign language for voters who were deaf or hard-of-hearing, as well as priority waiting for pregnant women, nursing mothers and older adults.



## 8. Conclusion

The discussion on the, international conventions, practices 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.



*S.D. Sharma  
Senior Fellow  
Election Commission of India*

# On an Inclusive & Accessible Journey

**A**rticle 325 of the Indian Constitution claims that “No person shall be ineligible for inclusion in or claim to be included in a special roll on ground of religion, race, caste or sex” and, in lieu of this, it is any nation’s primary prerogative to ensure that polling booths are available and accessible to each individual. Voter Participation is essential for the success of any election. However, there are numerous reasons for which voters might not be able to cast their vote. Every vote matters and, in lieu of this motto, it is the prerogative of the Election Commission to provide greater accessibility.

This report outlines possible improvements that may be applied in order to make polling booths voter friendly. In addition to this, it also provides prime examples adopted in order to make polling booths more accessible and the polling process more inclusive.

## 1. Poll-Place Accessibility

ITIF suggests that in order to make poll-booths accessible, State and Local election websites could make public information regarding poll booths available to all. Maps marking out closest poll-booths and, the nearest public transport could make voters familiar with the options available to them. Signs may be put up in order to facilitate a smooth travel to the polling booth to ensure. In addition to these, drinking water, accessible toilets, wheel-chair accessible doorways, wheel-chair accessible polling-booths. Polling Booths may also be made accessible by providing shuttles or car-pools restricted the area of

that constituency. The facility of battery powered rickshaws was available at some polling stations in India. To ensure accessibility, the Election Commission of India identified a list of Assured Minimum Facilities (AMF) which every polling station was to provide. This list included a provision for ramps to for differently abled voters, drinking water, adequate furniture, proper lighting, a help desk, proper signage and toilet facilities.

Poll-Workers could be taught the basics of sign language to help the deaf. The National Association of the Deaf in Spain suggested that poll-workers make information accessible, verbally and visually for specially abled voters. Service animals for the deaf could be allowed inside the polling booth. Qualified sign language interpreters could also be made available. In the 2018 Karnataka Elections to Legislative Assembly, in order to communicate with specially abled voters via sign language, the service of experts was used. In Tamil Nadu, the 108 Ambulance Service will be used in the upcoming 2019 General Elections to transport Persons with Disabilities to and from polling booths.

## 2. People with Disabilities as Poll-Workers

By including Persons with Disabilities as poll-workers, the accessibility of booths increases. Their experience ensures that the polling space is comfortable and friendly for Persons with Disabilities. India



has created various polling booths specifically for Persons with Disabilities. The SVEEP division of Hyderabad implemented PwD friendly polling booths in the Telangana Elections. The state of Telangana also plans to conduct a "Tricycle Rally by PwDs Electors" in order to spread awareness on pertinent

### 3. **Providing Information Ahead of Voting**

Polling booths may communicate polling instructions, booth location and other important information ahead of the actual voting. By using the election website, advertisements and hoardings, voters can be intimated about election information. Moreover, information could be made available in regional languages.

A 'Ready-to-Vote' Kit could be prepared for Persons with Disabilities to assist them better with the process of voting. The kit could comprise of information available as audio, video, braille and, a helpline number for additional assistance if required. The Division of Elections in Florida developed a Voter Education Toolkit for its 2018 General Election.

The Election Commission of India has established a number of Electoral Literacy Clubs (ELCs) in schools, colleges and communities with the aim to mainstream electoral literacy. Voter Awareness Forum in offices also aim to do the same for workers.

For India's 2014 General Elections, a web-based module was created in order to help users find the location of their polling station on Google Maps. The names of election officials with their contact numbers and addresses were also displayed for respective polling booths. The electoral roll of that polling station was also linked for display for the user.

### 4. **Mobile Voting Booths**

Pop-Up voting booths may be erected at key locations such as a busy metro station or a marketplace. They can be located at known crowded areas to relieve the footfall at the main polling-booth in that area.

By introducing drive-through voting, the process of casting a vote becomes easy, hassle-free and fast. Properly manned voting booths may be strategically placed in order to facilitate this process. El Dorado employed this method of voting in its 2008 elections. Cleveland in its 2017 elections employed this method to better facilitate voting for those with mobility issues, this new initiative was welcomed by disability advocates. Specific sites were chosen to build voting lanes where a polling official marks the elector off the roll who then casts their vote. This initiative has been adopted in Australia also.

As an alternative, a Voting-Van could be made available which would take the polling booth to the voters. Such access for old-age homes or home for the blind could help voters vote in an environments in which they are comfortable. The Union Territory of Puducherry in India had a mobile model polling station. This model polling station functioned as a real polling



*Puducherry's Mobile Model Voting Booth*

booth manned by polling personnel and provided with voting compartment, electronic voting machines (EVMs) and Voter Verifiable Paper Audit Trail (VVPAT) in order to provide hands-on experience to voters. This mobile model polling station was solar-powered and was built on a lorry.

## 5. An App for Voters

A mobile App for voters providing useful information about the voting process, polling booth location, facilities available at booths and car-pooling systems could make the process of voting hassle-free and fast.

Automated reminders could be sent from the app, via email or sms to registered voters to remind voters when it is time to request for an absentee vote or when it is time to vote. As the election-day approaches, reminders could be sent.

The employment of social network sites could be used to connect, alert and coordinate volunteers. The office of the Chief Electoral Officer in West Bengal launched its "Anubhav" App designed to make the voting experience easy for Persons with Disabilities. The App has special games designed for Persons with Disabilities in order to impart to them information pertaining to the electoral process. With the help of such interactive media, the state of West Bengal has



*The Sugamya App*

attempted to make its electoral process more informed and inclusive.

The state of Madhya Pradesh in India launched its "Sugamya" app in order to provide transport facility to Persons with Disabilities.

## 6. Posting Waiting Time

Most often, voters are met with long voting lines. By showing an average waiting time online or on the booth, voters can decide what time they would want to go to cast their vote. Making available a comfortable seating at the poll-booth for those waiting would make the process a lot more hassle free. 450 Pink Booths were set up in India for the Karnataka elections in May 2018. India has 'Ideal Voting Booths' which are equipped with feeding rooms for mothers, playroom for children and adequate seating for the elderly and physically challenged.

Long queues may be managed by introducing a token system on a first-come-first-serve basis.

## 7. Community Voter Advocates

High school students could be trained to be poll-workers. Younger workers will be more accustomed to new technology and could help older voters.

Election Officials could tap people already serving specific communities such as teachers, shopkeepers and NGO workers to be a part of the voter support team. These people could act as intermediaries who help voters in their immediate surroundings.

Indian states have identified a PwD state Icon. These icons work to sensitize the electoral process for Persons with Disabilities. In addition to this, the Election Commission of India has collaborated with All India Radio (AIR) and Doordarshan TV channel to increase voter awareness.



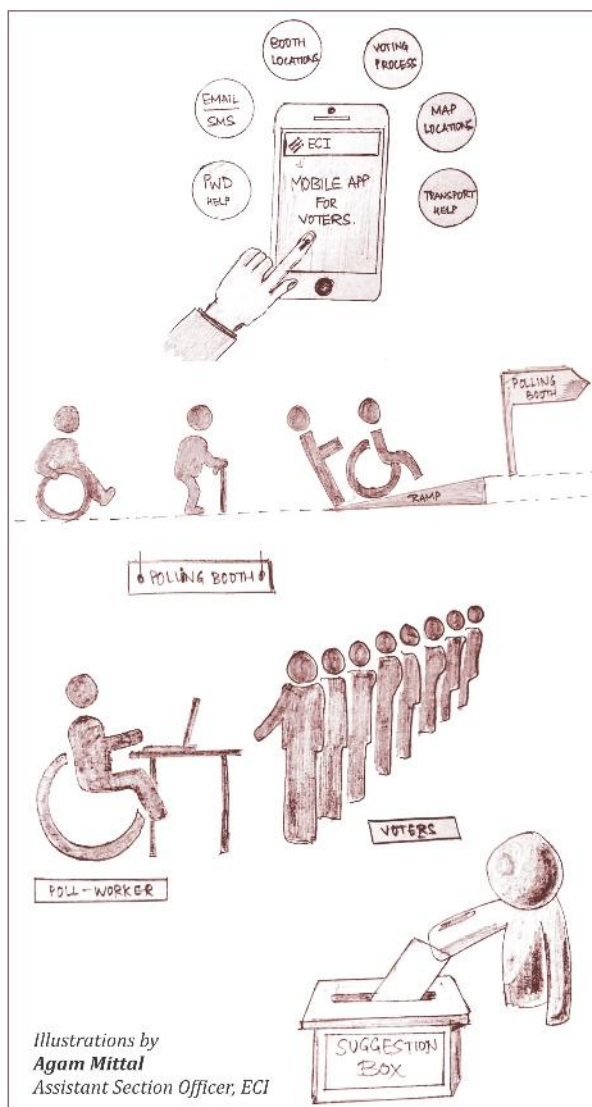
## 8. Suggestion Box

Often, voters have suggestions which can make the process of voting simpler and more comfortable. For instance, Persons with Disabilities would be at a better disposal to judge the accessibility of the polling-space. Such an open discussion of problems would only lead to a better executing of elections next time.

During India's 2014 General Elections, the Election Commission of India launched a people-oriented facility. This system provided a single-window common interface to citizens for submitting their complaints. The system then forwarded the complaints to the appropriate authority and kept the user informed about the progress. A mini call-centre activity was also attached with this application.

## 9. Online Poll-Worker Training

It is imperative to ensure that adequate training is imparted to poll-workers. For this reason, instead of having separate state-wise training for poll-workers, country-wide standard poll training could be given. Country-wide online poll-worker training ensures that a standard training is met out to all poll-workers. This would help lower training costs and ensure that all poll-workers receive the same quality of training. Such a training platform equips poll-workers to be of better help to voters.



Illustrations by  
**Agam Mittal**  
Assistant Section Officer, ECI

Compiled by  
**Hiteshi Ajmera**  
Intern ECI

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## Overview of Voter Education in Georgia

**T**he Mission of the Training Centre is related to encouraging the development of an environment within which free, fair, transparent and participative elections may take place. In line with the mission, one of the most important strategic goals for the Training Centre appears to be supporting electoral culture development. On that basis, the Training Centre focuses on the precise objectives related to the promotion of the intensive informational campaigns in order to reach successfully the outcome of having increased activity and credibility among voters and other stakeholders. As it stands for Georgian election administration and its Training Centre, one of the most effective tools and ways to tackle the challenges is civic and voter education. The evaluation of the authoritative, independent, international and local organizations, as well as the data of public opinion research has proved that voter/civic education appears to be the element of crucial importance for increasing electoral participation towards the elections.

In regard to voter/civic education, the Training Centre launches active effort work covering the following target groups of voters: young voters (students, school pupils), ethnic minorities, women, disabled people, and the accused people. Electoral culture development initiatives are intensively implemented in election and non-election period in two ways: informing voters and educating voters.

**Informing Voters** focuses on providing society with information to explain voting procedures and types of elections. In this direction, the



Training Centre ensures the preparation of various materials (Illustrated brochures; Educational films; Voter E-learning programs) and organizes informative events, here are some examples:

- Students' debate-clubs were created with the purpose of motivating young people as well as increasing awareness, with debates being organized annually. The winning team is given certificates of achievements. The topic of the latest debates among the students was gender related issues in the elections;
- CEC has opened election exhibition at its own premises and hosts on permanent basis young voters, including representatives of



ethnic minorities, enabling youth to learn about history of the Elections in Georgia and relevance of elections in promoting Democracy;

- Different open air Campaigns are held during election periods. The recent one was "Umbrella Campaign", where the goal of the campaign was to promote civic activity of voters for the second round of parliamentary elections 2016. A large number of voters had joined under the symbolic "Election Umbrella" and to demonstrate readiness of active participation in elections, they dropped green cards with the inscription - *I am Active Voter* in a ballot box.

**Educating Voters** is oriented towards increasing the awareness of voters on the importance of the elections in the democracy, their fundamental rights of electing own representatives and to motivate the active participation of citizens in the electoral process. Some of the successful innovative projects are highlighted below:

- On the primary study level of the project, 'Elections and Young Voters' is implemented for public schools' students of XI-XII grade. The initiative is aimed at the enhancement of civic electoral awareness among youth. Project is achieved successfully in

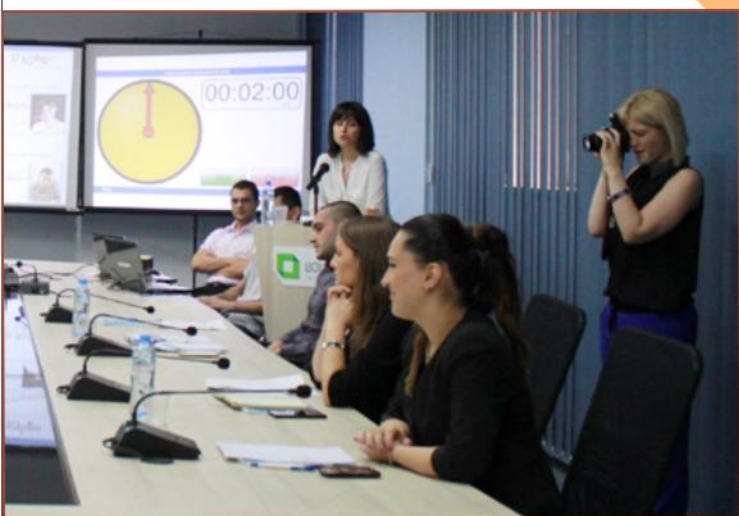


cooperation with ministry of education of Georgia and covers Public schools in ethnic minority and high mountain municipalities;

- On a fundamental study level, the study course in the Electoral Law is delivered in 19 universities for one semester, according to the curriculum designed by the Training Centre. The project aims to promote electoral culture development of youth and to enhance necessary professional knowledge and practical skills of students of law and journalism faculties;
- On informative introductory study level, CEC Georgia and Training Centre has developed "Electoral Development Schools" project. It aims at increasing civil engagement in the electoral process and contributes to the promotion of electoral issues among citizens. The curriculum of 10 days trainings developed by the Training Centre gives the opportunity to the participants to receive knowledge on electoral issues including: electoral systems, election administration, electoral stakeholders, and democratic







with disabilities, ethnic minorities and women.

Numerous important steps and efforts are made to promote electoral culture development in Georgia. There have also been some tangible evidence that voters' awareness and engagement with the electoral process has increased considerably. The benefits of voter education projects are still resounding in Georgia with increasing network of partners on local and international level and implementing new initiatives in regard to foster the democratic development of the society.

**Natia Zaalishvili**  
Training Centre Director  
Georgia

electoral principles. The project was piloted in 10 election districts and aims to expand and cover the whole of Georgia gradually:

- On Specialized study level, the Training Centre has introduced "Electoral Administrator Courses". The course offers the study of polling procedures and is aimed at the enhancement of civic awareness around electoral matters and at the same time, contributes to the formation of potential election administration officers' database and qualified human resources for other electoral stakeholders.
- Series of Grant Competitions are provided by CEC and Training Centre encouraging the involvement of NGO sector in the process of promoting the voting culture and increasing voter activity in the elections. Grant competitions are held on an annual basis targeting the groups of young voters, voters



**Umbrella Campaign**



*My Election, My Fiji*

## Fiji Approves **Elections Module** in Compulsory School Curriculum

**T**he Fijian Elections Office [FEO] introduced the first ever substantive voter education module for all Grade 10 students this year. The module is titled 'Introduction to Elections: A Learning Module for Year 10 Social Science'.

The module comprises of five lessons. The first four lessons lay the theoretical grounds of democracy, electoral history, the need to vote in a democracy, the role of the FEO, and electoral processes in Fiji.

The fifth lesson is a practical election simulation activity which requires teachers and students to conduct an election similar to how the general election is conducted. Identical but dummy materials have been developed by the FEO to facilitate this activity.

The comprehensive module comprises of the following materials or resources:

- Students Workbook;
- Teachers Manual;
- Mock Election and Resource Kit; and
- A full time dedicated website to supplement the module.



*NAPD shares accessibility audit techniques with DPOs in several regions in Ukraine in 2018.*

### Outreach

The module forms part of strand 1 of the Social Science Curriculum for year 10 students and it is compulsory for all year 10 students to take this course. Approximately, 17,000 students have studied the module in 2018 in the 172 secondary schools throughout Fiji.



*Year 10 Students with their copy of the Students Workbook*

Year 10 students generally fall between the age group of 14-16 years, the voter registration age in Fiji is 18 years. This indicates that students before reaching the legal age of voter registration and voting would know their fundamental voting rights and will be acquainted with the electoral processes.

It will further enhance and strengthen the democratic roots of the country through interest generation and political participation of youths.

### Development of the Module

The module is developed in line with Goal 9, Objective 1 and Activity 31 of the FEOs 2015-2019 Strategic Plan. It took three months of hard work, dedication and commitment to complete

the module. The module was jointly developed by an international consultant hired by the FEO and the Executive team of the FEO.

Various consultations were also done with the Curriculum Development Unit of the Ministry of Education. There were a series of workshops and meetings held before the final module was ready. The module was launched and handed over to the Ministry of Education on January 11, 2018.

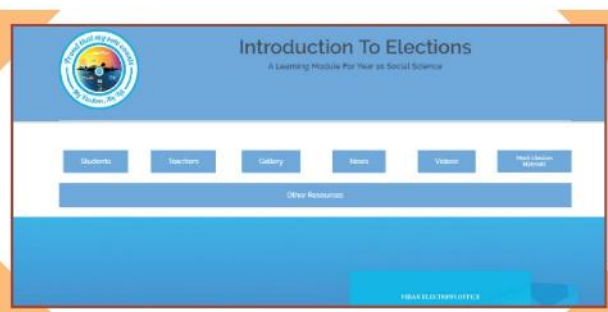
*The Electoral Commission Chairperson, Suresh Chandra handing*



*over the Module Kit to the Minister for Education, Hon. Aiyaz Sayed Khaiyum*

### Innovative Methodologies Used

There were a lot of innovative methodologies used by the FEO to deliver this module. The FEO developed various videos that discussed the processes on how to conduct mock election, developed lesson videos to summarise the main concepts in each lesson (this was broadcasted on national free to air television for an entire week); developed a full time dedicated website that has disability friendly features to accommodate for those students who are visually impaired and regularly uploaded materials relating to the module on social media sites.



*Picture of the voter education website*

### Capacity Building

In order for teachers to efficiently deliver the content of the module to the students, training of trainers workshops were organised. More than 500 teachers were trained to deliver the module to students.



*A scene from the Lesson Videos where the hosts are summarising the main concepts from the lessons*

The FEO staff also visited certain schools to assist them conduct the mock election activity.



*Year 10 Social Science teachers having a look at the Students Workbook*

### Way Forward

The module substantially covers the essentials of an election. However, the FEO will be engaged pro-actively in refining and enhancing the module. Potential ways to do this is by converting the module into an audio book and developing various inclusive resources to better impart the knowledge.

The FEO is also planning to develop university level curriculums in near future.





*A student casting his vote during the mock election activity*

### Conclusion

The FEO continues to take advantage of every opportunity it gets in creating awareness amongst voters and particularly the new voters. The right to vote is a fundamental right under the Constitution and as the election management body, the FEO aspires to ensure that every voter exercises this right with proper information and education.

Ultimately it will create voter interest which will have a ripple effect and perhaps also contribute to increasing voter turnout in Fiji for future elections.

### Case Study

The case study below is an article that was written by Eshilta Nivarni who is a Year 10 Student at Rishikul Sanatan College in Nasinu. This was one of the first schools to complete the mock election activity and send their case study to the FEO. During the mock election exercise she played the role of a Media Official. She feels that the Introduction to Elections Module for Year 10 students is an important and essential tool that will enable students to better understand the dynamics of electoral processes in Fiji.



### Banana Wins at Rishikul Polls

By: Eshilta Nivarni

This year the Social Science department together with the student representatives conducted a mock election for all the year 10 students. This event was carried out for the first time in school which was part of the topic introduced to year 10 – Introduction to Elections. The polling station was set up at the Rishikul

Sanatan College Hall.

This mock election was carried out to help the students learn more about the election process, how voting is carried out, counting of the votes and seat allocation. A total of 169 students took part in the mock election. For the purposes of this mock election, 100 pre-marked Ballot Papers were used. Hence, a total of 269 votes were casted from which 5 were invalid.



*Students participating in mock election activity*







*Students acting their roles out during mock election*

There were 3 political parties contesting for 10 seats in the parliament. Since it was a mock election dummy party names and candidates were used. The 3 parties were Fruit Party, Vegetable Party and Root Crop Party. The majority number of votes cast was for Fruit Party (215 votes) and the second was Vegetable party with a total of 32 votes, least votes were cast for the Root Crop Party with a total of 17

votes. The candidate with the highest number of votes was Banana with a total of 139 votes. We realized that banana was the favourite amongst students.

During the whole election process the voters showed patience and cooperation despite waiting for long hours.

The polling station was opened by the Presiding Officer at 1.30pm and general instructions were given to the voters. The polling station closed at 3.10pm after which the ballot box was opened in front of the media officials, polling agents and the observers and counting of ballot papers was carried out.

To add on, the Research Officer (Ravneel Chand) from the Fijian Elections Office was present at the polling station (Rishikul Hall) to observe the mock election, and he also addressed the students and guided the election officials through the counting of the votes.

The whole process of the election was steered efficiently and was very well organized by the teachers and year 10 students. The voters were given clear instructions and the voting was fairly done.

There were no hiccups or any forms of tumult throughout the election process. The mock election was conducted in a transparent, credible and accountable manner.

The Supervisor of Elections, Mohammed Saneem, in his remarks at the launch of module summed it up as follows "The Introduction to Elections Module in year 10 of the Secondary Schools is an investment that we are making in the future of our country."



**Ravneel Chand**  
Research Officer  
Fijian Elections Office





## Enhancement of Participation by Special Categories of Voters: Overseas Citizens

The International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) works in partnership with Election Management Bodies (EMBs) and Civil Societies around the world to support their efforts to operationalize the universal human right that ‘the will of the people shall be the basis of the authority of the government’ and that ‘everyone has the right to take part in the government of their country, directly or through freely chosen representatives’ (Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) Article 21).

In this journey that has spanned over 3 decades and 145 countries in every continent of the world, IFES has had the opportunity to see firsthand that this human right is not just a RIGHT but also as a fundamental human aspiration. IFES has seen millions around risking their lives to exercise this right.

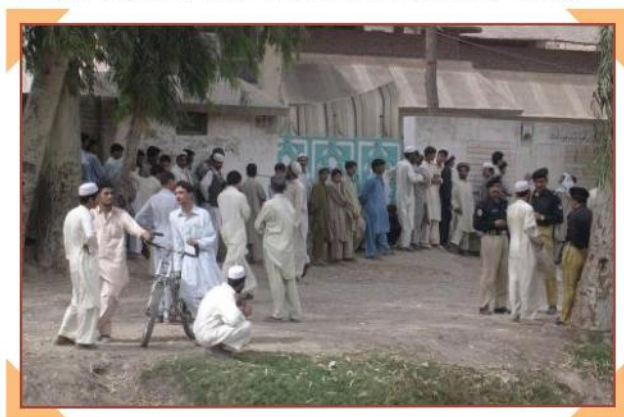
Overseas voting is a special cause for me. As a Sri Lankan citizen living abroad since I was 11, I have not been able to cast a ballot in Sri Lanka. I have worked with over 22 EMBs in my career

but have never had the privilege to vote. And I know I am not alone.

I was particularly struck when, in 2004 and 2005, I worked on IFES’ electoral support program for Afghanistan which included a significant Out of Country Voting (OCV) program in Pakistan and Iran where hundreds of thousands of Afghan refugees voted in those historical elections to elect their President and Parliament.

The legal framework for these voting rights are enshrined in the UDHR (Article 21), International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) (Article 25), Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) (Article 7), Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) (Article 29) and other covenants and treaties at the international and regional levels. In addition to these international instruments, constitutions and election laws at the national level also often guarantee universal franchise to citizens.

In addition to these commonly referred to legal instruments relating to the right to vote, there are articles in the UDHR and ICCPR that refer specifically to the right to information – which includes the right to voter education: **UDHR, Art 19:** Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.



**ICCPR, Art 19:** (1) Everyone shall have the right to hold opinions without interference. (2) Everyone shall have the right to freedom of expression; this right shall include freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other media of his choice.

The right to vote in genuine elections requires that voters be well informed about who was on the ballot and what they were promising to do for their constituents if elected.

Many countries have large diasporas who may demand inclusion in the electoral process of their country of origin. India and Mexico have some of the largest diaspora communities globally. As IFES Senior Electoral Advisor Peter Erben notes in *Out of Country Voting– A Brief Overview* (April 2012) the enfranchisement of the diaspora is not generally deemed a democratic standard, but is an option every democracy has to consider. Politicians wishing to tap into this potentially significant pool of voters may insist that such citizens be allowed to participate. Such demands are often based on political considerations and made without a full understanding of the cost and complexity of conducting an out-of-country voting operation. In other cases, inclusion of the diaspora is fundamental to the political process lending it legitimacy and stability.



Today, over 115 countries have some form of provision for OCV. This paper will not seek a detailed discussion of the different types of voting other than to name them here:

- Return voting
- In person overseas polling station
- Embassy voting
- Postal voting
- Internet voting
- Fax voting

Conducting out-of-country voting is incredibly complex and challenging for an EMB. In many cases, the diaspora population is large and spread across many different countries, which makes it difficult to assess the interest in participation amongst the various diaspora communities. The EMB needs to ensure that materials are delivered, staff trained, polls conducted, and results returned from locations around the world – locations that are not directly under the supervision of the EMB. Out-of-country voting operations are generally much more expensive than in-country voting. International experience shows that nationally conducted elections typically cost in the range of US\$1-3 per registered voter in stable democracies. Out-of-country voting operations often cost at least five to 10 times more, depending on the way a voter casts a ballot, resulting in a cost of US\$5-20 per voter. This can make out-of-country voting prohibitively expensive for many nations. While not a reason to ignore the operation completely, the costs involved may limit the extent and scope of out-of-country voting. It is a minimum requirement for elections that all voters (including eligible out-of-country voters) should receive credible information regarding:

- Election timelines including the registration period
- Eligibility criteria, and
- Mechanisms for registering and casting a ballot.



To best target information to out of country voters EMBs need to understand who the out of country voters are and where they reside. Some statistics below give us the global scale of this group:

- There are 150 **million migrant** workers globally (2013, ILO).
- UNHCR reports 65.3 million **refugees** globally as well (2015, UNHCR).
- **Diplomats, defense personnel or other members of a professional group** that are resident in a country other than that of their franchise by virtue of their work, usually in some form of state service; e.g. in 2012, India had over 600 diplomats stationed overseas and the US had more than ten times that figure.

These categories have some common features and in other cases are vastly different in their existential states. Diplomats and defense personnel are often educated and well informed and may be in need of limited voter education compared to migrants and refugees.

Given these realities, I will seek to offer some considerations on voter education specific to refugee and migrant out of country voters. These considerations are based on IFES' global experience in OCV operations in Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, Liberia and the referendum in South Sudan and my particular area of expertise in elections and conflict and the rights of ethnic and religious minorities.

## 1. Communicate Timelines, Eligibility Criteria and Registration/Voting Mechanisms

One of the key tasks facing an external voting program is informing eligible registrants of the timelines, eligibility criteria, and mechanisms for registering and casting a ballot. A recurring problem in overseas voting programs is that rules and regulations in post-conflict elections are often newly

devised, transitional in nature, and may be significantly different than pre-war electoral procedures. In Liberia, the pre-war electoral formula was based on a single-member majoritarian system. Given the significant population displacement, both ECOWAS and the UN believed a new electoral formula would be required and instituted a proportional system in a single national constituency. As one report notes: "This decision allowed Liberia to defer the difficult process of conducting a census and redistricting, but it was never understood by many Liberians."<sup>1</sup>

A related issue is that given the dynamic political situation in post-conflict elections (particularly those undertaken in the context of a peace-keeping operation), electoral procedures are often not agreed to until the last minute or are changed mid-way through the process. Since postal elections for refugees require a longer lead time to mail out and return election materials, these changes can have unfortunate consequences on refugee enfranchisement.<sup>2</sup>

## 2. Consider Diversity

Linguistic diversity requires VE materials to be produced in various languages to target all segments of the electorate e.g. in OCV for Afghanistan materials were produced in Dari and Pashto. For Iraq OCV materials were produced in Arabic and Kurdish. This may be especially challenging in case of short timelines. An EMB planning OCV must take this into account to plan sufficiently in advance for materials to be produced and disseminated in time.

## 3. Host Country Limitations

Host country may have limitations on gatherings – this may affect campaigns and voter education. In the case of Libya it was not possible to hold large gatherings with

the community in the UAE. This was not a significant issue for Afghanistan OCV in Pakistan.

#### 4. Consider Literacy levels

Where literacy levels are low, VE strategy should take this into account and expand outreach through village community structures. VE materials should be designed accordingly. Large pictorial flip charts and instructions videos (if suitable) are often a good way to reach out to voters who cannot read or write.

#### 5. Consider Gender

Conscious efforts are required to reach out to female voters especially in post conflict OCV operations in refugee camps. An EMB planning OCV should conduct a careful gender analysis and prepare VE materials which target female voters and do everything within its power to enhance freedom of safe movement for women.

#### 6. Include Important Content

Key messages in the campaign often include information on who could vote, how to vote, how to mark the ballot, polling times, documents required to prove eligibility, polling locations, the electoral system, transparency of the elections, and information for observers and agents.

#### 7. Utilize Multiple Means of Outreach

Social media, mass SMS and call centers have proven to be effective in reaching out to voters without direct contact, and in situations where direct contact may not be possible. In case of Libya, this was extremely useful.

Mass media in the host country is often quite expensive and may not be effective, e.g. in the South Sudan referendum.

Telephone hotlines were extremely useful in South Sudan but not in Libya. In For Kosovo, in 2001, IOM operated a centralized telephone "hotline" system in Vienna and other European Countries. The hotlines were staffed with both Albanian and Serbian speakers, and ultimately responded to over 32,000 calls (25,000 during registration alone). Via the hotlines, registrants and voters were able to inquire about the procedures and check the status of their registrations and ballots.

#### 8. Targeted VE materials for specific segments of the electorate, such as voters with disabilities, women and youth.

Association with community elders and appointing community representatives. An EMB that directly interacts with the electorate will enhance confidence in the process and the outcome of the elections

Establishing a network of community mobilizers can be highly effective, especially when literacy levels are low. However, these must be monitored to ensure information is disseminated correctly and in time.

In the case of Iraq OCV 2010, IFES worked closely with key OCV staff in the public outreach department to develop a series of materials to support the OCV operation. These materials included leaflets, banners, a website, newspaper ads, Facebook accounts, and an observer guide. These materials informed voters about voting dates and how and when to vote in each host country. IFES worked closely with the external relations department to develop the observer accreditation procedures.

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**Vasu Mohan**

*Regional Director, Asia-Pacific, IFES 1*

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# Political Participation and Extraterritoriality

From the political point of view, people are 'the voting group which has politicized itself (namely, has assumed decisory capacity), in other words, the electoral body'<sup>1</sup>. Thus the core of the concept of people is the bias of political participation.

As the Brazilian Constitution stipulates that 'all power emanates from the people, that exercises it through representatives or directly' (Article 1, sole paragraph), it enshrines popular sovereignty and the democratic principle. According to Gomes Canotilho such principle "hosts the most important postulates of representative democratic theory - representative bodies, periodic elections, party pluralism, separation of powers"<sup>2</sup>.

Naturally, not all people are entitled to take part in the political process. Going into the legal concept of people, Carlos Blanco de Moraes correlates the notion of people to the one of nationality<sup>3</sup>. Here we reach the first restriction of political participation: only nationals can take part in the political process. There are still other restrictions directly related to the enlistment and the right to vote such as minimum age to vote (16 years old) & to be voted for (18 years old or more depending on the intended office).

However, there are no participation restrictions related to territoriality. On the one hand, the sole circumstance of residing in Brazil or being in Brazilian territory does not entitle foreigners to participate in the political process. Although,

Brazilians occasionally staying abroad or even the ones who reside there are not excluded of the political process. Thus, there is no relationship between political participation and territoriality. Territoriality is relevant for the concept of population, which has a demographic bias, not for the concept of people, community of persons entitled to participate in the political decisions of the country. As Afonso Arinos puts it, 'people in legal sense is not the same as population in demographic sense. People is that part of the population which is capable to participate in the democratic process through elections, within a variable system of limits that depends on each country in each time'<sup>4</sup>.

## How is Brazil ensuring and promoting political participation of Brazilians overseas?

Considering the rule of compulsory voting<sup>5</sup>, Brazilians residing in Brazil but occasionally abroad, thus out of their electoral circumscription, should justify their absence. It may not sound like one, but it is also a political participation rule. As for Brazilians residing abroad one should distinguish between those who reside abroad and those who have their electoral domicile in the foreign country and those who reside abroad but maintain their electoral domicile in Brazil. This last situation is possible because of the traditional difference between residence and domicile. Although

<sup>1</sup> Paulo Bonavides, *Ciência Política*, p. 80.

<sup>2</sup> J. J. Gomes Canotilho, *Direito Constitucional e Teoria da Constituição*, p. 288.

<sup>3</sup> Carlos Blanco de Moraes, *O sistema político no contexto da erosão da democracia representativa*, p. 21.

<sup>4</sup> *Jornal do Brasil*, edition of August 22th 1963.

<sup>5</sup> As exception voting is facultative for analphabets, persons between 16 and 18 years old and persons over seventy years old.

Brazilian Electoral Code in its Article 42, sole paragraph, stipulates that 'domicile is the place of residence or housing', the Superior Electoral Court understands that electoral domicile is determined by the existence of political, social, affective, patrimonial or business bonds, and so domicile can differ from residence. Therefore, regarding Brazilians residing abroad but with electoral domicile in Brazil, such citizens can only vote within their electoral zone. If they are abroad then they should justify their absence just like Brazilians who are occasionally abroad.

Finally, as for Brazilians residing abroad, they are entitled to enlist or to transfer to the so called Overseas Electoral Zones, linked to Regional Electoral Court of Federal District (in Portuguese Tribunal Regional Eleitoral - TREDF). TRE-DF organizes elections overseas along with consulates and diplomatic missions. It is worth highlighting that such citizens are only entitled to vote for president and vice-president, and have no participation in the election of Councillors, Mayors, Governors, State and Federal Deputies and Senators.

The number of overseas electors enlistment and appearance at elections is increasing significantly. According to the Electoral Justice data, on the first round of the 2010 General Elections, around two hundred thousand overseas electors were able to vote; in 2014 such number reached more than three hundred and

fifty thousand. **In 2017 there were five hundred and seventy nine overseas electoral sections, a number that has almost doubled in 2014 when nine hundred and fifty four sections were totalised.**

Although the amount of absent electors is yet considerable the numbers also reveal that participation is increasing. In 2010 more than 55% of the overseas electors did not vote; this percentage was decreased to 40% in 2014.

The increasing political participation of Brazilian citizens with electoral domicile overseas points out that, despite of leaving national territory to reside around the world, Brazilians maintain an interest in the political course of their home country. This represents the maintenance of cultural bonds, of the 'idem sentire' that composes the core of the idea of nation, that extrapolates borders and the vicissitudes of life that nowadays make more than 3 million Brazilians live abroad.



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

**T**wenty-seven years ago this July, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) was signed into law. While this groundbreaking 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 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 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](http://www.eac.gov).*

*Photo Courtesy : <http://www.amsvans.com/blog/disability-law/wheelchair-accessibilitylaws/>*



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







# Moving Towards More Inclusive Electoral Frameworks

**W**ith this paper, rather than focusing on the inclusion of persons with disabilities, I would like to cover its contrasting angle: the electoral exclusion of a particularly vulnerable category of persons with disabilities.

Too often, basic and fundamental rights of these citizens are not given adequate consideration, or worse, they are largely neglected.

Today, most of the efforts supporting electoral inclusion, participation and access of persons with disabilities continue to focus primarily on addressing barriers relating to physical illnesses and disabilities of voters. These may include impairments to walk, stand up, see, write or hold the ballot paper, among several others.

While the electoral participation of these physically disabled voters is, and remains, a critical challenge to be addressed, I would like to take this opportunity to pay greater attention to the electoral exclusion faced by another equally vulnerable - and perhaps more marginalized - category of persons with disabilities: voters affected by mental and intellectual illnesses.

Mental illness is - at all effects - a serious form of disability and, therefore, voters affected by mental and intellectual illnesses should be regarded as persons with disabilities. Yet, today, the electoral inclusion of voters with mental illnesses continue not to receive equal levels of recognition and support to those provided to

physically disabled voters. Widespread, persisting and excessive restrictions to the electoral inclusion of these voters end up marginalizing even more this already socially stigmatised segment of every society.

Surprisingly, until now, little attention has been given (and continues to be given) to the serious obstacles of various nature limiting the electoral inclusion of voters affected by mental and intellectual illnesses.

I, myself, couldn't realize the extensive and systematic levels of exclusion these voters faced, until a decade ago, when through my work



## Expanding electoral inclusion to all Persons with Disabilities

### 3 broad categories/levels of severity:

- **mental disabilities**
- **cognitive and intellectual disabilities**
- **mental illnesses and psychiatric disabilities**
- **Not all mental illnesses necessarily impair the ability of a person to understand political issues, or make reasonable decisions and choices, when voting**

with International IDEA, I was involved in the reform process of the election law of a certain country.

My attention was attracted by one of the proposed "reforms" being tabled because it implied the introduction of new legal provisions that were designed to arbitrarily

disenfranchise voters affected by mental and intellectual illnesses. If introduced, these provisions would have disqualified those voters who, on election day, were 'clearly and publicly known as mentally ill' even if they had been "not declared to be mentally ill by a judicial body".

To put it plainly, the proposed "reform" would have empowered on election day polling station officials to revoke, on the spot, voting rights of otherwise fully eligible voters who 'clearly' appeared to them as mentally ill, or who they subjectively assumed to be 'publicly known' as mentally ill.

To complicate this matter even further, polling station officials could have revoked these voting rights in the absence of an ordinance of a judicial body and/or of the assessment of a qualified mental health professional or institution.

I am sure that everyone would agree that revoking the right to vote to any member of a society is a severe measure that cannot be – and shouldn't be – ever underestimated.

Voting exclusion based on mental and intellectual infirmity through disenfranchisement laws is a contentious issue, but it becomes even more controversial when its application is loosely defined in electoral legislation and when it is left open to interpretation – or misinterpretation, like in the case of the country that I have just described.

Luckily, this country was eventually dissuaded from introducing these questionable provisions, but this interesting and controversial case prompted me to look deeper into this critical issue and pose some fundamental questions:

- Why do mentally disabled voters have to be discriminated in the first place?
- Why should the vote of a mentally disabled person count less than that of a citizen in his or her full mental and intellectual capacities?

A starting point for my reflections was to consider not only the different types of mental

and intellectual infirmities that exist, but also the quite diverse impairing effects that these various forms of illnesses can have in the way in which a person reasons, communicates, behaves—or, in our case, votes.

Most commonly, mental infirmities can be grouped into three broad categories depending on their level of severity:

- Mental disabilities
- Cognitive and intellectual disabilities
- Mental illnesses and psychiatric disabilities

So, when dealing with mental and intellectual infirmity and voting rights, it is important to recognize that these infirmities can indeed cause intellectual, personal and social impediments. However, it is equally important to recognize that not all mental and intellectual illnesses necessarily impair the ability of a person to understand political issues, or make reasonable decisions and choices, when voting.

An unfortunate reality is that, today, in the wide majority of countries in the world, electoral frameworks still lay down significant normative and procedural barriers limiting the inclusion and equal participation in electoral processes of their mentally and intellectually disabled citizens.

In some cases, these barriers have been inherited from old and obsolete regulatory systems and were just left there, unquestioned and unchallenged.

In the United States, for example, the practice of revoking voting rights for people with mental and intellectual disabilities dates back to the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Legislators, when drafting and ratifying the earliest constitutions in the various states, opted to exclude "the idiot and insane" to ensure that the active electorate consisted only of those, in their view, capable of making informed and intelligent political decisions.

As I was deepening my research on this topic, I ran across a comparative analysis on "who has the right to vote" published, several years ago, in



an international journal dedicated to the study of elections. Examining electoral laws of 63 democratic countries, the analysis concluded that, at that time, there were only 4 countries (namely Canada, Ireland, Italy and Sweden) that were placing no restrictions at the national level on the right to vote for persons affected by mental and intellectual disabilities. While in recent years these figures may have changed, it is interesting to note that not so long ago as many as 59 out of 63 countries disenfranchised their voters affected by mental and intellectual illnesses. Why so?

A common justification for the adoption of exclusionary provisions is that voters with mental and intellectual disabilities are (or may be) incapable of understanding the electoral process, its mechanisms and the political issues at a stake, well enough to express an informed vote.

Yet, this statement can be challenged by arguing that now a days in many consolidated democracies wide numbers of voters, who are not affected by any mental and intellectual disability, regularly cast their votes without being minimally informed. These voters may know nothing - or very little - about the process, mechanisms and the social and political issues at a stake in an election, yet, they are freely allowed to vote.

One may ask, then, whether it is fully justifiable that mentally and intellectually "healthy" voters are free to exercise their voting right, while mentally and intellectually disabled voters are instead systematically and legally discriminated?

Another common justification for the adoption of exclusionary provisions preventing persons affected by mental and intellectual disabilities from voting is that they are (or may be) particularly vulnerable, when voting, to undue influence and manipulation by unscrupulous individuals.

Then, one may also ask whether voters affected by mental and intellectual illnesses are the only

group vulnerable to undue influence? With the illicit practice of vote buying on the rise globally, my instinct would be to say no, this simplistic assumption couldn't certainly justify the severe measure of revoking the fundamental voting rights of these citizens.

In addition, even if these voters were indeed particularly vulnerable to undue influence and manipulation, why punishing them? They have to be considered as the victims and certainly not as the perpetrators of such an illicit practice. Shouldn't those exerting undue influence on these vulnerable voters be punished instead?

More attention should be also given to the fact that the 'harm' to the integrity and the legitimacy of an election that could made by the presumably non-informed vote of quite reduced numbers of mentally and intellectually disabled voters is certainly minimal.

Furthermore, it also needs to be considered the fact that the more serious the mental illness is, the less would be the chances that a mentally and intellectually disabled voter would be interested (or even be physically able) to vote and appear in person at a polling station.

As long as the majority of countries worldwide continue to exclude the mentally and intellectually disabled from electoral processes, political parties and candidates will continue to have no incentives in pursuing issues, protecting the interests and advancing policies that are relevant to this vulnerable category of citizens.

With voter participation steadily declining throughout the world, every single vote counts even more. Therefore, excessive legal restrictions on voter participation, while global trends instead confirm its steady decline, seem a quite illogical measure that the various countries still practicing this obsolete form of legalised disenfranchisement should consider more objectively and attentively.

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**Antonio Spinelli**  
*Head of Mission, Nepal & South Asia*  
 International IDEA





## Enhancing Participation of Special Groups of Voters

The Iraqi election law is keen on the inclusion of all Iraqi voters in the electoral process. The commission, since its inception in 2004, is keen to apply the law and take special measures for ensuring the right to vote to all voter categories. There are certain categories of Iraqi voters abroad like representatives of the diplomatic corps. There are also voters like the Iraqi security forces, the patients and staff in hospitals, the security personnel in the prison as well as the guests of the Iraqi prison terms of less than 5 years. The concern of the law is to provide voting rights for all these kinds of groups on the basis of the constitutional rights granted by the constitution, which was by referendum in 2005 for the need for all Iraqis to enjoy the same basic freedoms.

The Commission, in addition to setting the timetable for elections and the development of the technical details of the electoral process, is educating voters in general on how to exercise their electoral right properly.

### Inclusion of Iraqi voters abroad

In accordance with Iraqi election law, the Commission has developed procedures to ensure the right to vote for the Iraqis abroad in the parliamentary elections. In 2005, the Commission did not have the detailed and accurate information about the number of Iraqis abroad. But later years of 2010, it requested the assistance of the Organization (IOM) for the election procedure abroad. In 2014, IHEC made Iraqi employees abroad to vote from different countries of the world through conduct of elections abroad amounted to Iraqis voting from twenty countries. For the staff on diplomatic missions, the voting was conducted in the same polling stations where votes were cast by Iraqis abroad and outside the buildings, embassies and

consulates chosen by the Commission. IHEC is developing an integrated educational program to educate voters abroad on how to exercise the voting process to ensure they vote properly.

### Inclusion of Iraqi security forces

Iraqi law allows the Iraqi security forces to vote, and the voting process for them is conducted two days before the day of election. While the security forces of the army and police vote in special centers, but the process of counting for this category takes place later when the process of counting the public vote is conducted. The Commission is also interested in an elaborate scheme to educate security forces around the polling station on voting. In order to secure their votes image the plan includes, lectures to members of the security forces and the distribution of publications and posters in addition to advertising on satellite channels.



Security Personnel Casting their Vote





**Security Personnel Casting their Vote**



**Special Voting arrangements for patients**



**Special Voting arrangements for staff at hospitals**

### Special Voting facilities for the staff and patients in medical hospitals

The law also authorizes for the patients in hospitals and the doctors, nurses and personnel working in hospitals to vote in elections where IHEC takes special measures for them to cast their vote on the same day as the vote of security forces, and also the Commission is keen to prepare an educational plan for this segment in



order for them to have good knowledge on how to vote at the special voting centres.

### **Voting Arrangements for the staff and security personnel working in prisons and inmates**

The law of election rule also states that the inmates sentenced for in less than 5 years are eligible to vote in the elections in addition to security personnel working in prisons where IHEC has developed special procedures for them to vote on the same day as the vote of security forces, two days before from the day of the public vote.

### **Voting by staff working at the polling stations**

The staff which has been assigned to management centres at the polling stations vote in the same centers where they work according to a private set by the electoral governance mechanism. In fact they cast their votes at the beginning of opening polling stations and then allow voters to vote so that it does not affect their work for the management of the centres and the stations' electoral process on the polling day.



**Iraq: Votes cast by the staff engaged with management of elections**





## The plan for educating the voters of these categories by the election administration

We mentioned that the law of the Iraqi election allowed the voting rights to these categories. IHEC believes that the legal right alone is not enough. The voter must have detailed knowledge of all the instructions for the electoral process in order to ensure the voting is done properly and for maintaining the voting electorate. So IHEC has put smart plan for the voter education process for these categories through several measures like taking direct

educational lectures, advertisements in satellite channels, publications and educational posters, advertisements on roads and others.

To ensure the plans yield best results, IHEC, through election educational institute in Iraq has held several technical workshops with the diplomatic staff as well as for the staff working in the field of elections, and also representatives of various civil society organizations, as well as agents and representatives of political parties. The Commission believes that 'Candidates in the elections and the electoral process as well as all partners' must be well informed on all details of the electoral process in order to vote the right way.

Iraq today is a democratic country since 2003. To some extent the Iraqi administration electoral held more than 10 large electoral processes, including the referendum process to the Iraqi constitution in 2005 which has gained Iraqi Leasing electoral accumulated expertise in the field of labor in the elections, where the United Nations High Commissioner body provided technical support and training to Iraqi staffs at the inception. These staffs have gained experience through continuous work in holding the elections. Today, the Iraqi electoral administration represents a model of professional administration in the Arab region. It has the oldest electoral administration in the Arab region and has great staff with extensive experience in the field of work as well as in the field of education .It has built electoral capacity through electoral education institute of the Iraqi electoral administration.

It is worth mentioning that this status enjoyed by the Iraqi electoral administration has been based on the involvement with the rest of the electoral departments in the Arab resistance spot, with the support of the program by UNDP and the Arab Organization for Electoral Administration, which today comprises 10 Arab countries as a professional establishment for technical cooperation and exchange of experiences between the electoral departments in the Arab region as well as the cooperation between the organization and other like organizations in the world.

*Safaa Ibrahim Jasim*  
Commissioner, IHEC





# Participation of the Public Force and Integral Security in Electoral Processes

In Ecuador, democratic aspects and values bind together electoral institutions with the public force. This contributes to a society that has the effective guarantees for its right to vote. In this regard, this article aims to analyze the actions of the National Electoral Council (CNE) from the following considerations: first, regarding the institutional actions undertaken together with the Armed Forces and the National Police; and second, about the elements oriented to the integral security in every phase of the electoral processes.

It is important to mention that according to Article 11 of the Organic Law on Elections and Political Organizations - Code of Democracy (2009), voting shall be mandatory for Ecuadorians over 18 years of age, including people deprived of their liberty without a final judgement of conviction. Likewise, it establishes that voting shall be optional for people between sixteen and seventeen years ago, elderly persons over the age of sixty-five years, Ecuadorians living abroad, members of the Armed Forces and National Police in active service, persons with disabilities and illiterate people. Additionally, it determines that voting shall be optional for foreigners over sixteen years of age who have legally resided in the country for at least five years, and are registered in the Electoral register.

In order to accomplish the exercise of the right to vote, the CNE promoted a process of delivery of credentials to the members of the Armed

Forces and the National Police. The purpose of this initiative was that all the personnel of these institutions could exercise their right to voluntary vote from wherever they are on the Election Day, given that, due to their functions, they may be fulfilling activities in different parts of the territory and not precisely in the polling station corresponding to their registry and electoral domicile. Regarding the integrality of electoral processes, the electoral institution had at its disposal the National Security Plan, whose objective was to provide integral physical security to the electoral process 2017, and thus guarantee the sovereign will of the citizenry in the exercise of their political-electoral rights. Its purposes were the following: to coordinate the implementation of integral security before,





during and after the General Elections 2017 with those entities of the public sector involved in the electoral process; to implement security devices in the facilities of the CNE nationwide, as well as in the transportation and custody of the electoral package; and to provide custody and security to the Centers for Processing of Results and the Electoral precincts.

In the specific case of the installation of the security desk, not only it fulfils the principles of our public responsibilities, but also responds to the citizens' demands for security during an electoral process. In its composition, this Security Desk is a temporary body that seeks to coordinate every entity of the public sector participating directly or indirectly in the electoral processes, for the purpose of monitoring and supporting, in a de-concentrated manner, the activities that may be required in each province of the country. Its operations entails the strategic distribution of officials and equipment of each ministry at a national level, in order to, if necessary, activate contingency plans and solve any emergency that may arise throughout the national territory before, during and after the electoral process, and in the most appropriate times.

Specifically, the security desk is composed of the Ministry of National Defense, Ministry of Interior, Coordinator Ministry of Security, Integrated System ECU 911, National Secretary of Risk Management, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Sports, Ministry of Electricity and Renewable Energy, Ministry of Transport and Public Works, National Transit Agency, and the corresponding institutions in the provinces, according to their competencies. The coordination of actions is one of the principles of public administration; it constitutes a service to the common welfare, Just like efficacy, efficiency, quality, hierarchical structure, de-concentration, decentralization, participation, planning, transparency and evaluation, as established in Article 227 of the



Constitution of the Republic of Ecuador.

In this important context, I would like to refer to the President of the National Electoral Institute of Mexico, Lorenzo Córdova Vianello, during the opening ceremony of the 2015 Inter American Course on Elections and Democracy, with the subject 'Democracy and violence: from old to new challenges in Latin America'. Precisely, he alluded to how throughout the time, and depending on the contexts, legislators, authorities and electoral expert have modified their main preoccupations and modified their main preoccupations and priorities in the democratic domains. He traversed an interesting path, because, at the beginning, the weaknesses of the still emerging democracies, and the incipient electoral competition, were related to authoritarian regressions, and even to the processes of legality around the procedures in elections. This affected equally to the guarantees related to the importance of vote equality and the citizenry's political participation. In every case, he tended to think freedoms and securities in an integral manner.

In this regard, it is important to use these spaces not only to refer to the normative competencies we have in our institutions, but also to the responsibility we take as citizens to



unconditionally respect the will of the people. As electoral authorities, we are interested in debating and working effectively in the security of electoral processes, and this implies that even if the regional and Ecuadorian democracies have managed to consolidate fundamental rights for the exercise of suffrage, there are still challenges we have to face for the purpose of establishing fair and secure conditions.

From the institution, we understand the integrality of electoral planning by means of such an important space like the Security Desk, in order to guarantee the fundamental rights of the citizens and of every actor of the politicalelectoral system. On this matter, we highlight the importance of an effective coordination between entities and branches of the government that, from their own competencies and attributions, contributed to the integral security in every phase of the

process: preelectoral, electoral and post-electoral. This included the security in the transportation and custody of the electoral package and technical kit, as well as the custody and security they provided to the Centers for Processing of Results and the Electoral Precincts.



We considered that it was fundamental to have a contingency plan in every stage, considering levels in risk management that allow us to make decisions at a decentralized level in the electoral stage, which allowed us, together with society and other entities, to optimally respond, given the case, to natural disasters, considering the expertise of the National Secretary of Risk Management. In this context, we underline the work done in the Ecuadorian provinces affected by the earthquake of April 16, 2016, since they did not have one single delay in the planning of the General Elections 2017. The actions we have promoted contribute to the decision of the Ecuadorian people, since the basis of the elections was an absolutely technical and transparent process, essential requirement to keep up with the quality of democracy Ecuador demands.

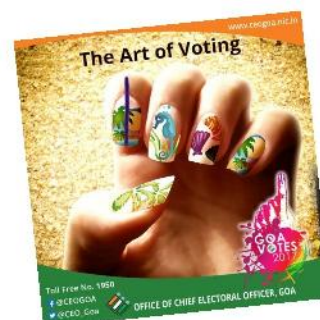


**Juan Pablo Pozo Bahamonde**  
Chairman of the National Electoral Council  
Ecuador





## Facilitating women's electoral participation: SVEEP in India



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

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

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

Under SVEEP, every Indian is seen as a voter, if too young to be a current voter then a prospective one. Every Indian is also seen as a partner in the exercise of voter education.

A targeted approach is adopted towards meeting the various gaps in registration and voting besides spreading awareness about informed, un-intimidated and inducement free voting under the broader framework of civic education.

### Planning Interventions

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

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

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

### Information, Motivation & Facilitation

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

### National Elections for Lok Sabha 2014

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



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

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

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

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

### Mothers take the lead in Reasi, Jammu & Kashmir

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

### Mother Daughter Conversation

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

"Dear mother, don't stop me, I will go to vote  
Listen daughter, I will not send you outside  
Stay at home and work, I will not send you outside

Dear mother, your aunts would go to vote  
Your old grandmother will go to vote  
Listen daughter, I will not send you outside  
Stay at home and work, I will not send you outside  
Dear mother,

Listen to me, pay attention; I have got my voter slip

My name is in the rolls and I am a voter

"Dear daughter, how can you be a voter without being married?

Dear mother, I am eighteen years old, my name is in the voter list, the Tehsildar came to school and showed us the voter list

I will take everyone with me to vote

I will perform my duty

Dear daughter, thanks for enlightening me, I will vote and make sure you vote too."



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

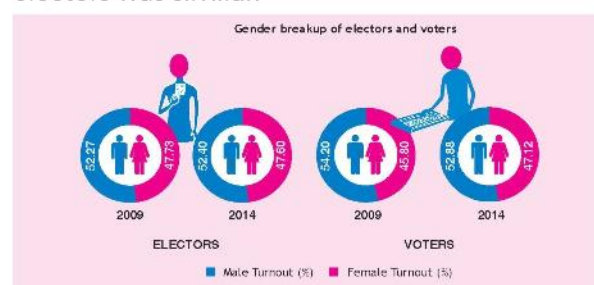
### Outcome

As per the electoral data of the final publication of Summary Revision 2014, male electors constituted 52.4%, female electors 47.6% and electors belonging to the "Others" category constituted 0.0035% of the total electorate.

Among the 28 States and 7 union territories, in 8 States/UTs<sup>2</sup> the number of female electors exceeded that of male electors.

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

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



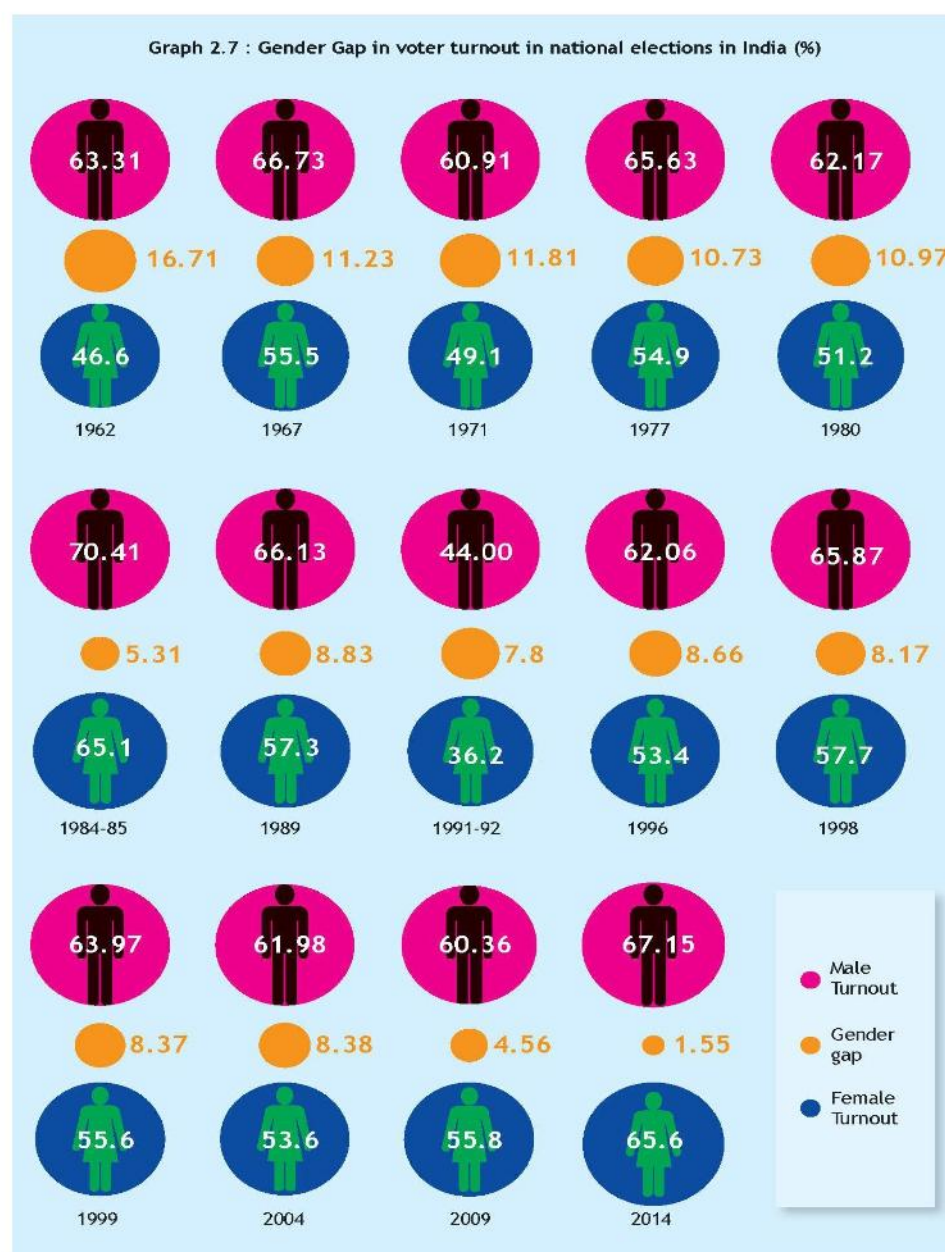
<sup>1</sup>The Electoral Roll with which the country went to polls had 834,209,839\* of which 396,650,344 were women electors.

(\*includes Service electors who are generally not identified separately as Male/Female.).

<sup>2</sup>Arunachal Pradesh, Goa, Kerala, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Tripura and Puduchery.

As many as 16 States/UTs<sup>3</sup> recorded higher women turnout in 2014, as against six States/UTs in 2009 polls. Of these, 9 States/UTs<sup>4</sup> saw higher women turnout percentage than men for the first time in Lok Sabha election history. Also LS 2014 saw higher women voter increase than women electorate increase over 2009.

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



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

<sup>4</sup> Bihar, Punjab, Uttarakhand, Odisha, Goa, Sikkim, Arunachal Pradesh, Chandigarh and Puducherry



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

## Recent Initiatives

### All Women managed Polling Stations

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

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

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

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

### Women Mascots

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



message in an easy and relatable manner.

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

### Reaching out to Third Gender

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

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

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

### The Road Ahead

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





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

and the next earning in terms of participation is not coming easy. This is the latest experience from states which registered high increase in women's turnout immediately after SVEEP was

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

Engaging with future voters through electoral literacy in curricular and extra-curricular has now emerged as one of the focus areas and Election Commission of India now aspires for complete and enlightened participation in coming years.



**Padma Angmo**  
Director  
Election Commission of India



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



*Manipur State Assembly Elections, 2017*



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





## Role in Voter Education for Enhanced Participation of Women

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

With the objective of promoting gender equality in electoral processes UNDP and UN Women have jointly produced a guide 'Inclusive Electoral Processes: A Guide for Electoral Management Bodies on Promoting Gender Equality and Women's Participation'. This guide focuses attention on the role of electoral management bodies in encouraging the participation of women across various points in the electoral cycle. The Guide highlights the important work being carried out by the UN and by EMBs, offering concrete examples of steps that can be taken to remove remaining



barriers that continue to affect women's participation in electoral processes. The guide is available at <http://www.undp.org> in Arabic, English, French, Romanian, Russian, Spanish and Vietnamese. It shares strategies to mainstream gender equality within the organizational structure of EMBs (to ensure women participate at all levels of decision-making; data collected is disaggregated by sex; that the organization formalizes its commitment to gender equality through a gender policy) and in the organization and administration of the election by the EMB (voter education and outreach; candidate and voter registration processes; ensuring all voters are able to securely access a polling station).

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



In Kyrgyzstan UNDP is supporting a project "Women as Peaceful Voters: Women as Candidates" which aims at strengthening the capacities of women candidates and women voters. The "Follow your Voice!" information campaign had been developed for the 2015 parliamentary elections in Kyrgyzstan and aimed at drawing attention to the issue of women's participation in the electoral process and increase awareness of the importance of women's political participation. The campaign had been conducted by a network of nongovernmental organizations of Kyrgyzstan with support from the UNDP/UNICEF project "Women as Peaceful Voters and Women as Candidates". As a result, more than 250 women registered for local parliaments and around 100 women were nominated as candidates.

In Haiti the UNDP project "Support to the Electoral Cycle Project in Haiti" aims at strengthening the capacities of the institutions involved in the organization of elections, to contribute to the organization of presidential, legislative, municipal and local elections according to the electoral calendar and in a free, transparent, credible and inclusive manner. One important component of the project is the support to the participation of youth and women in the electoral process, which is reflected in its main lines of work:

- (i) support to civic and electoral education through empowering and strengthening the capacities of youth and women networks;
- (ii) support to the participation of women candidates;
- (iii) awareness-raising around violence against women and safety measures;
- (iv) an information/communication campaign about civic and electoral education by national media;
- (v) electoral data segregation by gender;



(vi) training and capacity building to the EMB staff. As a result more than 1,000 people from civil society organizations have been trained on civic education techniques and 300 volunteers were trained to conduct civic education that reached around 35,000 people (UN Women); around 106,000 people were reached through the civic education actions of 150 'Volunteer Replicators of Democracy and Citizenship.'

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

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



**Sumeeta Banerji**  
Assistant Country Director &  
Head Democratic Governance  
UNDP





# Empowering Youth and Democracy in Bhutan

**D**emocracy 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 function 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.

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 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 15<sup>th</sup> of September every year is another way employed by Democracy Clubs to involve



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

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 responsibilities in a democratic society. The day's key highlight is the message delivered by the 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 enthruse 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 (BCPNC) are elected members from democracy club members from a constituency and district (Dzongkhag) respectively. The BCPNA 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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# Educating Young Voters in Lesotho

**E**lections in African context had been viewed with a moment of madness and a season of contentions curses. Most of them named with violence and arbitrating a case no different from the Kingdom Of Lesotho. This piece seeks to highlight some of the measures taken by Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) of Lesotho and its local partners in addressing the most causes of their problem.

Voter's knowledge levels on engaging people and their right to participate in civic life has arguably been the major cause of violence in the period coming to and ending elections.

Voter education which is now known as electoral education is a process of involving electorate in the electoral processes through persuasive and effective communication. This process provides key factual information regarding electoral law, procedures and other important responsibilities of electors. It serves to help people understand all important steps in the voting process. Equally important, it dismisses misconceptions about different electoral processes. It also mobilizes people to participate in peaceful electoral activities and to also make sure. Not only is the Independent Electoral Commission of Lesotho responsible for voter/electoral education, but other stakeholders in elections have the responsibilities to educate people about electoral law, encourage them to participate and ensure elections that are free of choice, free from any form of coercion and intimidation.

These stakeholders include Political Parties, Civil Organization Societies, Media, Church Leaders, Chiefs and other Community Leaders.

Following were the activities organised ;

## Tertiary Institutions

With this activity, the voter education was delivered to young women and men in the tertiary institutions. This was done in forms of one on one where an electoral educator would hold a session with one tertiary student and pass the message of voter education, or in a group discussion where one or more educators address a group of tertiary institution in one session still delivering the same message of encouragement to vote.

## 'My Vote My Score' Tournament

Voter education being past in a tournament were the participants were given the message before games could start in the team talk by the voter educators taking part in the event. These tournament saw young people competing against each other in volleyball and soccer sporting codes and the theme was explained to them. Scoring in any sporting event is very significant, very valuable, it signifies



*Schools competing in a volleyball match*





*Celebrations after a soccer match*



*The Bacha Re Bacha Soccer Team at 'My Vote My Score' Tournament*



*Tsikoane High School team*

the person as a winner, in the same respect exercising one's right to vote means taking a significant step towards becoming a responsible citizen, one who participates in decision making, and this is equivalent to scoring.

### Open Air Street Rap

This is an open air street theatre on voter education. It targeted young people on streets,

there were rappers who competed against each other in a form of a mock session where each was given time to rap. This was done after these young people were educated on issues of voting, the processes and the importance of exercising their right to vote as valued Basotho Citizens. When given the stage, a contestant was to freestyle and rap with anything they had learned from that day's agenda of voter education and the winner was awarded a prize.



*Rappers who took part in the open theatre session*

### Small Group Discussions

With this activity, voter Educators held a discussion on Electorate Education having a group of people ranging from 10 to 20. In this group the voters were also shown the importance of taking part in elections in the

country, registered voters were encouraged to exercise their voting right, non registered people were encouraged to register with the Independent Electoral Commission and hence take part in the voting process.

*Independent Electoral Commission  
Lesotho*



*Small group discussions that were held during voter education in different constituencies*





## Maharashtra celebrates Third Gender Day

Inspired by the success of International Women's Day which was celebrated on March 08, 2017 to create awareness among women, Ashwani Kumar, Chief Electoral Officer Maharashtra, decided to celebrate 'Third Gender Day' to create awareness among this marginalized community about their electoral rights on April 15. Since the landmark judgment on recognition to third genders was delivered on April 15, 2014 by Supreme Court of India, it has become a historical day for the Third Genders (TGs).

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

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

### State to observe third gender day

Mumbai | Sona Shrivastava

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

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



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

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

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

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

publicity campaign was chalked out for the forthcoming week (April 14 - April 21, 2017).

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

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







## Southeast Asia Regional Disability Rights Plan – A Training by AGENDA

The International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) had founded a range of Disabled People's Organizations (DPO) and Civil Society Organizations (CSO) in Southeast Asia in 2011. Training for these DPOs and CSOs from 8 ASEAN countries was organised from November 01-04, 2018 which was conducted by General Election Network for Disability Access (AGENDA) and focused on the key issues of electoral management and participation and inclusion of Persons with Disabilities.

The practical training equipped participants with tools for advocacy and strategic

communication plans were developed to get government stakeholders to spread this message at regional levels. The focus was on mainstreaming the rights of persons with disabilities and The international nature of this training platform allowed for exchange of advocacy methods among Indonesia, Cambodia, Myanmar, Malaysia, Thailand and the Philippines. Persons with disabilities across the ASEAN community were empowered and equipped with tools required to advocate, plan and implement strategic plans to counter the exclusion of persons with disabilities.

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



## ASEAN Convenes a Dialogue on Rights of People with Disabilities

The ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR) convened a conference on the rights of people with disabilities in Bangkok. The event was held from December 3 to December 5, 2018 with special focus on the theme of



'Accessibility through Universal Design' by Dr Seree Nonthasooth, the representative of Thailand to the AICHR with support from Japan-ASEAN Integration fund and the Australian government. This was the fourth annual dialogue which was conducted with a vision to further nourish the rights of the disabled in all community pillars of the ASEAN community.

The event saw the participation of ASEAN sectoral bodies, government officials, organisations of persons with disabilities, national human rights institutions and experts on disability rights. The dialogue also highlighted the need for empowering persons with disabilities to understand and exercise their rights.

Source: <https://asean.org>





## Ambassador of Republic of Turkey H.E. Haldun Koc visits the BiH Central Election Commission

Ambassador of Republic of Turkey H.E. Haldun Koc visited the Bosnia and Herzegovina Central Election Commission on December 19, 2018 and met with the president and members of the BiH Central Election Commission.

The main topic of the meeting was continuation of cooperation between the BiH Central Election Commission and the Supreme Electoral Council of the Republic of Turkey. The cooperation was established in 2015 when a Memorandum of Understanding between the BiH CEC and the Supreme Electoral Council of the Republic of Turkey was signed. The main



goal of cooperation between the election management bodies is exchange of experience and improvement of electoral process. **Source:** <http://www.izbori.ba>



## The Democratic Republic of Congo conducts its General Elections

The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) conducted its general elections on December 23, 2018. The results were published on January 09, 2019 and the president took an oath on January 13, 2019.

The Congolese government said they couldn't hold the vote on time because they could not afford \$1.8bn bill needed for the elections. Furthermore the elections were conducted nationwide, except three cities which are expected to vote in March 2019.

The election, originally scheduled for late 2016,

had been repeatedly delayed. These delays have triggered unrest and raised fears that the central African nation could slip back into the conflicts that killed millions around the turn of the century, mostly from hunger and disease.

Twenty-one presidential candidates have been approved for the single-round contest. Voters will also cast their ballots for 34,900 candidates running for 500 national and 715 provincial seats. More than 46 million people are registered to vote.

**Source:** <https://www.globalsecurity.org>



## IFES conducted Sensitisation Training session for OBEC Officials

**B**ougainville's approach to its upcoming elections seems all-inclusive. By establishing an agreement with the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES), Bougainville is attempting to educate its citizens regarding inclusive elections. Two main methods have been covered below.

The Office of Bougainville Electoral Commissioner (OBEC) along with IFES is aiming to build a credible and inclusive electoral process. In order to facilitate a smooth referendum, IFES collaborated with CSOs in order to promote women's participation in the electoral process. Gender focused strategies are one of the key strategies followed to make elections inclusive. IFES will continue to work with OBEC in order to create a gender equality and social inclusivity policy to further women and transgender involvement in electoral politics. A skill enhancing training was conducted by IFES on social cohesion, gender

equality, strategic communication and financial management.

Training for OBEC was conducted on November 14, 2018 by IFES. The interactive session addressed disability rights, problems of inclusive participation and its solutions, environmental and institutional barriers throughout the electoral cycle, mainstreaming disability and attitudinal communication. Solutions were drawn to advance inclusivity via legal and electoral framework, voter registration, voter education and awareness. The participants included disability rights advocates and OBEC officials. This was OBEC's first strategic plan. Thus, the IFES-OBEC collaboration resulted in the addressing of key issues and, the over-all betterment of society. More focus is being given to data collection on people with disabilities to ensure that they can be registered as voters.

Source: [www.ifes.org](http://www.ifes.org)



*Participants discussing strategies to engage persons with disabilities in the election campaign*





## Chief Electoral Officer of Canada promotes Civic Education Resource

**S**téphane Perrault, Chief Electoral Officer of Canada joined a Grade 10 history class on November 30, 2018, to explore a resource called Voting Rights through Time. The class was conducted through case studies; this resource focused on issues of inclusion in Canada's democracy.

"I enjoy having opportunities to join students in the classroom to explore elections Canada's brand new civic education resources. Engaging students on civic participation and voting in elections is an important issue for us. We know that young Canadians who vote in the first election they are eligible for are likely to be lifelong voters," said CEO of Canada.



Source: <http://nationtalk.ca>

## CNE promotes mechanisms to eradicate gender-based violence



**W**omen, Rurality and Democracy" is the framework of the project that was executed by the National Electoral Council (CNE) of Ecuador on November 18, 2018. The project presented the results and commitments for the eradication of the political violence based on gender in order to strengthen the Ecuadorian democratic system. More than a thousand people were involved in the process of systematizing the experiences of women who have participated, or aspire to participate, in the political life of Ecuador. It is remarkable to note that more than 60% of the people who were involved were women. In this act, the Framework Agreement for Inter-institutional Cooperation was signed between the National Electoral Council, the Institute of Democracy and the

Council for Gender Equality. In addition, the Work Plan was signed between the participating institutions and the United Nations Organization - UN Women.

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





## Meeting Regarding Ethnic Minority Issues at CEC

The Central Election Commission (CEC) of Georgia hosted a meeting of the permanent working group on ethnic minority issues. Senior officials of the CEC and its Training Centre, representatives of the Office of State Minister for Reconciliation and Civic Equality of Georgia, representatives of international and domestic NGOs attended the meeting held on December 18, 2018.

The chairperson of the CEC, Tamar Zhvani, opened the meeting by mentioning the activities executed by the CEC in 2018 to closely engage ethnic minorities with the electoral process. The chairperson stated that the solutions to their problems would be more effective if the recommendations of other sectors were also incorporated.

The Head of the CEC Coordination, Planning and Reporting Department, Sophio Sitchinava, lay special emphasis on the language barrier



being an obstacle on the path to ethnic minority women's engagement and awareness of the electoral process. Participants of the meeting had a shared belief that voter awareness and the implementation of education projects in the process were both very crucial.

Source: <http://cesko.ge>



## A guide to support Women with Disabilities

The International foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) and the National Elections Commission of Liberia (NEC) Gender Section, with the support of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) produced a new guide to support the integration of women with disabilities at the NEC and its programming. Strategies for engaging women with disabilities throughout the electoral cycle included ideas for inclusive strategic planning, voter registration, voter education, and other parts of the electoral process. The guide also includes good practice examples from the NEC Gender Section which will empower women



and persons with disabilities to fully participate in the electoral processes.

Source: [www.ifes.org](http://www.ifes.org)





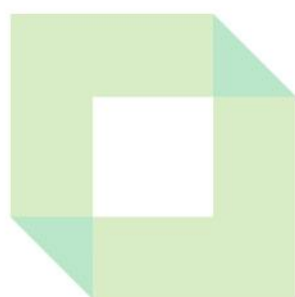
## Meeting of Working Group for Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Electoral Participation

A meeting of the permanent members of the working group on Persons with Disabilities (PwDs) was held at the Central Election Commission (CEC) of Georgia on December 17, 2018. Tamar Zhvania, Chairperson of the CEC, opened the meeting and thanked the members of the group for their support and engagement in the electoral process. The CEC Chairperson deliberate on the challenges remaining in the inclusion of PwDs in the electoral process. The Chairperson stressed on the need to realise the suffrage of PwDs and said that the CEC will use all the available leverage to achieve this goal. In the

meeting, Giorgi Sharabidze, CEC's deputy Chairperson spoke about the vital need to initiate legislative amendments to boost PwDs' engagement in the electoral process. The Chairperson underpinned the need to approach the issue from a several angels and also emphasised how crucial coordination between agencies would be. Sophio Sitchinava, Head of Coordination, Planning and Reporting Department of the CEC highlighted the necessity of large-scale PR campaign to realize electoral rights of PwDs.

Members of group who were part of civil society organisations thanked the CEC Management for the activities they had executed to bolster the inclusion of PwDs in the electoral process. Furthermore these members also presented their recommendations which were aimed at furthering PwDs' involvement in the electoral process. The CEC members will discuss these recommendations when the 2019 action plan will be developed.

Source: <http://cesko.ge>



**CEC**  
ELECTION ADMINISTRATION  
OF GEORGIA



## IEBC to meet political parties on Gender Rule Compliance

In its attempt to further the cause for gender equality, the Independent Elections and Boundaries Commission (IEBC) intend to meet political parties of Kenya and the Office of Registrar of Political Parties (ORPP) to discuss compliance with the Court ruling in the Katiba Institute Petition. The court ordered on April 20, 2017 that political parties are bound by the provisions of the constitution and all actions taken by them in the nomination process must be in compliance with the prescribed requirements. IEBC is obliged to maintain that political parties comply with the norms set by the court. If political party nominations do not comply with the gender rule, the IEBC is by principle required to reject any nomination of a political party if they are not in tandem with the requirements of the constitution. The court also ruled that political parties are required to maintain the two-third gender rule and create their own rules and regulations to further it. The makers of the constitution did not want one gender to be overly represented in the parliament. In order to counter this, they



provided for a stipulation that the National Assembly and the Senate should not have more than two thirds representation of one particular gender. This provision had not been adhered to and recently the Kenyan Supreme Court in 2017 laid down directives for the implementation of the constitutional requirement.

The court ruling was regarding gender parity in the nomination process of candidates contesting elections and the primary objective of the meeting organised by the IEBC is to engage key stakeholders of the election process in the two-third gender principle.

## Electoral Commission Celebrates Suffrage 125



Women's suffrage was hard fought for and on the November 28, 1893, New Zealand women joined men at the polls for the first time to vote in a General Election, says Chief Electoral Officer, Alicia Wright.

Wright said that it is easy to take universal suffrage for granted in New Zealand where almost all citizens who are 18 years or older are eligible to vote.

"Suffrage 125 is a time to celebrate not only the fact that women in New Zealand were the first to win the vote, but that we continue to have

universal suffrage, where we have the right to vote and the right to be heard," says Wright.

The Electoral Commission of New Zealand marked Suffrage 125 with a string of videos rejoicing the suffragists' accomplishments 125 years ago and analysing the meaning of suffrage in 2018.

The Commission is also developing a series of Suffrage 125 postcards and will also be promoting its Votes for Women teaching resources in schools to augment lessons about suffrage and participation in classrooms.

Source: <https://www.elections.org.nz>



## Hassle Free Elections in Philadelphia

In its mission to make polling locations easy to get to, Philadelphia has 1693 divisions in 66 wards with 829 polling booths all around the city. Al Schmidt, City Commissioner claims that it is their aim to avoid lines as much as possible and to keep polling places as close to people's homes as possible.

For those with physical disabilities, Uber and Lyft offer free or discounted rides to polling location and Indego offers free day passes on its bicycles to help voters get to the polling booths on Election Day.

In order to make booths more accessible, Churches and community centres are common locations for establishing polling booths. Philadelphia's list of polling locations for its 2018 elections included Lee's Hoagie House, the

Mummer's Museum, the Painted Bride, auto-repair garages, people's home garages, barber shops and salons, restaurants and cafes, a yoga studio and offices.

If the polling place cannot be made wheel-chair accessible, it is shifted to a neighbouring division or to a location which is more accessible.

Source: <http://www.philly.com>



*Voters line-up outside a café*

## Community Life & Citizenship : A Symposium by KOCEI



REPUBLIC OF KOREA  
NATIONAL ELECTION  
COMMISSION

The 14<sup>th</sup> International Symposium on Civic Education for Democracy was held on November 02, 2018 by the Korean Civic Education Institute for Democracy (KOCEI). 150 domestic and international stakeholders promoted international exchange and support in the field of civic education for democracy. This international symposium has been held every year since 2005 to look at major

international issues in the field of civic education for democracy along with ways to develop global democracy. This year's symposium was held together with the "2018 Voter Political Festival".

Domestic and international experts, including those from Germany and Sweden, attended the symposium. In-depth discussions were also held to suggest directions for future civic education democracy in Korea.

The KOCEI said that it would strive to contribute to the development of civic education and democratic politics by analysing several examples and impacts of other advanced democratic countries discussed in the symposium.

Source: <http://www.nec.go.kr>





## The Students' Parliament Program of Sri Lanka

As part of its four year plan, the Election Commission of Sri Lanka has created a Students' Parliament whose main objective is to provide students with practical understanding and knowledge of a democracy and its practices.

The Election Commission of Sri Lanka along with the Education Ministry aim to involve students in the act of nation building by imparting civic education. In order to do so, students representatives will be elected to the Students' Parliament by calling for nominations, conducting an election, counting of votes and the election of the new representative to the Students' Parliament.

The main objective of this initiative is to inculcate the value of active engagement within the youth by imparting to them experiential knowledge of democratic practices. The nation-wide platform provides students with the opportunity to reach a consensus on problems pertaining to national



*The Students' Parliament*

education. This involves the students directly in the process of nation building and regional development while developing leadership skills of the students. The program is based on an experiential model and promotes theoretical knowledge as well as practical skills apart from ensuring that students adopt the roles of becoming responsible citizens and thereby upholding the principles of democracy.

**Source:** <http://elections.gov.lk>





## How the City of Sudbury made its Elections Accessible

According to demographics, Greater Sudbury has 24,000 to 26,000 citizens with disabilities living in their communities. The city is thus committed to providing Accessible Elections to all voters and candidates. The 2018 Municipal and School Board Elections offered a number of accessible options to remove barriers which might prevent any voter from casting their vote.

Voters had access to electronic voting anywhere, at any time. Electronic votes could be cast from the voters' homes or at Electronic Voting Locations. During the entire voting

period, Voter Help Centres were operational at the City's Citizen Service Centres and Libraries.

Electronic voting allowed increased rights of privacy to voters with disabilities who might find it difficult to vote at more traditional paper based voting places. Electronic voting lets users use the personal assistive technology to interact with the voting system anywhere. Voters with Disabilities could also use the built in electronic voting system accessibility features to enlarge the font size and adjust the colour contrast to make the process easier.

**Source:** <https://greatersudbury.ca>





# Political Participation of Women and Men with Disabilities in Tunisia

## An Assessment by IFES

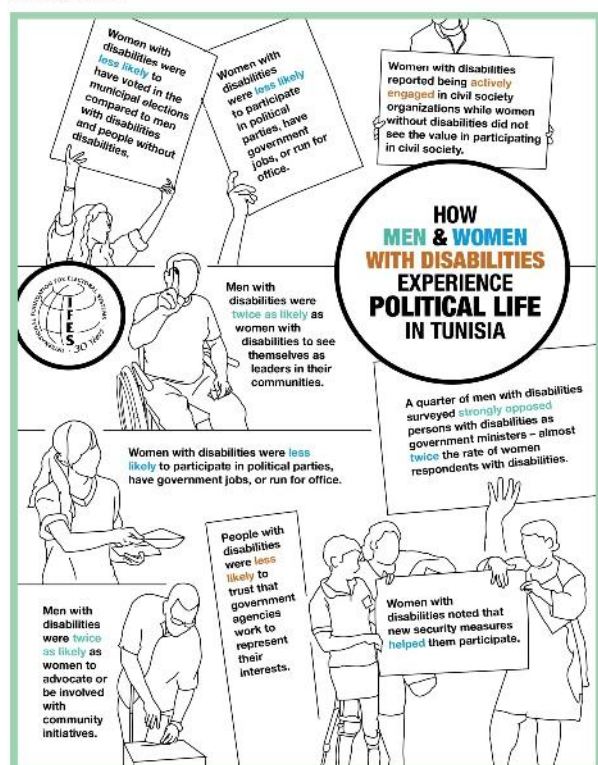
Over a two week period around the 2018 Tunisian elections, the International Foundation for Electoral Systems conducted a disability rights assessment mission to analyse the barriers and opportunities pertaining to the participation of women and men with disabilities in political life. The focus of the assessment was primarily on the preparations and conduct of the elections.

Tunisia's May 2018 elections were an important step in its stride towards democracy. For the first time, a disability quota was implemented for candidate lists which resulted in 144 people with disabilities being elected. The empowerment of people with disabilities goes to show Tunisia's walk towards a more inclusive leadership.

In its assessment of the Tunisian elections of May 2018, IFES found that there exists an inclusive legal framework. Despite the prevalence of such inclusive laws, their effective implementation or enforcement is not always seen through. While the disability quota of Tunisia appears to be a positive influence on making municipal councils more inclusive, it is not as effective as required and consideration needs to be given on how to make it more beneficial for Tunisia's population of disabled women and youth.

As a solution to the problems it identified, IFES suggested recommendations for Tunisian stakeholders such as its Parliament, Election Commission, Political Parties, Disabled People's Organisations, Civil Society Organisation And Government Ministries.

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







## AFGHANISTAN



### IEC Afghanistan responds to the stakeholders in view of the upcoming Electoral Process

**T**he Independent Election Commission of Afghanistan, respecting the procurement of the elections law, is committed to bringing reforms in all different electoral processes. The Commission, while taking into consideration the role and importance of the political parties in a democratic system especially in the electoral process, has continuously endeavored to seek views, opinions and recommendations of the relevant stakeholders in this national process, especially of the political parties.

In response to the statement issued by representatives of some of the political parties and movements concerning the Commission and the upcoming electoral process, the Independent Election Commission of Afghanistan shared its views in that regard with the respected political parties, political

movements and the noble people of Afghanistan as following:

1. The Independent Election Commission is committed to conducting the Wolesi Jirga and District Council elections in 1397 (2018-19), provided that the required budget for the process is provided within the due time, and security of the process is maintained.
2. Based on its legal obligation, the Independent Election Commission is committed to providing the opportunity of exercising the right to vote to all persons eligible to vote throughout the country and that will include the IDPs as well.
3. The Independent Election Commission has established a continuous consultation mechanism with the stakeholders through conducting the National Election Forum meetings, and would welcome their permanent representatives to the Commission.
4. The Independent Election Commission conducted a comprehensive program of the polling centers assessment at the secured areas of the country.

Source: <http://www.iec.org.af>

## CANADA

### Chief Electoral Officer Remarks on Bill C-76

**T**he Chief Electoral Officer of Canada gave his remarks on Bill C-76, an act to amend the Canada Elections Act and other Acts to make certain consequential amendments before the Senate Standing Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs.

Bill C-76 is a bill that will restore the use of voter information cards as a valid form of identification to prove residency. It will limit spending by parties and advocacy groups during the three-month period before an election is officially called, as well as during the official campaign. And it scraps a Tory-instituted provision allowing parties to spend \$650,000 for each day a campaign exceeds the minimum 37 days and caps the maximum campaign length at 50 days. It will also extend the right to vote to ex-patriate Canadians, no matter how long they've lived outside the country, rather

than the current five-year limit.

Stephane Perrault 'Chief Electoral Officer' stated that Bill C-76 is a transformative piece of electoral legislation. Not only it allow for more flexibility in the administration of the process at the polls, which will allow us to improve services to Canadians in the future, it also significantly improves the political financing regime in a manner that increases transparency and strengthens the level playing field.

With respect to third parties and the possibility of foreign interference in Canadian elections, the changes contained in the bill are significant. If the bill becomes law, the activities of third parties will be much more extensively regulated, both before and after the writ, and their use of foreign funds will be greatly restricted.

Chief Electoral Officer mentioned that their current plan is to be ready in January 2019 to start integrated testing of all IT systems.

Source: <https://canoe.com>





## ECUADOR



### CNE reforms electoral promotion regulation

**T**he Consejo Nacional Electoral (CNE) approved reforms to electoral promotion regulation. For cantons with a certain population of electors (150001 to 666666), the amount of election promotion cannot be less than USD 4000. Within the reforms is included that State institutions may not issue advertising or propaganda in the media during the campaign period, there are four exceptions to this case :

- If the announcement is about programs which will be executed during the timeline of the campaign

- If the citizens need to be informed about the closure of roads
- If news of national importance such as vaccinations, public health, citizen security need to be communicated
- If there arises an emergency situation wherein the citizens need to be informed of evacuation and closure measures

This is a significant development for the country of Ecuador. In the contesting of free and fair elections, the CNE by approving these reforms re-established itself as an independent body, upholding the values that a democracy stands for.

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



## INDIA

### Sunil Arora takes over as new Chief Election Commissioner of India

**S**unil Arora assumed charge as the 23<sup>rd</sup> Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) of India on December 02, 2018 succeeding O.P. Rawat. Prior to assuming charge as Chief Election Commissioner Sunil Arora had been serving as Election Commissioner of India since September 01, 2017. During this time, Election Commission had successfully conducted 6 Assembly Elections and during his tenure as CEC, there will be General Election to the 17<sup>th</sup> Lok Sabha, besides the 10 Assembly Elections.

Sunil Arora is a former Indian Administrative Service (IAS) officer. During 36 years of his service, he held various crucial positions in the State Government of Rajasthan and in the Central Government. He served at several key positions viz. Secretary in the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship, and Ministry of Information & Broadcasting, Chairman & Managing Director of the then Indian Airlines between 2002 to 2005, member of Board of Directors of Air India, Airport Authority of India Ltd. and National Skill Development Corporation.

Sunil Arora also served as the Chairman of Rajasthan State Industrial Development & Investment Corporation (RIICO) in 2005-2013 and as Additional Chief Secretary, Home, Government of Rajasthan in 2013-2014 among



several other important positions.

"All I can say at this stage is that all of us in the Commission shall continue to put our best foot forward to meet the expectation of all the stakeholders strictly in consonance and in conformity with the vision and ideals of the Constitution of India especially the Preamble thereof. We are also aware that Elections to Lok Sabha are in the offing. The internal preparations for this actually started sometimes back. We will try to meticulously prepare on all fronts whether it is ER, EVM, VVPATs disseminations through our very credible programme of SVEEP ensuring voting rights through ETPBS for our soldiers, for persons with disability and give the country a fair, credible, free, impartial and ethical election," Sunil Arora said in a statement after assuming office.

Source: <https://eci.gov.in>



## PAKISTAN



### The Election Commission of Pakistan launches Trust for Democratic Education and Accountability – Free and Fair Election Network (TDEA-FAFEN)

**T**he Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) has pilot-tested the Results Management System as well as the Results Transmission System. The introduction of technologies in results management will help in digitization of voting records, and thus make the records free of any errors.

Trust for Democratic Education and

Accountability – Free and Fair Election Network (TDEA-FAFEN) is an organization that works towards fostering a culture of democratic accountability in many countries. It was established as a coalition of 30 domestic non-governmental organizations. The organization has mobilized and empowered voters in various countries to exercise their voting rights.

FAFEN, a spin-off of TDEA, mainly focuses on improving the quality of governance by presenting its insights on the legislative and electoral processes in the country.

TDEA-FAFEN has also launched a project named "Open Parliament" to publicize all on-floor proceedings of the legislative houses, including the Parliament and the four Provincial Assemblies.

Source: <https://propakistani.pk>



## RUSSIA



### CEC of Russian Federation presents report on the Mobile Voter Mechanism

**O**n December 13, 2018 Deputy Chairperson of the Central Election Commission of the Russian Federation, Nikolay Bulaev presented a report on the work of the Mobile Voter mechanism at the first meeting of the CEC of Russia Scientific Expert Council.

"So far, we have implemented only about ten percent of the capabilities of the mechanism, not more. We were convinced that the system is absolutely transparent and inspires confidence in the majority of participants of the electoral process," emphasised Nikolay Bulaev.

He observed that the number of voters that voted at the Presidential elections in March in 2018 using the Mobile Voter mechanism was twice as high as the number of voters who voted at the Presidential elections in Russia in 2004, 2008 and 2012 using absentee ballots. He noted that after the Presidential elections, the

Central Election Commission of Russia organised an inspection of the facts of repeated voting. It was found that five cases of double voting occurred.

"We must create a mechanism that is capable of being transparent, verifiable by participants of the electoral process and does not distort the results," said Nikolay Bulaev. He outlined that the Central Election Commission will make the next target in the development of the voting mechanism at the location within the framework of the Digital Economy of the Russian Federation Program. This will enable the realisation of the possibility of casting votes at the federal elections and elections to the state authorities of their constituent entity of the Russian Federation in any other region of the country. It is proposed to create 5,000 polling stations, which are conditionally called "Digital Polling Stations"

Nikolay Bulaevre marked that in a few months time the CEC of Russia will be ready to present a model of such a "Digital Polling Station" and to demonstrate to everyone what it is and how it works.

Source: <http://www.cikrf.ru>





## SOUTH AFRICA

### **Voter Registration for South African Citizens living abroad to take place in February 2019**

**T**he Electoral Commission of South Africa announced that voter registration for those citizens living abroad will take place from February 04-09, 2019. The registration will take place across 120 of South Africa's foreign missions like the embassies, high commissions and consulates world-wide.

The registration of voters abroad will be followed by a cooperation agreement between the Electoral Commission of South Africa and the Departments of International relations and Cooperation. This agreement is on the registration and voting at diplomatic institutes abroad, this will enable South African Voters living abroad to be able to register and vote in national elections. This agreement gives effect to the Electoral Act 73 of 1998 according to which all South African citizens aged 16 and older are eligible to register and vote in national elections.

Source: <http://www.elections.org.za>



### **Electoral Commission of South Africa signs Memorandum of Understanding with University of South Africa**

**T**he Electoral Commission and the University of South Africa extended a Memorandum of Understanding by three years to advance knowledge and skill development in the field of electoral democracy.

The MOU aims to fortify the knowledge and expertise in electoral democracy of election practitioners in Africa. This will be done through the development of education and training programmes. Furthermore, it also seeks to identify research opportunities to refine and promote democratic electoral principles, legislation and practices.

At the signing ceremony, Chairperson Mashinini said that the partnership with the continent's leading distance-learning institution offered opportunities to augment knowledge and professionalism amongst electoral management bodies spread all over Africa.

Through the strategic partnership between the Electoral Commission, the Institute of African Renaissance Studies at UNISA along with funding and support from USAID, the Management of Democratic Elections in Africa (MDEA) has established a certificate programme. Over the past seven years this programme has been able to impart skills, knowledge and expertise in the field of electoral democracy management to hundreds of electoral practitioners throughout Africa.

On this occasion Professor Makhanya said, "The MOU sets the framework for the joint development and implementation of mutually beneficial programmes which will help enhance professional electoral management capabilities in South Africa and beyond."

Source: <http://www.elections.org.za>



## SOUTH KOREA



### National Assembly Election Boundary Delimitation Commission (NEBDC) appoints Kim Sehwan as its Chairperson

**T**he National Election Commission (NEC) of the Republic of Korea announced that the National Assembly Election Boundary Delimitation Commission (NEBDC) was officially launched to delimitate the electoral districts for the 21<sup>st</sup> National Assembly Elections.

The NEBDC held its first meeting on December 7, 2018 and appointed Kim Sehwan, the Deputy Secretary General of the NEC, as its Chairperson. The NEBDC began activities to delimitate the 21<sup>st</sup> National Assembly Electoral districts.

The commission came to the conclusion that they would delimitate the electoral districts fairly and objectively. This would be done without keeping political considerations in

mind. Furthermore, the Commission urged the National Assembly's Special Committee on Political Reform to settle on its strategy for reforming the electoral system as early as possible.

According to Article 24 of the Public Official Election Act, the NEBDC must submit a draft of the delimited boundaries to the Speaker of the National Assembly 13 months before the National Assembly elections (in this case by March 15, 2019) and Article 25 of the same Act requires the National Assembly to confirm the electoral districts one year before the election (In this case April 15, 2019).

Source: <http://www.nec.go.kr>



## SWEDEN

### The Election Authority of Sweden welcomes Report from Election Observation Mission

**A**t the elections of September 09, 2018, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe's (OSCE) Democratic Institutions and Human Rights Office (ODIHR) conducted an independent election observation in Sweden. The ODIHR submitted its report on the Swedish election. This report, among other things, contains recommendations on how the secrecy can be strengthened and how the management of election bills can be improved.

The ODIHR noted that the Swedish electoral law constituted a solid basis for the implementation of democratic elections. The report also went on to state that the majority of those who have spoken to their expert teams have expressed confidence in this transparent system. The ODIHR also recommended that Sweden should implement further measures to ensure that ballot papers are printed and distributed in an equal manner for all parties who will be contesting in an election.

Anna Nyqvist, the Head of Department at the Election Authority, said the following on the report:

We welcome ODIHR's independent election observation of the Swedish election. The Election Authority shares the conclusions presented in the report regarding the handling

of ballot papers. For several years, we have argued that a review and a change of the election board system is needed

Anna Nyqvist also noted that regardless of how the wide variety of ballot papers will be allotted, they will still pose a challenge in logistics and distribution. It must be considered that there are different rules for different parties. It is unsuitable from an economic as well as an environmental perspective to print as many ballot papers as are done today. There is also a risk of missing ballot papers on the premises. In the long run, the election board system risks hampering confidence in the Swedish electoral system.

The Swedish Electoral system is designed to ensure a precise election result. It is an order in which trained staff count ballot papers by hand. The system is decentralised with built-in control stations on several levels. Corrections can be made until the result is determined and mandates are distributed. Since everything is transparent and open to the public, the ballot papers are saved. If needed, the votes can be recalculated in the same way several times. Developing the selection board system by reducing the amount of ballot papers helps to preserve the positives in the Swedish electoral system.

Source: <https://www.val.se>



## UGANDA



### The Electoral Commission of Uganda launches Voter Education Outreach Programme

**T**he Electoral Commission of Uganda has embarked on a voter education outreach programme in primary schools, secondary schools and institutions of higher learning to sensitize the pupils and students on elections in order to enhance their participation. This is in accordance with Article 61, (g) of the 1995 Constitution of the Republic of Uganda as amended which mandates the Commission to formulate and implement voter educational programmes relating to elections.

For conducting this programme, the commission is guided by its vision "To be a Model Institution and Centre of Excellence in Election Management" and mission "To efficiently organize, conduct and supervise regular free, fair and transparent Elections and

Referenda to enhance Democracy and Good Governance".

Objectives of the programme are:

- Equip pupils and students with electoral information in order to enhance their participation in elections.
- To sensitize pupils and students about their rights and responsibilities in the electoral process.
- To enhance understanding of the electoral process and laws governing elections.

The programme will also emphasize on the things, Demarcation of Electoral areas, Re-organization of polling stations, Voter registration and Update of the voters' register, Display of the Voters' Register, Nomination of Candidates, Campaigns, Polling, Announcement and declaration of election results, Tallying, transmission and declaration of results and Gazetting of election results.

Source: <http://ec.or.ug>



## ANNOUNCEMENTS



### UGANDA

#### Uganda Launches Strategic Plan for Elections

**T**he Prime Minister of the Republic of Uganda launched the strategic plan and road-map of 2020/2021 General Elections at Kampala. The guests included diplomats, governments officials, media representatives, security personnel and civil society actors.

This road map pens down good planning and implementations of Uganda elections. Like with every plan, this plan also takes into considerations the role of its stakeholders and will succeed if every part of the plan is implemented timely at each level.

This roadmap lays the plan for Uganda's upcoming elections with regard to citizen participation and, the direction of the elections. If implemented accurately, it will open up 7000



new polling booths. It will also give the Election Commission of Uganda ample time to delineate polling stations, prepare and display national voter's register, procure equipment in time and, to enable the participants to plan elections in a timely manner.

Source: <http://www.ec.or.ug>  
<https://www.monitor.co.ug/>

## ANNOUNCEMENTS



### UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

#### Election Assistance Commission of U.S releases budgets for 48 states and Territories

**T**he U.S. Election Assistance Commission (EAC) released program narratives and budgets for 48 states and territories eligible to receive the newly appropriated Help America Vote Act (HAVA) funds contained in the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2018. The narrative and budget release was preceded

EAC regional press calls to provide additional information about the grants and state-specific narratives.

EAC representatives had provided an overview of how state plans were evaluated and how states are spending funds, with a focus on plans in that specific region and spending ahead of the 2018 midterm elections, it was also featured by "The three regional press teleconference". Additional Information of the state's plan and budget was provided by Region-specific Secretaries.

Source: <https://www.eac.gov>

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

### VICTORIA

#### Victorian Electoral Commission releases Voter's Voice App

For its November 28, 2018 Victorian State Elections, the Victorian Electoral Commission released the App Voters Voice. The app provides information about enrolling and voting process for Victorian voters who have complex communication disability, English language or literacy issues, or those who use Australian sign-language.

This App provides downloadable information on how to enrol and vote currently. This information is made available in multiple languages and different easy to understand formats such as written, audio, visual and Australian sign language.

An electronic communication board is also available on the App. This board is for voters who cannot speak or find it difficult to make themselves understood by others. The communication board includes pre-prepared phrases which can be used to 'speak' or 'show' the relevant response to the election staff at the voting centre.



A screenshot of the app

The App also sends alerts in forms of notifications and reminders on specific days preceding the Election Day. A Voting Centre Locator which is included in the App allows voters to find their two nearest Election Day voting centres or their nearest early voting centre.

The App also has the ability to provide direct feedback to the Victorian Electoral Commission about the app. So if any user faces difficulties in using the interface, by using the feedback system inbuilt in the app, they can submit their feedback. This feature allows the makers to constantly modify the app to make it more user friendly.

Source: <http://electionaccess.org>

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

### ASEAN

#### Association of South East Asian Nations sign ASEAN Enabling Masterplan 2025

The ASEAN Enabling Masterplan 2025: Mainstreaming the Rights of Persons with Disabilities was signed by the Association of South East Asian Nations on November 15, 2018.



Such a plan is a first regional masterplan prepared by ASEAN and, it aims to mainstream the rights of the disabled. In order to successfully implement this masterplan, the General Election Network for Disability Access (AGENDA) is working closely with its network of Disabled People's Organizations (DPO).

The ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights initiated dialogue, drafted the masterplan and launched it to further the cause of the disabled and their rights. The plan identifies 76 key action points which cover disability inclusive participation in political, public and economic life.

Source: <http://electionaccess.org>

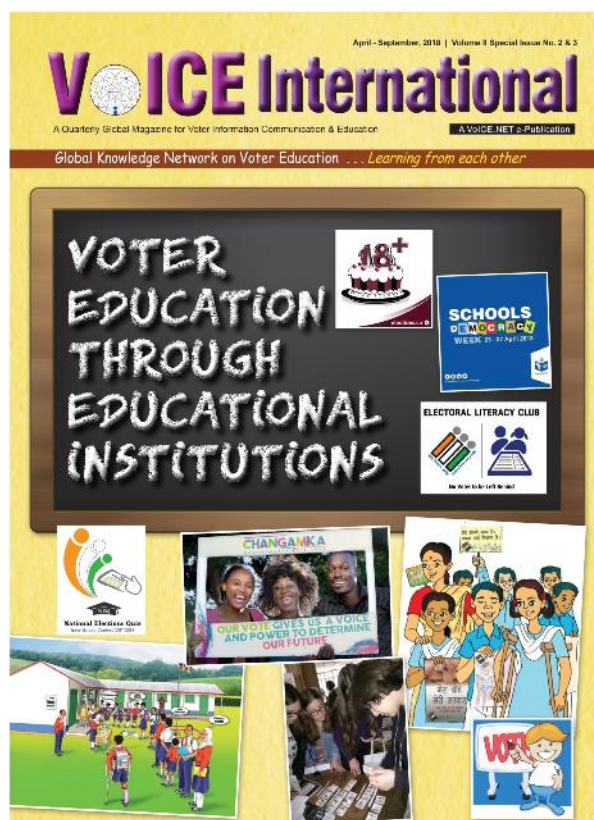


## Special Issue of VoICE International launched

**V**oICE International is about to successfully conclude the second year of its vibrant life. The launch of the issue of marks the end of volume II of the quarterly e-publication on the VoICE NET portal. 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. At present, VoICE.NET has 27 members, which includes Election Management Bodies (EMBs) across the world and reputed international organizations. VoICE.NET contents are provided by the member EMBs/ Organisations and the portal is maintained by Election Commission of India.

Volume II's Special Issue number 2 & 3 were dedicated to the theme, 'Voter Education through Educational Institutions'. This theme primarily focused on introducing greater electoral awareness and sensitivity to future generations of voters and electoral participants; an issue that has great significance for investment in the future of electoral democracy.

Several contributors sent their insightful articles on this subject. Nubia Villacís Carreño, President of the National Electoral Council of Ecuador, wrote a comprehensive piece on the role of the Council in the construction of a democratic culture in Ecuador. Ravneel Chand from Fijian Election Office penned his thoughts on the topic 'Elections Module in Compulsory School Curriculum'. Lela Javakhishvili, IFES Georgia noted 'The Galvanizing Force of Civic Education in a Sustainable Democracy'. Dorothy Atieno and Kate Simba, IFES, Kenya



both observed 'Voter Education through Educational Institutions in Kenya'. Zvezdana Dragovic from AEOBiH Secretariate wrote the article 'First Time Voter - Go Out and Vote'. Furthermore, S D Sharma, Senior Fellow, Election Commission of India stressed on voter education through educational institutions in Australia, New Zealand, Georgia, Canada and the US etc.

Apart from contributions on the core theme, the magazine also featured articles on some other pertinent subjects as well. Tarcisio Vieira De Carvalho Neto, Minister, Superior Electoral Court of Brazil shed light on 'Brazil's Fight Against Fake News. The Threat to Democracy and Elections'. The magazine also included an article about 'National Consultation on Accessible Elections' organized by the ECI.

# Policies and Politics of Migration towards European Union Elections

**T**he Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI) organised a conference in collaboration with Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, Rome.

The Report of the conference "External Borders and Internal Division of Europe: Policies and Politics of Migration" addressed key issues regarding factors leading to the lack of substantial policy reforms in the European Union. Tensions among member states and the lack of a common political will were identified as the main obstacle in the path of policy

reform in Europe. This context provides fertile ground for further polarization of the political debate between the two extreme positions of open versus closed borders, highlighting the need for more balanced and neutral narratives on migration in the run up to the European elections.

Source: <https://www.iai.it>

*Maria Saide Liperi and Asli Selin Okyay*

Authors

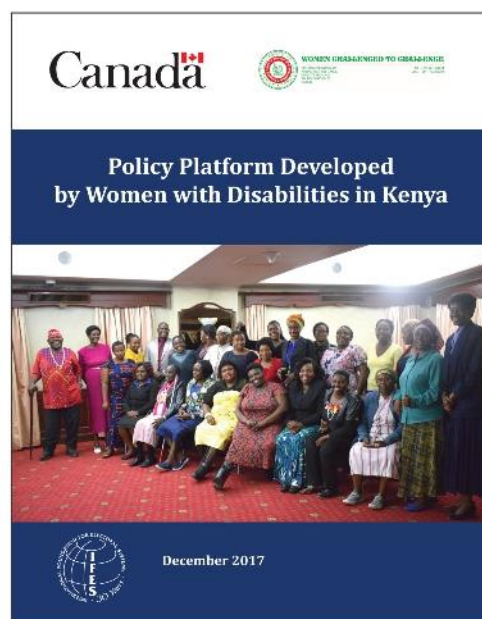
Published: December 20, 2018

## PUBLICATIONS

# Policy Platform Developed by Women with Disabilities in Kenya

**I**n 2017, Women Challenged to Challenge, with support from the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) and Global Affairs Canada, created a policy platform with priorities of women with disabilities in Kenya.

Source: [www.electionaccess.org](http://www.electionaccess.org)





# Financing of Electoral Processes: An Investment for Inclusive and Sustainable Democracy

**T**his report was made on the findings of each conference session of International Institute of Democracy and Electoral Access (International IDEA) and the Electoral Commission of Namibia (ECN). The conference took place from June 07-08 in 2018 and proved to be a platform for coalition of information, sharing of information and exchange of knowledge.

In Africa, Election Management Bodies (EMBs) generally have a broad constitutional mandate in order to oversee electoral process and the management of elections. In many cases, the establishment of EMBs has not matched with timely commitment of resources required for the realisation of this mandate. In order to ensure that the mandate is met; the topic of financing elections is a pressing issue for African election practitioners.

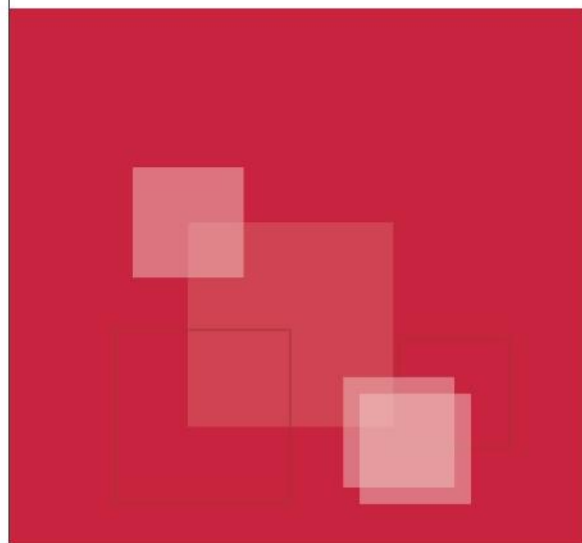
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*Rumbidzai Kandawasvika-Nhundu,  
Noria Mashumba, Nicholas Matatu  
and Therese Pearce Laanela  
Published - November 5, 2018*



### Financing of electoral processes: An investment for inclusive and sustainable democracy

Africa Regional Conference, Windhoek, Namibia, 7-8 June 2018



## PUBLICATIONS

### Election Access Toolkit

**P**ublished by the IFES, this toolkit provides Disabled People's Organisations (DPOs) and election observer groups with background and tools in order to effectively incorporate a disability rights perspective into national and international observation missions.

Major features of the toolkit include step by step instructions for DPOs and election observer groups to collect data via standalone disability-focused observations. It is equipped with detailed checklists for both long-term and short-term observations. In addition to this, it provides DPOs and observers guidelines to contextualise their observations with respect to national laws and policies. Its illustrative list of disability-inclusion questions may help mainstream observers while they prepare their observation checklists. It also has an appendix of resources which include observer reports from election access observations.

This toolkit was supported by the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, United States Agency for International Development and Global Affairs Canada.

Source: <https://eaccess.s3.amazonaws.com>



## PUBLICATIONS

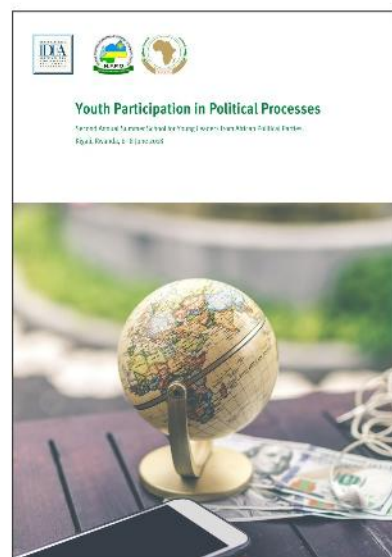
### Youth Participation in Political Process

**T**he second Annual Summer School for Young Leaders from African political parties took place in Kigali, Rwanda on June 06-08, 2018.

The theme for this was, "Youth participation in political process: emerging trends of the negative aspects of money in politics". The summer school wanted to recognize youth participation in politics, especially by young women, either in the form of direct representation in political structures or within less formal modes of politics engagement, since this remains limited across Africa.

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

*Published by- National Consultative Forum of political organizations*  
*Published- October 10, 2018*





## Election Commission sets-up Women Polling Booths

**S**angwari polling booths have been set up in various constituencies in Chhattisgarh by the Election Commission. These voting booths are exclusively for women.

"Sangwari" in the Chhattisgarh dialect means friend. These women friendly booths have all-female staffs which includes women polling officials, presiding officers, supervisors and



security personnel. These polling booths were set up to encourage women to exercise their franchise in Assembly

elections. According to Chief Election Officer Subrat Sahoo, five "Sangwari" polling booths had been set up in every assembly segment.

Even one of the worst affected maoist areas, Narayanpur, saw three "Sangwari" polling booths. Such booths were also set up in Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Telangana. The Election Commission claims that the establishment of these booths aims to ensure gender equality and greater constructive participation of women in the electoral process.

Chhattisgarh has about 1 Crore 85 Lakh electorates. Out of this, more than 92 lakhs are female.

The women turnout notably increased as compared to earlier Assembly Elections.

Source: <http://www.newsonair.com>

## All Mail-in Voting

**F**or the 2020 Primary and General Election, Governor David Ige signed a law that allows Kauai County to distribute mail-in ballots to all registered voters. Lyndon Yoshioka, Kauai's Elections Administrator said that 2020 will be a huge challenge for obvious reasons, and it's been something that they have advocated for such a long time - they have been pushing for vote-by-mail for at least a decade because of its growing popularity.

For the preparation of 'All Mail-in Voting', other states that are already using vote-by-mail have been visited to take notes of best practices and challenges and also to purchase new equipment for the same.

The Elections Administrator also stated that they need an envelope scanner/sorter to help expedite the processing of returned ballots, as



well as to capture signatures apart from needing security cages to secure the ballots prior to processing. There will be one voting center where people can still walk in and fill out their ballots.

Colin Moore, Hawaii News Now's political analyst said that it will be very interesting to see if this move will change the manner in which candidates campaign.

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

## Replacement to Georgia's Aging Voting Machines

**T**he Secure, Accessible, and Fair Elections Commission formed by Governor-elect Brian Kemp have recommended a new system to tackle the problem of Georgia's aging voting machines. On January 10, 2019, the state commission set up a machine that allows voters to cast their ballot on a touch screen; the machine then prints out a ballot for the voter to check and then a scanner reads the hard-copy print-out to cast the vote.

According to the bi-partisan commission, a combination of computers and hard copy print outs of ballots would be the safest way to prevent hackers from rigging elections and allow them for speedy vote-counts on election nights.

On January 10, 2019, the public of Georgia including people with disabilities got their first chance to try out some of the possible replacements to Georgia's 16 year old voting machine and the public was glad to have a chance to try out the potential replacements to the state's machines.

Danny Housley, Assistive Technology Acquisition Manager of Georgia was highly encouraged after trying one voting machine that guides the voter through the ballot as they listen on headphones, and make their selections on a small handheld device.

Source: [www.wabe.org](http://www.wabe.org)





## 'Breaking the Glass Ceiling'



In 2002, when Bahrain held its first election there was no woman elected to Parliament, in spite of there being 31 female candidates. In 2006, Lateefa al-Gaood, was the only woman elected as a legislator, who retained her seat in 2010 as well. In 2014, three women were elected to Parliament. This happened because Bahrain does not have a quota system for female representation in parliament. Ahlam Janahi from Bahrain's Businesswomen's Society said the latest election will be remembered for breaking the glass ceiling. She stated, "Finally, the women of Bahrain have proven that they are able to represent themselves in all facets of life and proved that as a country, we do not need a quota system in order guarantee female representation".

This time, a record number of women have been elected in Bahrain's elections, breaking the glass ceiling of representation in the country's parliament.

Mohammed al-Sayed, spokesperson for citizens for Bahrain Organization said that the 2018 elections are historic for Bahrain, "We certainly have more women in parliament and this is a source of pride for all Bahrainis as we believe in equality and the important role played by Bahraini women in society and politics."

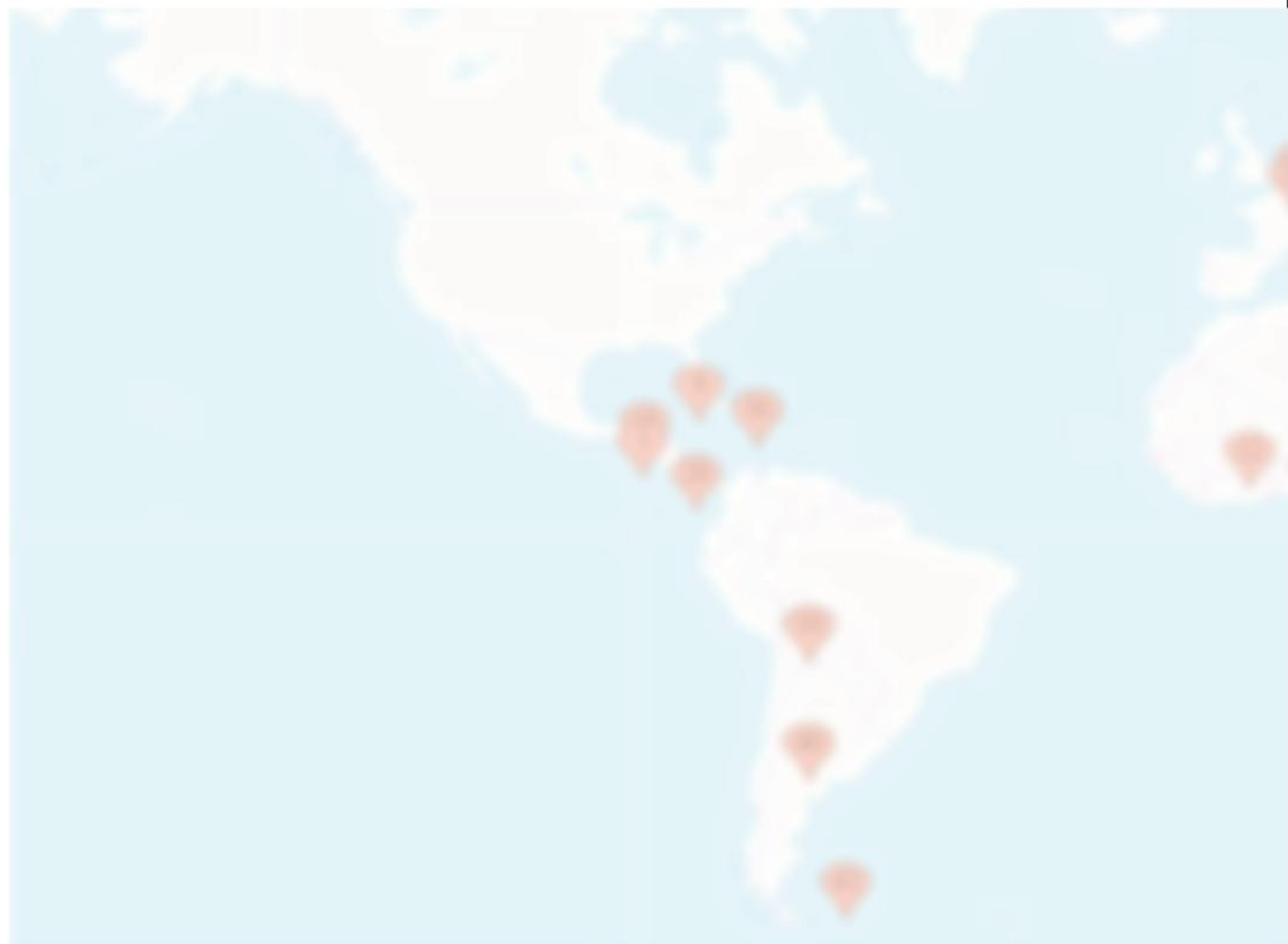
At 67%, the voter turnout for 2018 election was the largest in Bahrain's history.

Source: <https://english.alarabiya.net>  
<https://updatesviralnews.com>

## WORLD ELECTION CALENDAR WITH DATE

Country	Election	Date
Afghanistan	President	20-04-19
Argentina	Argentinian Senate	27-10-19
Argentina	Argentinian Chamber of Deputies	27-10-19
Argentina	President	27-10-19
Belgium	Belgian Chamber of Representatives	26-05-19
Belize	Referendum	10-04-19
Bolivia	Bolivian Chamber of Senators	27-10-19
Bolivia	Bolivian Chamber of Deputies	27-10-19
Bolivia	President	27-10-19
Burkina Faso	Referendum	24-03-19

Country	Election	Date
Cuba	Referendum	24-02-19
El Salvador	President	03-02-19
Estonia	Estonian Parliament	03-03-19
European Union	European Parliament	23-05-19
Falkland Islands (Islas Malvinas)	Referendum	07-11-19
Federated States of Micronesia	Congress of the Federated States of Micronesia	05-03-19
Finland	Finnish Parliament	14-04-19
Haiti	Haitian Chamber of Deputies	27-10-19
Haiti	Haitian Senate	27-10-19
Indonesia	Indonesian House of Representatives	17-04-19





Country	Election	Date
Indonesia	President	17-04-19
Lithuania	President	12-05-19
Malawi	Malawi National Assembly	21-05-19
Malawi	President	21-05-19
Mozambique	Mozambican Assembly	15-10-19
Mozambique	President	15-10-19
Netherlands	Dutch Second Chamber	27-05-19
Nigeria	Nigerian House of Representatives	16-02-19
Nigeria	President	16-02-19
Nigeria	Nigerian Senate	16-02-19
Panama	President	12-05-19

Country	Election	Date
Papua New Guinea	Referendum	15-06-19
Philippines	Philippine House of Representatives	13-05-19
Philippines	Philippine Senate	13-05-19
Republic of Moldova	Moldovan President	24-02-19
Somaliland	Somaliland House of Representatives	31-03-19
Switzerland	Swiss National Council	20-10-19
Thailand	Thai House of Representatives	24-02-19
Thailand	Thai Senate	24-02-19
Ukraine	President	31-03-19

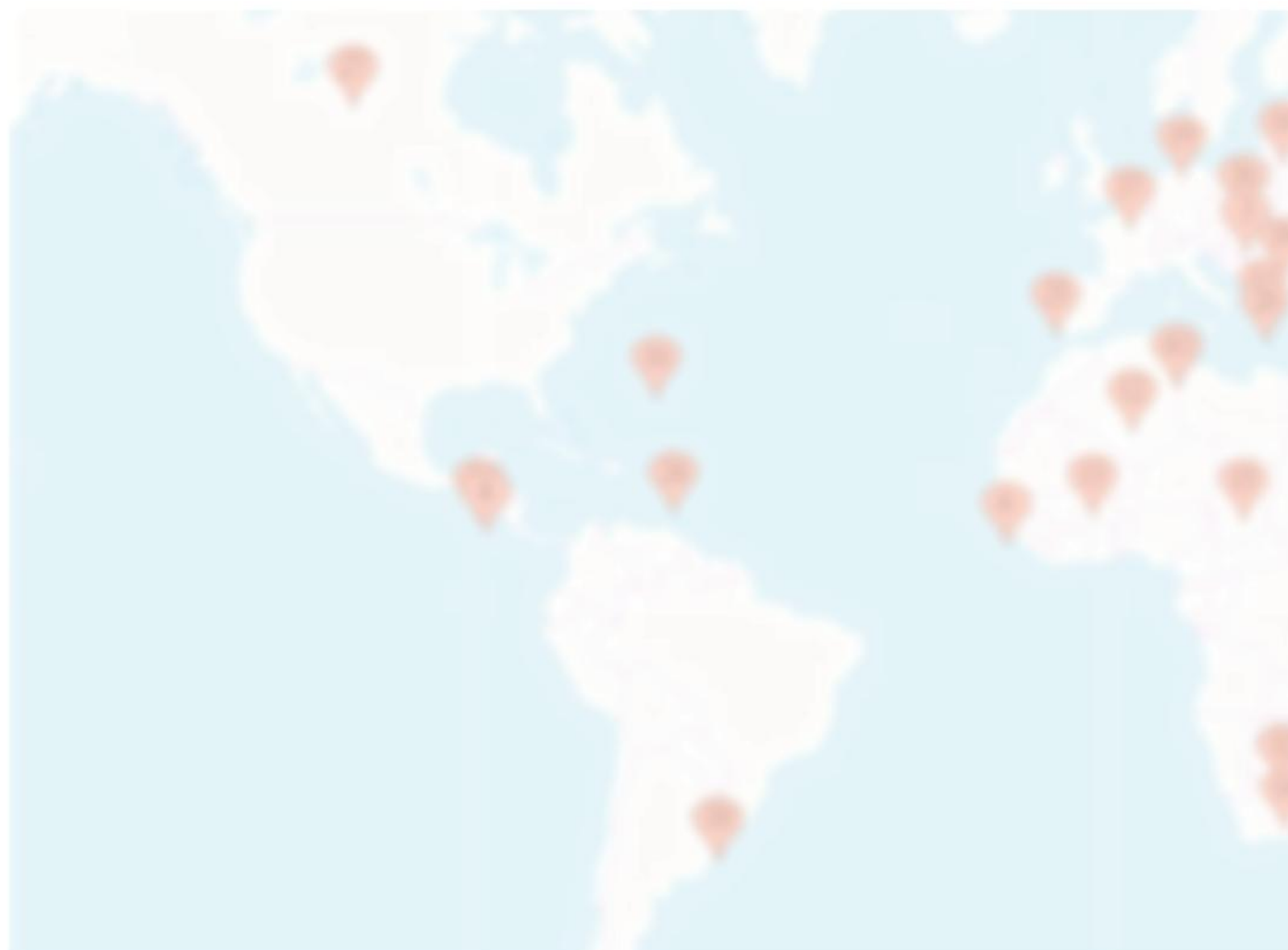


Compiled by Samyak Shami  
Intern ECI

## WORLD ELECTION CALENDAR SCHEDULED IN 2019

Country	Election
Algeria	President
Australia	Australian Senate
Australia	Australian House of Representatives
Bermuda	Bermudian House of Assembly
Botswana	President
Botswana	Botswana National Assembly
Canada	Canadian House of Commons
Chad	Chadian National Assembly
Cocos (Keeling) University	Cocos (Keeling) Island Shire Council
Denmark	Danish Parliament
El Salvador	President
Greece	Greek Parliament

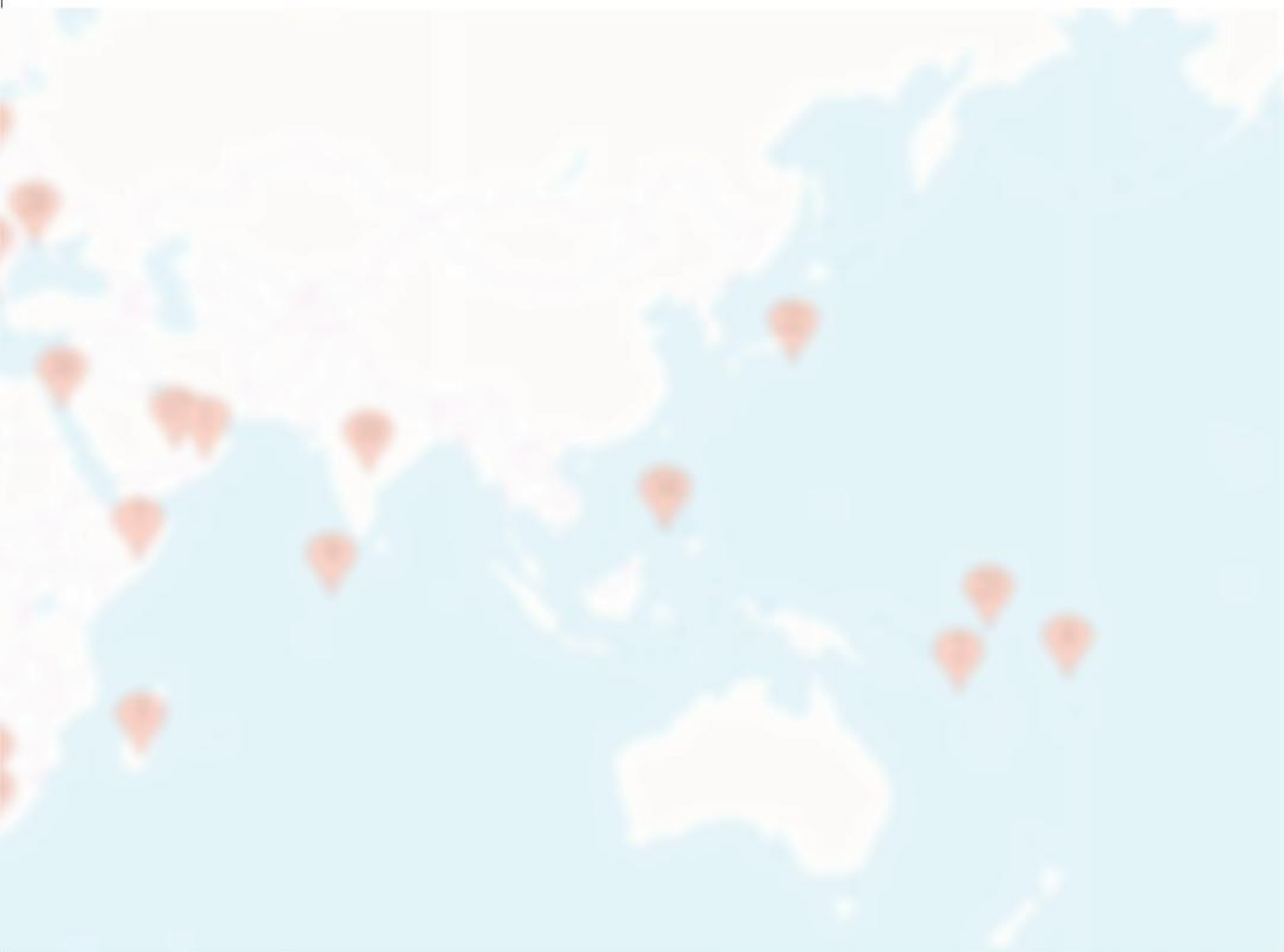
Country	Election
Guatemala	Guatemalan Congress of the Republic
Guatemala	President
Guinea-Bissau	Bissau-Guinean People's National Assembly
India	Indian People's Assembly
Israel	Israeli Knesset
Japan	Japanese House of Councillors
Latvia	President
Macedonia, The former Republic of Yugoslav	President
Madagascar	Malagasy National Assembly
Maldives	Maldivan People's Council





Country	Election
Mali	Malian National Assembly
Montserrat	Montserratian Legislative Council
Nauru	Nauruan Parliament
Poland	Polish Senate
Poland	Polish Sejm
Portugal	Portugese Assembly of the Republic
Qatar	Qatari Advisory Council
Romania	President
Slovakia	President
Solomon Islands	Solomon Islanders National Parliament

Country	Election
Somaliland	Somaliland House of Representatives
South Africa	South African National Assembly
Tunisia	President
Tunisia	Tunisian Constituent Assembly
Tuvalu	Tuvaluan House of Assembly
Ukraine	Ukrainian Supreme Council
Uruguay	President
Uruguay	Urugayan Chamber of Representatives
Uruguay President	President



Compiled by Shagufta Parveen  
Intern ECI

## BELIEF IN THE BALLOT

Elections are all about people; about their choices, their dreams, and aspirations. The road to democracy is paved with stories of millions of people who work behind the scenes and whose determination, grit and bravery have been instrumental in overcoming multiple challenges in ensuring smooth, free and fair elections.

This section is dedicated to such stories of election officials and voters. It is a sincere attempt to profile real actors and participants of the democracy. Election Commission of India **invites your contributions** – that would go a long way in inspiring and motivating sentinels of democracy across the countries.

belief  
in the  
ballot



### Tribals exercise their franchise without fear

The Coimbatore district consists of 79 tribal settlements that lie in the fringe area of reserve forests and have access to polling stations within 2 Kms of their reach. In the past, tribals communities have been attacked by wild animals when they had ventured out to exercise their franchise. This fatal incident has made the communities wary of venturing out. To resolve this issue, a total of 46 polling stations were identified as vulnerable polling stations for the General Elections to Tamil Nadu Legislative Assembly, 2016. The Forest Department took the onus of putting in

place all the preventive measures to protect the communities from the attack of wild animals so that the people could come out and vote safely without any fear. In addition to this, basic infrastructure facilities like provision of drinking water, sanitation, electricity etc were provided to ensure a seamless electoral process. Due to the efforts of the election officials with the co-operation of the Forest Department, the tribal people who live in the vulnerable areas came out eagerly and participated in the electoral process to help strengthen the democracy.



belief  
in the  
ballot



### The 9 month pregnant lady on election duty

Pooja Cholli, ASHA worker and BLO from Nehru Nagar, volunteered and functioned as voter facilitator at a Hubli-Dharwad west-74 Pink Polling station number 006-Bendre Bhavan at the Karnataka General Assembly Elections 2018. Even though she was nine months pregnant, she was determined to do her duty. When asked why she didn't seek exemption from election duty from the SVEEP Nodal Officer, she said that it was a matter of pride to be part of the election duty and that her due date was two weeks away.

It is individuals such as these that set an example in the community by showing their grit and determination to help conduct fair and free elections in the country.



belief  
in the  
ballot



### Sonakki Bai of Nallihanklu village casts her vote

106 year old Sonakki Bai from Nallihanklu village cast her vote in Polling Station 130 of Assembly Constituency 109 Channagiri in the 2018 Karnataka General Elections to



Legislative Assembly. She was confident in coming to the Polling Station. She cast her vote because of the encouragement and support provided by the District SVEEP team.

belief  
in the  
ballot

### PwD casts his Vote for the first time

To uphold the spirit of free and fair elections, Election Commission of India declared '**Accessible Elections**' as the theme for this year's National Voters' Day, i.e. January 25, 2018. The theme seamlessly integrates with the underlying philosophy of universal adult suffrage and the concept of 'No Voter to be Left Behind.'

A host of SVEEP activities were undertaken to ensure the arrangement of assured minimum facilities at each polling station so that the PwD voters could cast their vote with ease. The arrangements made were of utmost assistance to ensure that all PwD voters in Lingadalli village of Davangere District in Karnataka participated in the electoral process. A 32 year old man, Jayappa had never cast a vote in any election so far. Suffering from locomotor disability was a hindrance that he overcame at the Assembly Elections of 2018 when he came out to cast his vote. As nodal person, he also ensured that all other PwDs in his village fulfil their responsibility. It is inspiring stories such as these that accurately depict the success of interventions at the ground level.

Each polling station was assigned a nodal officer for assisting all persons with disabilities enlisted at that booth. It was the nodal officer's



duty to ensure that the process of voting was hassle free for persons with disabilities. The nodal officer's duty also extended to providing travel assistance to persons with disabilities. This arrangement was given prior publicity among all persons with disabilities so that they don't shy away from casting their vote.

To further involve and encourage the participation of persons with disabilities, bike rallies were conducted. Letters in Braille script were sent to visually challenged people, inviting them to cast their vote. Special demonstrations were performed to show them the presence of braille script on the EVMs. Various PwD associations were also involved in this process.



# GLOSSARY

## FIRST PAST THE POST

Term used to describe the UK's parliamentary election system. It means a candidate only needs to win the most votes in their constituency to win the seat.

**Source:** <https://www.bbc.com/news/election-2015-32613441>

## ELECTION FRAUD

Criminal activity that impacts the integrity of an election. Election Fraud can include bribery, tampering with ballots, or other illegal ways to interfere with the result of an election.

**Source:** <https://www.usa.gov/voting-and-election-definitions>

## INCUMBENT

The person currently in a political office.

**Source:** <https://www.usa.gov/voting-and-election-definitions>

## RECOUNT

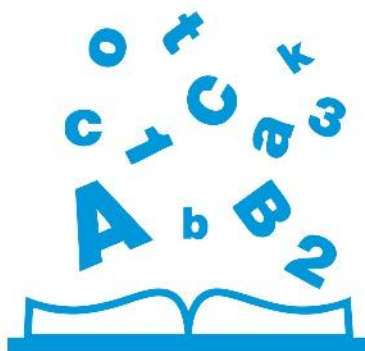
Counting the votes again because of a suspected error in totaling the vote.

**Source:** <https://www.usa.gov/voting-and-election-definitions>

## MANIFESTO

A public declaration of a party's ideas and policies, usually printed during the campaign. Once in power, a government is often judged by how many of its manifesto promises it manages to deliver.

**Source:** <https://www.bbc.com/news/election-2015-32613441>



# QUIZ

1

The Parliament of England had its roots in the restrictions on the power of kings written into this document), which explicitly protected certain rights of the King's subjects and implicitly supported individual freedom against unlawful imprisonment with right to appeal. Name this historic document.

2

What system of governance, prevalent in India, derives its name from Latin words for 'two' and 'chamber'?

3

What are eagerly awaited polls of voters taken immediately after they have walked out of the polling station that asks for whom the voter actually voted called?

4

Name a country in the Indian subcontinent that makes use of Biometric voter registration.

5

As of 2017, the number of electors for this election stands at only 217. The vote takes place in a closed, locked room and the result is announced to the world through white smoke out of a chimney. Who is being elected in this way?



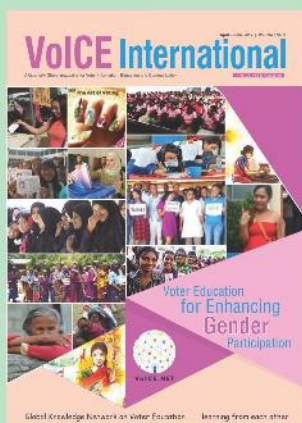
1. Answer: Magna Carter 2. Answer: Bicameral 3. Answer: Exit Polls  
4. Answer: Bangladesh 5. Answer: Pope



# PREVIOUS ISSUES OF VoICE INTERNATIONAL



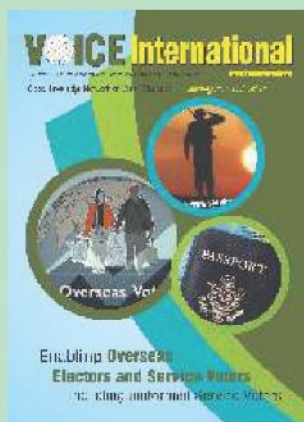
JAN-MAR 2017



APR-JUN 2017



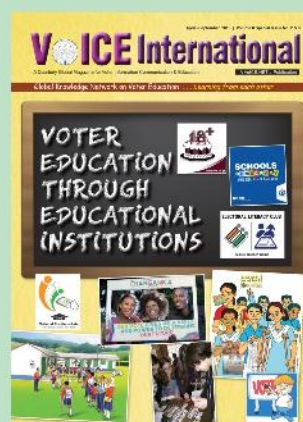
JUL-SEP 2017



OCT-DEC 2017



JAN-MAR 2018



APR-SEPT 2018

## VoICE.NET





# Voter Information, Communication & Education Network

Voter Information, Communication & Education Network (VoICE.NET) is a Global Knowledge Network for sharing knowledge, resources and expertise on **Voter Education**.

**VoICE.NET** was launched on October 20, 2016 at the International Conference on Voter Education for Inclusive, Informed and Ethical Participation held at New Delhi. The Global Knowledge Network is a part of the New Delhi Declaration adopted at the Conference by the 25 Election Management Bodies (EMBs) and representatives from UNDP, International IDEA, IFES and Malaysian Commonwealth Studies Centre. **VoICE.NET** contents are provided by the member EMBs/ Organizations and the portal is maintained by Election Commission of India.