V ICE International

A Quarterly Global magazine for Voter Information, Communication & Education

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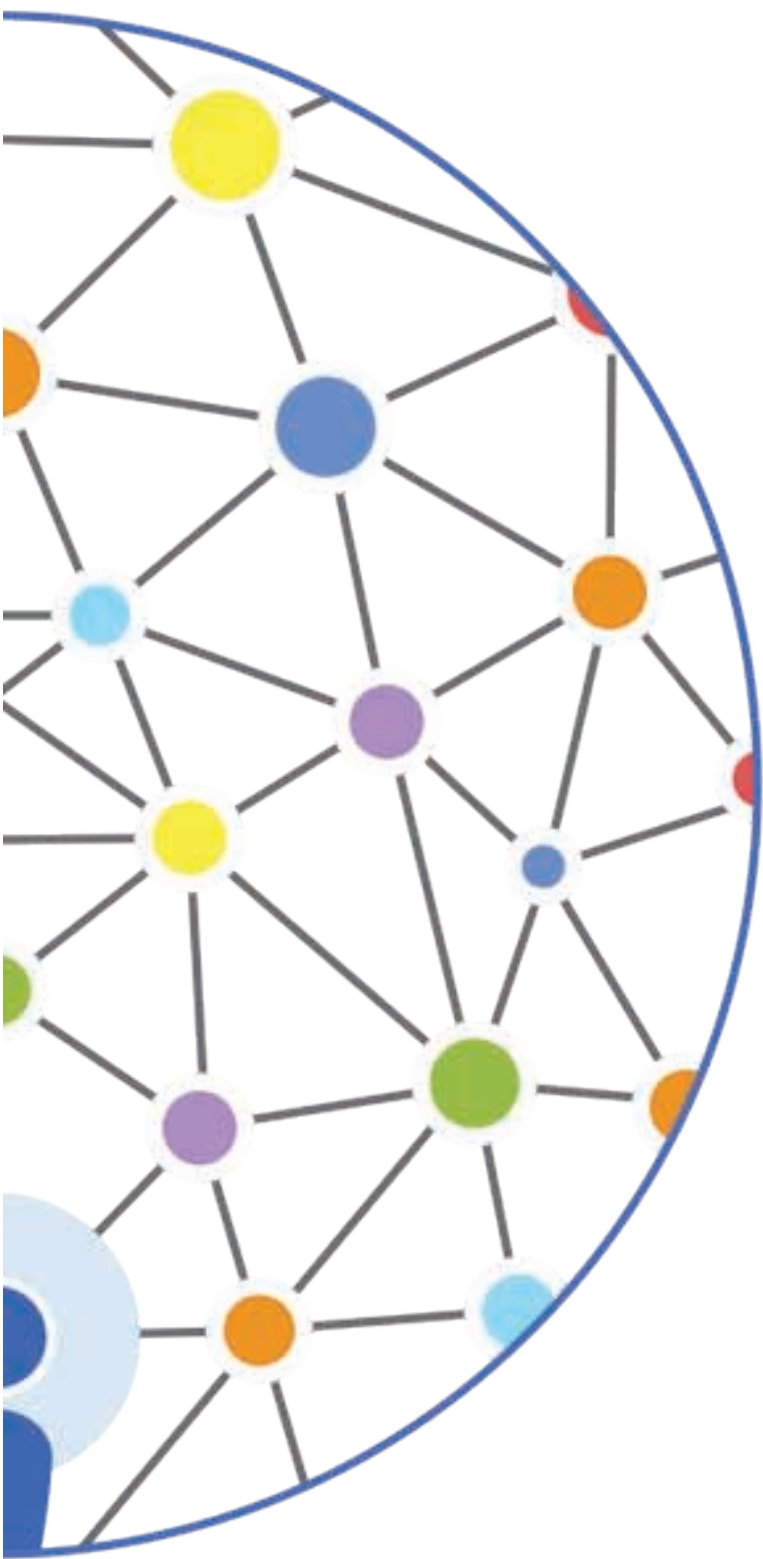

Using

DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY

&

Social Media

for Voter Education

VoICE.

NET

VoICE International

EDITORIAL BOARD
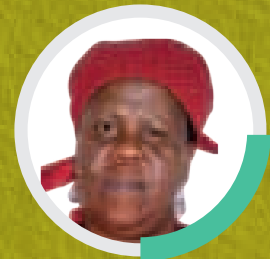
VoICE International

ADVISORY BOARD

DR. ABDUL KHABIR MOMAND
Independent Election
Commission of Afghanistan

ASADUZZAMAN
Election
Commission,
Bangladesh

ZEHRA TEPIC
Central Election
Commission,
Bosnia & Herzegovina

PHUB DORJI
Election
Commission of Bhutan

DR. FABIO LIMA QUINTAS
Superior Electoral
Court, Brazil

MARIYA MUSORLIEVA
CEC Republic
of Bulgaria

NUBIA VILLACÍS CARREÑO
National Electoral
Council, Ecuador
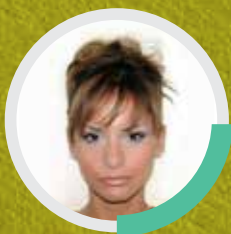
NATIA ZAALISHVILI
Central Election
Commission of Georgia

U TIN TUN
Union Election
Commission,
Myanmar

MARILYN KATJITUNDU
Electoral Commission
of Namibia

NAVARAJ DHAKAL
Election
Commission of Nepal

HERNANE VIEGAS SANTIAGO
Democratic Republic of
Sao Tome & principe

DR NOMSA MASUKU
Electoral
Commission of South
Africa

JAMES TZUNG-YU LAI
Central Election
Commission, Taiwan

KHAMEYEL FENNICHE
High Independent
Election Commission
Tunisia

J.A.S.P JAYASINGHE
Sri Lankan Election
Commission

SUMEETA BANERJEE
United Nations
Development
Programme

DR. M P SINGH
Member

DR. RAVI GARGESH
Member

BERNADETTE O'MEARA
Australian Electoral
Commission

DHARMAJAI MULLOO
Office of the
Electoral Commissioner
Mauritius

JOSE' ROBERTO RUIZ
National Electoral
Institute, Mexico

EDITORIAL

VoICE International enters the second year of its vibrant life and it is my pleasure and privilege to present you the first issue of the year 'Two' of the magazine.

The journey through the first year has been quite encouraging. Presentation of the global experiences, innovations and best practices from various EMBs and international organisations on thematic subjects has opened new vistas of developing synergy among global electoral institutions. Our effort has been to develop VoICE International as window of knowledge sharing and innovation in the field of voter education.

I would like to recapitulate that we started with concept of thematic progression right from the launch of the magazine in January 2017 when we chose 'Empowering Young and Future Voters'as theme for the inaugural issue. Subsequent issues were dedicated to 'Enhancing Gender Participation' (June 2017), 'Special Initiatives for Enhancing Participation of PwDs'(Sept. 2017) and 'Enabling Overseas and Service Voters' (Dec. 2017). Each of the issues carry articles that provide rich experience and knowledge to the readership on the subject. Digital version of the issues as e-magazine has been hosted on VoICE.NET to facilitate accessibility and maximization of readership.

I express my gratitude and heartily thank the contributors of the issues under Volume I and hope for a larger contribution in the coming issues in form of articles, events, announcements etc. I call upon all the participating EMBs and international organisations to continue their efforts to enrich the magazine both by contributing and reading the magazine. I also invite suggestions and feedback from them in order to further improve the magazine and make it more useful for the global community. Little bit of sharing of your experiences will go a long way in contributing to the cause of better of elections and democracy.
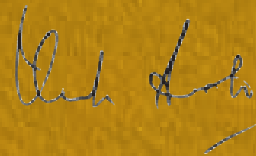
Through this issue, we bring to you the knowledge and experience on 'Digital Technology and Social Media for Voter Education' with rich contributions from the EMBs of Brazil, Ecuador, Fiji, India, Iraq, Kenya (byIFES) and Nepal besides an article from IFES. Expert contribution through in-house research brings comprehensive and analytical information on the subject in relation to Australia, Canada, The United Kingdom and The United States of America in the form of 'Insights'. Further, we have added a special section with articles dedicated to 'Inclusion of PwDs' in electoral process in line with theme adopted for celebration of 8th National Voters' Day of India. The section carries highlights of the International Conference organized by the ECI, on the subject, and rich experience sharing from Australia, Bhutan, Ecuador, India and Moldova, International IDEA and IFES etc. I thank the authors of the articles and compliment them for their valuable contributionto enrich knowledge base and experience sharing for the readership of VoICE International.

The theme for our next issue of the VoICE International is 'Voter Education through Educational Institutions.' I take this opportunity to invite you to contribute to the next issue in the form of articles etc. describing how schools, colleges and universities are supporting voter education and awareness.

I dedicate the first issue of the year 'Two' to the cause of strengthening electoral participation through integration of technology and media.

Thanks again to all contributors and readers!

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

CONTENTS

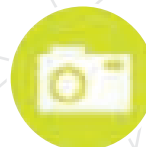चुनावको चासो...

THE VoICE.NET TODAY

Two laudable achievements of the International conference on Voter Education for Informed, Inclusive and Ethical Participation included the New Delhi Declaration on Voter Education and the launch of the Voter Information, Communication, Education Network or the VoICE.NET. The Conference, attended by the Heads of the EMBs and their representatives from 25 countries, International Institutions and Experts witnessed the world class expertise, knowledge and experience sharing on voter education from across the world in presentation by the participants.

The conclusion, a unanimous one, came up in the form of 'synthesis' with the launch of VoICE.NET at the closing session. The participating EMBs and the International Institutions and Experts witnessed a new digital knowledge platform to connect them, and the democracies of the world in due course, for the cause of voter education. A global initiative had become a reality at the historic International Conference.

International Conference on Voter Education for Informed, Inclusive and Ethical Participation
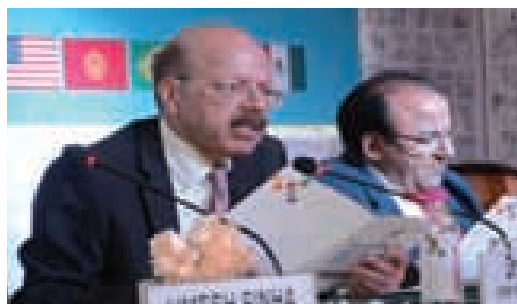
Launching VoICE.NET as a resolution of New Delhi Declaration

VoICE.NET Portal

The VoICE.NET has powerful features such as Resources, Best Practices, Announcements and Calendar of Events etc. as also the quarterly e-magazine VoICE International and Conference Readers with continuous update on innovation and initiatives from across the world especially on voter education. VoICE.NET hosts a number of ongoing events, activities and publications as briefly discussed below.

VoICE.NET contents are provided by the member EMBs/Organisations, in-house research and practice. The portal is maintained by Election Commission of India with the Senior Deputy Election Commissioner as the Executive Secretary. As of now, VoICE.NET has 27 members, which includes 23 Election Management Bodies (EMBs) from across the world besides 4 expert international institutions.

VoICE International

VoICE International, the quarterly e-magazine on voter education was launched on January 24, 2017 as one of the first events on VoICE.NET. The magazine is presented with a specific thematic focus for each issue. The Editorial Board selects the theme and invites inter alia, the members to contribute articles. The first issue was dedicated to 'Empowering Young and Future voters'. Subsequent Issues were dedicated to 'Enhancing Gender Participation' (April -June, 2017), 'Special Initiatives for enhancing Participations of Persons with Disabilities' (July-Sept, 2017) and 'Enabling Overseas and Service Voters'

(Oct - Dec, 2017). Each of the issues carry articles that provide rich experience and knowledge to the readership on the subject. Current issue, the first one in Volume II is dedicated to 'Digital Technology and Social Media for Voter Education.'

The magazine while presenting rich resource on voter education on the thematic focus, also carries a vibrant global coverage on topics of current interest in voter education insightful articles, case studies, best practices, innovation and special interventions for enhancing a robust culture of electoral participation.

International Conferences

VoICE.NET Platform has hosted a series of International Conferences. The support comes in the form of information sharing, notes on topics covered, Conference Readers, glimpses of interactive sessions etc. The coverage started with the 'International Conference on Voter Education for Informed, Inclusive and Ethical Electoral Participation' organized at New Delhi in October, 2016. This was followed by International Seminar on 'Strategies for Empowering Young and Future Voters' in January, 2017. In January, 2018 International Conference on 'Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Electoral Processes' was hosted on VoICE.NET. The Conference Readers along with other papers for these Conferences along with a number of other documents have been hosted on VoICE.NET. The above said papers, as such, form a good, substantive reading on the subject. These conferences were supported by the Election Commission of India. There

4 Issues of VoICE International, released so far, available at VoICE.NET

are events and conferences organized by other countries; such events are also hosted on the VoICE.NET.

An Interactive Platform

The website of VoICE.NET offers a 'One Stop' interactive platform that hosts global resources on voter awareness and education. It contains information about the events held by Chair Country, India and member EMBs. In addition to that, news announcements are also updated to keep the members aware of the activities happening in the other countries.

Open Invitation to other EMBs

With the existing membership of 27 EMBs and international institutions, the Election Commission of India has been making sustained efforts to increase the membership to bring new members on board. This approach enhances the interactions, knowledge sharing and in turn learning from each other.

Futuristic Outlook

Continued efforts are being made to improve the website in the light of valuable suggestions. In our endeavour the VoICE.NET will not just be a portal, search engine, digital library or e-discussion board, but shall be a holistic and a robust digital portal with various components which are to be available for an interactive and comprehensive knowledge network.

It will cover a good analytic component, both texts mining as well as data analysis. It would be completely responsive, integrated with social media platforms, with mobile app for IOS/Android. Along with that, there will be continuous migration of content based on relevance with archives for large database. All for the cause of voter education for enhancing voter participation.

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

International Seminar on 'Strategies for Empowering Young and Future Voters', January 2017

Release of VoICE International Vol1. Issue 1

Signing of MoUs

International Conference on 'Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Electoral Processes', January, 2018

E-ELECTIONS IN BRAZIL

Electoral Justice started its path towards informatization almost thirty years ago when in 1986 an electronic registration of more than 7 million voters took place. In 1994 the results of the general elections were established through a central computer at Superior Electoral Court (TSE, in portuguese abbreviation)[1]. Once enlisting voters and establishing the results were informatized, next step would be to informatize vote itself, so that the whole hardcore of the elections would be completely modernized.

In 1995, the first version of the electronic ballot were developed to be used in the 1996 elections, when a third of the electorate voted electronically. In 1998 elections two thirds of the electorate voted in electronic ballots and in 2000 elections every single vote was electronically captured.

Such electoral digital scenario brings numerous benefits, namely the logistic gains and the speed in which the results can be established and published. Nevertheless, Electoral Justice maintains its efforts to improve security of the electronic voting system.

At the public security tests TSE welcomes external specialists in order to encourage them to search for vulnerabilities of vote capturing and result establishing system. The tests became so important that it is now formally a part of Brazilian electoral process according to TSE Resolution n. 23.444/2015.

Through Biometric registration, since 2008[2], Electoral Justice aims to reduce duplicated records in voter registry, ensuring that each vote is personal, unique and non-transferable. In 2016 elections almost 50 million people were able to vote through biometric identification, corresponding roughly to 30% of the Brazilian total electorate.

Level of trust on results establishing of electronic voting
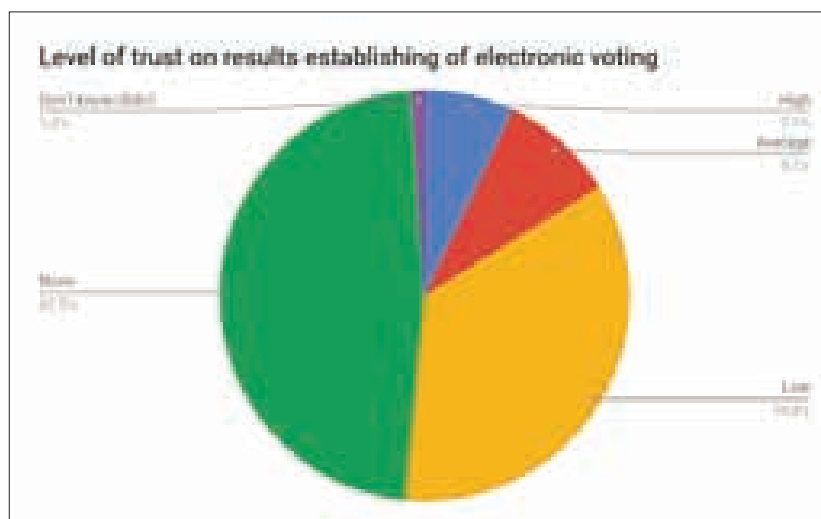
Despite this, people have some doubt about the electoral system: although we live the longest time of institutional normality, ensured

---

[1]Superior Electoral Court. Vote informatization. Available at: <http://www.tse.jus.br/eleitor-e-eleicoes/eleicoes/urna-eletronica/seguranca-da-urna/eleicoes>

[2]"Carta garantiu estabilidade institucional, diz Gilmar". Conjur:
https://www.conjur.com.br/2013-set-09/gilmar-mendes-constituicao-garantiu-estabilidade-institucional

Regarding printed vote

Don't know/Didn't aswer
1,0%
Against
7,0%

Agree
92,0%
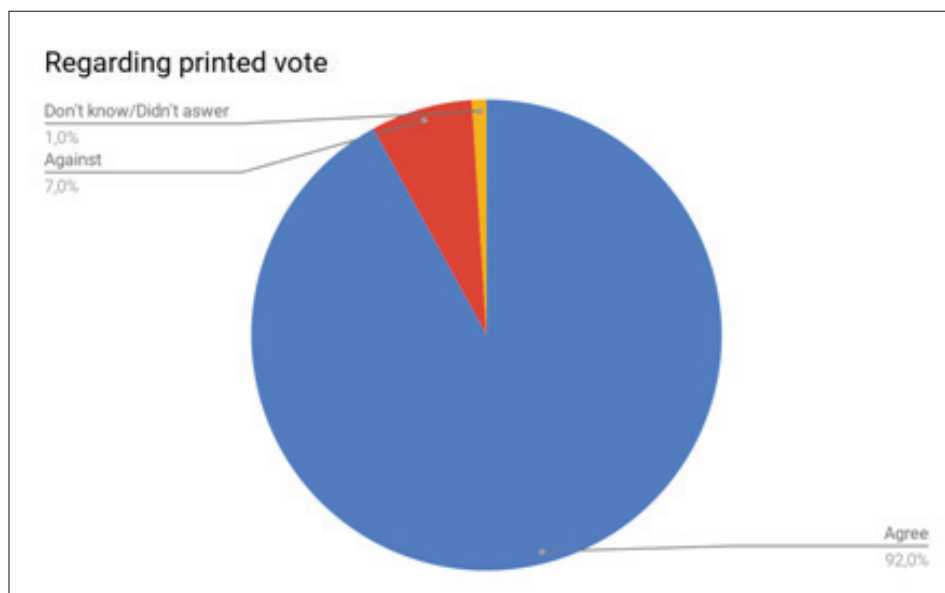
by Federal Constitution of 1988, a part of the people express distrust in our institutions. Thus, beyond the concern about improving the system, maybe Electoral Justice's biggest challenge nowadays is to get credibility, namely to show that E-elections are trustworthy, in other words, that it provides a reliable voting system.

Seeking to confer reliability to the ballots, the Legislative enacts Law n. 13.165 of 2015, which included in Elections Act (Law n. 9.504 of 1997) the requirement of printed vote along with the electronic voting process. In general terms, from the 2018 elections on, a gradual implementation of built-in printers on electronic ballots will take place, so that the vote can be stored in both electronic and physical forms. In Article 59-A the above-mentioned Act establishes that "in electronic voting process the ballot will print each vote, which will be stored automatically and with no manual contact to the voter in a previously sealed slot".

To get an idea of the distrust level of population on electronic voting system and of the popular support for printed vote, here is a survey held by Federal Senate in 2015 when the mentioned law were being considered in Congress [3]:

However, despite of the popular support and the above-mentioned law, printed code remains uncertain. In February Federal Public

Prosecution filed Direct Unconstitutionality Action n. 5889 contesting aforementioned article 59-A, under the argument that it would threaten vote secrecy and therefore a democratic setback. In this lawsuit, providing information to Brazilian Supreme Court, TSE (Electoral Court) argued that printed vote would be a setback on the result establishing process. Furthermore, Electoral Justice carried out an expenditure projection of 2.5 Million reais within the next ten years to put printed vote system gradually in place.

Finally, despite of the mentioned "analogic relapse", Brazilian electoral system became reference of technology application and there is no evidences of change of course. Thus, Brazil is building its recent democratic history with the eyes on a increasingly more digital horizon.
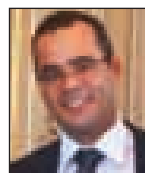
Prof. Dr. Fábio L. Quintas
Professor Superior, Electoral Court Brazil
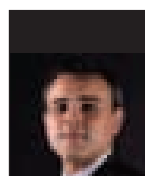
Prof. Adisson Leal
Professor Superior, Electoral Court Brazil

[3]Fonte: Senado Federal. Disponível em: https://www12.senado.leg.br/institucional/datasenado/materias/enquetes/impressao-de-votos-nas-eleicoes

A DIGITAL TOOL FOR TRACKING AND MONITORING IN THE POPULAR CONSULTATION

Technological changes keep a close relation with the different generations of individuals that play the leading role in them. Focusing on the new generational groups is key in the democratization of information and in the *citizenshipzation*[1] of communication, which entails a necessary instantaneity of answers and immediacy for decision making at the service of society.

The new generations of citizens informed in democracy have had vertiginous experiences in relation to the communication they receive. But, who are they? Who are the Millennials? And what do they want?

Let's begin by stating that 'Millennials' or 'Generation Y' is the denomination given to those born between 1980 and 2000 (15-35 years of age), and, according to several studies, they have a strong way of interacting with

Transmission of Electoral Data

Transmission of Minutes at National Level
- 1,566 RTPA
- 674 mobile RTPA
- 161 satellite links – Precincts of difficult access

Transmission of Minutes from the Special Abroad Circumscriptions
- 75 mobile RTPA
- 21 RTPA
- 10 precincts of 1-50 electors – Videoconference (Consul/Vote-counting commission)

Monitoring of Electoral Operations
- Integral security and contingency
- Institutional Communication
- International Relations and Electoral Observation
- Electoral processes abroad

¹ Precincts for the Transmission of Results (RTPA)

[1]Citizenshipzation (ciudadanización), a new word meaning that institutions are formed by citizens without a political membership background in order to avoid bias (GALINDO, D. and CABRAL, S., 2015, p. 33, retrieved from: http://www.roaep.ro/prezentare/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/Expert-electoral-3_2015.pdf).

social problems, they are capable of developing empathy towards certain topics and filtering the information they consume with a critical thinking. Regarding information transfer, Millennials communicate through cellphones; in Ecuador, over 60% of them use a smartphone.

From this social interaction arises the need of playing a more active role in the use of technologies as main tools to inform the citizens. The study 'New Kids on the Block' determines that, as of today, there are more than 2 million Millennials, which represents 32% of the world's population.

With these premises in mind, and considering the facts described in a general way, we, as members of the National Electoral Council (CNE), must adequate our administrative and operational practices, not only to organize electoral processes, but also to conjugate the new technologies with the practices demanded by the active generations of information in democracy.

In the process of Referendum and Popular Consultation 2018, the National Electoral Council, for the first time in the history of the country, as an innovative and unprecedented event, bet on technology through a mobile application specialized in-tracking and monitoring of institutional activities; which, at the same time, serves for reducing time and even costs during the electoral process.

Citizens are connected in real time 24 hours a day; taking this into consideration, the CNE implemented an uninterrupted service for the transmission of data among electoral officials during every phase of the Election Day. Thanks to this, it could be known in real time the details of every electoral precinct in the country, including those of 'difficult access', where immediate transmission of electoral data was guaranteed through any mobile device, as well as assistance to electoral officials, set-up of polling stations and training to the members of the polling stations.

In this way, by immediately sending videos, audios and photographs, the operational activities of the National Electoral Council can be controlled between its National Directions and the 24 Provincial Commissions. At the same time, the official data of national vote-counting gets transmitted, giving fast access to information of the minutes already scanned and uploaded to the system. For instance, the coordinators of the different electoral precincts nationwide can notify any possible unexpected circumstance, in order to immediately make a decision.

Furthermore, the inputs received allow us to feed the dashboard, a graphic representation of the map of the entire Ecuadorian territory and our Special Boards Abroad, with the main indicators that allow the optimization, tracking, monitoring, analysis and effective compliance of the process.

The National Electoral Council of Ecuador is a pioneer in the implementation of this digital tool and in the use of ICT aiming to substantially improve the access to information, strengthening the credibility in the electoral processes, optimizing celerity, efficiency and quality in the provision of services to the citizens, having regard to their demands and, more than anything, embracing the example that the technological day-to-day puts at our service.
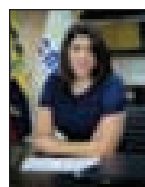
Nubia Villacís Carreño
President
National Electoral Council, Ecuador

Paúl Salazar Vargas
Councilor
National Electoral Council, Ecuador

FACEBOOK AS A TOOL FOR ELECTION AWARENESS AND EDUCATION

With the 2018 General Election scheduled to be held any time between April and November, the Fijian Elections Office [FEO] aims to maximize its awareness platform to inform and educate as many voters from across the country, as well as regional and overseas registered voters. Community mobilization through social media is an empowering and engaging platform that the FEO has invested into since the 2014 General Election. Already, more than 12 percent of Facebook users in the

country are engaging with the FEO through this platform. The Fijian Elections Office has two Facebook pages, one for the Fijian Elections Office (@Fijianelectionsoffice) and the other for the upcoming 2018 General Elections known as Fiji Elects 2018 (@FijiVotes2018).

The popularity of social media in Fiji has steadily increased since 2014, with 2017 statistics revealing more than 421,000 internet users in the country, of which over 380,000 were Facebook users. As of Januar y 2018, the Fijian Elections Office page had over 50,000 likes and followers while the Fiji Elects 2018 page had over 34,000 likes and followers. Statistics also revealed that over 82,000 people had in some way seen or read posts through both pages. The number of pages likes and followers for the Fijian Elections Office compared to the number of Facebook users in the country converts to around 12.9 percent.

The strategy of the FEO for social media is to post positive posts and critical election updates.

This way negative publicity is minimized as followers are only given positive stories that are relevant for upcoming elections. The impact of this strategy is evident through the increasing popularity of the FEO Facebook platform. An example is the Fiji Elects 2018 Facebook page, which has only been active for less than a year and has already reached over 34,000 followers.

Live Streaming of Events

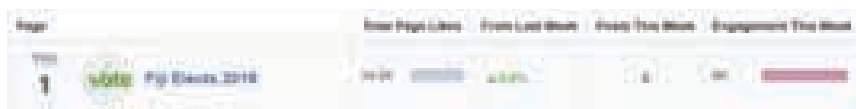The FEO shares live feeds of all important electoral events on its social media pages. This eliminates inhibition in terms of being confined in front of a television set to see the event happening live. Through sharing live feeds, the voters that have access to smart phones and internet, are able to view the electoral events live where ever they may be at that point in time–in school, at a restaurant, in a bus, etc.

Facebook as a Medium of Advertisement

All vacancies and tenders are advertised on the FEO official FB pages. There is visible interest from the public for wanting to work for the FEO. This is evident from the high number of likes and comments on these posts.

This interest is amplified when users share the post amongst their networks and encourage them to apply as well. This is evident from the high number of shares and tags on each of these posts.

Case Study 1: Recruitment Drive
The FEO utilized a number of mediums, through both traditional media as well as contemporary media, to inform the interested individuals who wanted to apply to become Election Officials in the 2018 General Election. However, the only medium of advertisement used by the FEO to inform these people to register to be able to sit the online test on day 1 of the Recruitment Drive, was Facebook. In just two days, all 70 slots for the test in the Central Division was full.

This exemplifies the effectiveness of Facebook as a vital tool and platform for election related advertisements.

Schedules of Activities and Events
The FEO shares schedules of upcoming activities and major events on its Facebook page. The users are able to identify the events that will take place at a venue nearest to them in order to maximize participation. Users from a particular area that are interested in an event can also flag their interest, if they are unable to attend the sessions that are currently planned. Whilst

the FEO might not be able to address all the needs flagged, it is certainly important baseline information when planning future activities and events. These posts are also boosted for relevant areas to increase awareness and maximize participation.

Case Study 2: Overseas Voter Registration Drive
Overseas Voter Registration Drive schedules were shared and boosted in areas where the FEO teams had planned to visit. This helped in boosting the turnout of Fijian citizens to participate in the Overseas Voter Registration Drive. As a result, the FEO managed to provide voter election services to up to 2900 Fijians living overseas out of which, 696 were new registrations.

Personal Engagement with Followers
During festive seasons, the FEO posts personal messages and well wishes on the FB page. These messages are from the FEO staff and addressed to the Fijian citizens and FEO FB followers. The personal messages give a platform for the FEO staff to be seen as approachable and caring individuals who have customer service skills and community engagement at the heart of the work that they do. This helps build the organizational image as well instills confidence of the people in the FEO and the FEO staff.

Case Study 3: Christmas Greetings
The FEO posted Christmas and New Year messages from various directorates and staff over a period of three weeks. This allowed members of the public and followers on social media to see the faces of the staff working

behind the scenes to prepare for the 2018 General Election. This interaction was an opportunity for the FEO staff to send followers festive greetings during the holiday period.
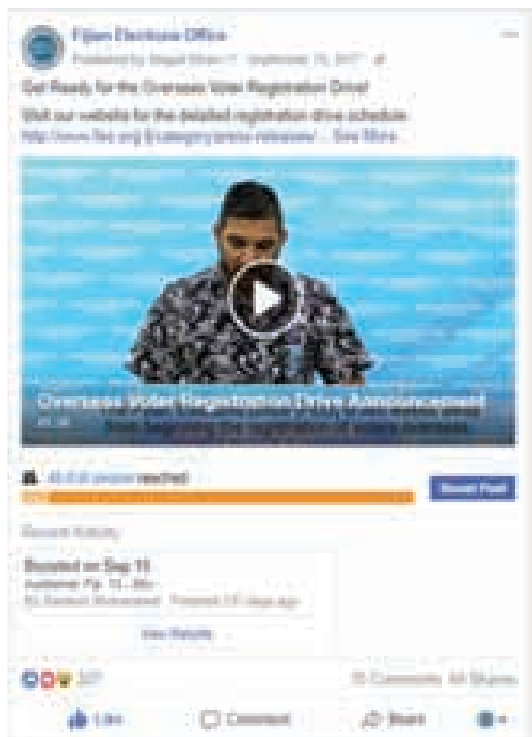
Encourage Participation Through Polls and Quizzes

Feedback from Facebook users and members of the public has been positive with regards to the Fijian Elections Office response rate, open conversations and interactions on social media.

In a bid to further increase the interaction on social media, the FEO ran polls online to gauge the knowledge of social media followers regarding electoral process. It gained huge popularity as many members of the public proved they are well versed with some of the

processes while some social media followers even requested for information in areas which they are were not sure of.

Conclusion

Feedback from Facebook users and members of the public has been positive with regards to the Fijian Elections Office response rate, open conversations and interactions on social media. Overall the Fijian Election Office brand viewership has increased significantly with more members of the public logging in to view live feeds, events and updates.

Facebook has also proven to be an efficient tool to effectively reach and disseminate key election information with the youths, which form a large portion of the electorate in Fiji.

Natasha Verma
International Relations Officer
Fijian Elections Office

Arin Kumar
Public Relations Officer
Fijian Elections Office

THE IMPACT OF DIGITAL MARKETING

Goa is among the most literate states having better network connectivity. The use of social media is quite common in Goa especially Facebook and Whatsapp. Observing this trend, the CEO office started facebook page *(http://facebook.com/CEOGoa)* and twitter handle *(http://twitter.com/CEO_Goa)* to engage and educate citizens on various aspects of election during the Special Summary Revision 2017.

The creatives used during initial days were sourced from Election Commission of India advertisements, local creations and from students of Goa College of Arts. The office used services of students of Goa College of Engineering as interns to connect with youth on social media. EPIC selfie competition was launched targeting new voters and youth to post their selfie with new Voter ID Card (EPIC) or enrolment form. Winners were decided on basis of likes and shares. The EPIC selfie contest saw good participation and high user interaction in view of the nature of the competition. It got the CEO Goa facebook page noticed and the traffic on these platforms increased drastically.

The experience during the Special Summary Revision gave useful insight into the potential use of social media in citizen engagement and education. Social media management requires constant updation of content and audience management strategies. The contents posted on facebook page were lacking uniformity, design and appeal. Considering the General Election immediately after Special Summary Revision, the CEO office chose Goa Tourism Development Corporation (GTDC) which has a vibrant and

professionally managed facebook page and twitter handle to implement digital marketing under supervision of CEO Office.

The Digital Marketing was focused towards three objectives:

ADAPT Model

ADAPT Model for Digital Marketing was used with following features

Audience: The potential reach of Facebook was analysed. In 18+ age group, the potential reach was found to be 4,20,000, nearly 35 per cent of voters. In the 18-25 age group, the potential reach was 2,00,000.

Direction: The direction of entire campaign was
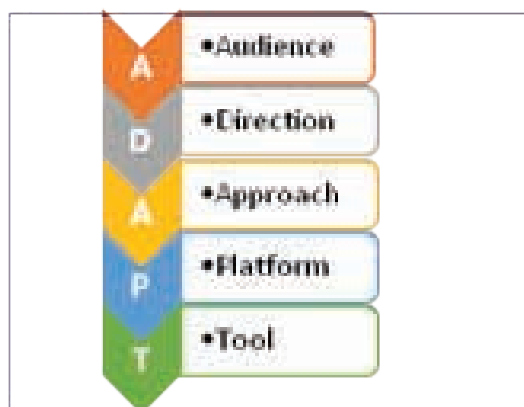
focussed on three goals of VVPAT usage, Ethical Voting and Maximum participation. The creative development and messaging was done in these particular directions.
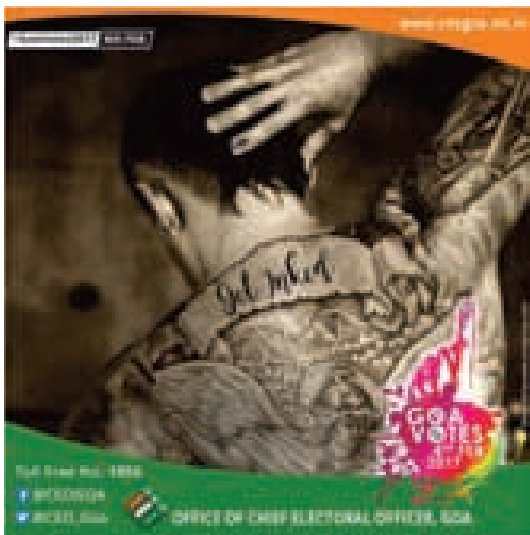
Approach: Considering the preponderance of youth in the social media platform, the creatives were made to look modern, youthful, trendy and contemporary.

Platform: Social media and webpage was redesigned using bootstrapping and a mobile version was created to give an app like look with smooth transition from webpage to mobile look.

Tools: Carousel strategy was used to reduce visual fatigue. Separate locations in Goa were targeted with 10 mile radius and six creatives were rotated in that particular radius. So when a visitor was moving from one area to another, he was watching a different content (advertisement). This also gave an idea of which advertisements were getting more hits and accordingly, that creative was separately boosted to get wider reach in the public.

The role of Social Media

Social Media especially facebook with large presence in Goa became the preferred medium of communication with citizens and voters. ADPAT model provided a framework within which the campaign has to move. Election has various stakeholders and proper

communication from Election Machinery to citizens is essential to ensure that they get right information on various rules and procedures, activities of election

machinery and the events leading to culmination of election process.

Logo Re-branding: In modern advertising world logo becomes the symbol of the organisation and its most visible feature. It creates an easy recall for the brand and helps in making a lasting impact on the education of the audience. A new trendy, colorful logo was created which emphasised the vibrancy of Goa with focus on importance of voting with indelible ink mark as a most visible form of the participation and the voting date was put which constantly reminded the voters about the voting day from the election. It was used in all creatives and communication from Election Machinery.

Creatives: Standard format was created for brand building and same was used in all mediums, Facebook, banners, hoardings, ads etc. Regular update was provided to audience on activities of the Election Machinery, provisions of elections, VVPAT usage through witty and
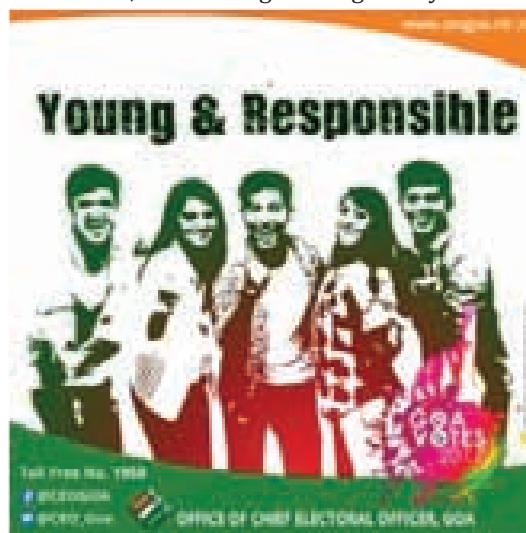
creative messages. The language was kept simple and easy to understand. The audio-visual messages of Election Icons were widely used. In the last week of campaign period, immediately before voting day, a targeting campaign was started to remind viewers about voting day to ensure that they remained focused to exercise their franchise. On voting day messaging was done with features on "Come Out and Vote" with witty graphics.

Major Focus areas of creatives

- **Maximum Participation from all sections of society:** Strategic creatives were made to ensure complete participation from all groups of people i.e., from first time voters to senior citizens.
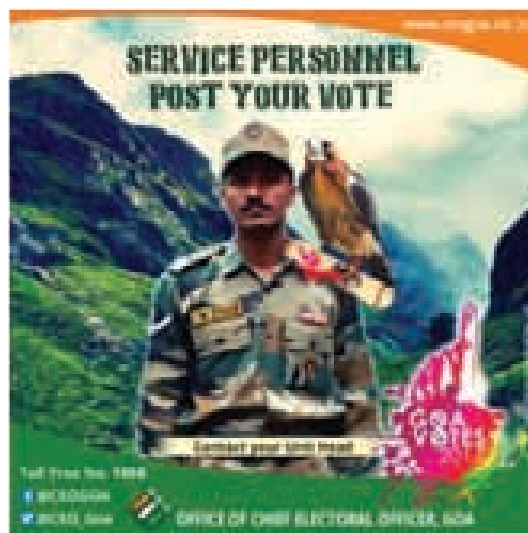
- **Messages by Icons:** Goa had 6 State Icons and 23 District Icons. The icons were selected from people having rich social, cultural, sports contribution to Goa and having good standing in Goan society so that their messages are easily conveyed to people. Creatives were made with motivational message of icons for posting on social media. The icons also create very catchy video songs which went viral with wide reach.
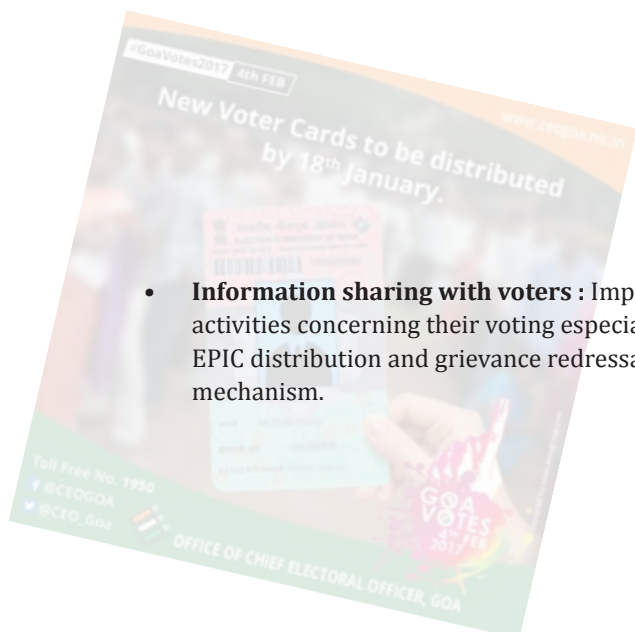
- **Information sharing with voters :** Important activities concerning their voting especially EPIC distribution and grievance redressal mechanism.
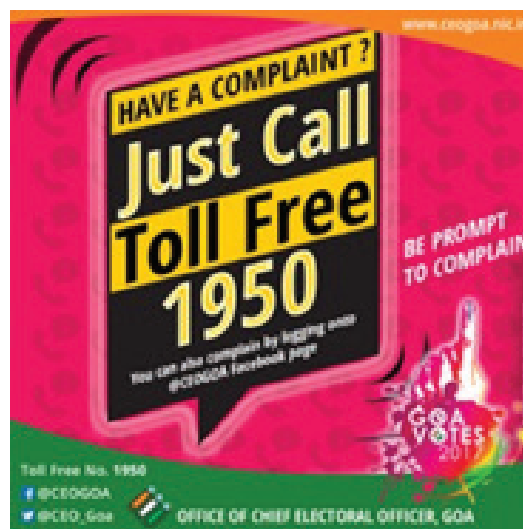
- **VVPAT Usage:** Goa was witnessing VVPAT for the first time. Voters were having confusion about secrecy and efficacy of VVPAT. VVPAT demo was conducted in every nook and corner of the state despite rumours were noticed and the features of VVPAT was repeatedly emphasised through infographics and videos.
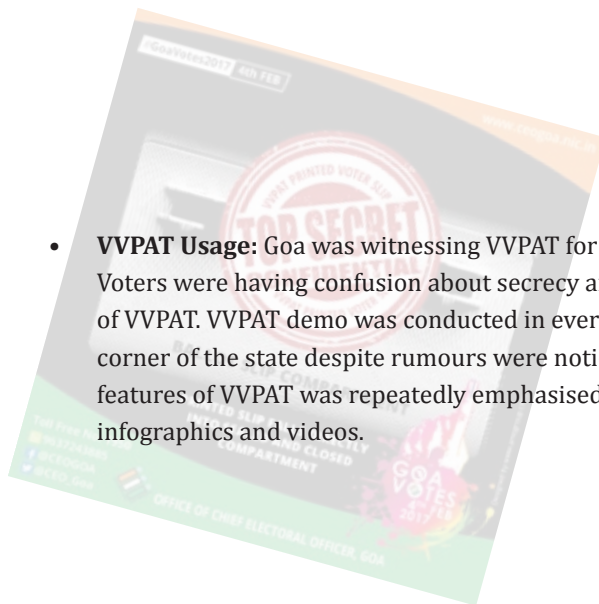
- **Regular update of onground activities:** Updates were made to ensure that voters feel constantly connected with the Election Machinery.

- **Promotion of Ethical Voting :** Ethical voting was promoted through various creatives.

- **Significant Days :** Celebration through Social Media kept citizens engaged.

- **Music Videos and Clips :** Clips convey messages quite emphatically and with current trend of avg attention span being less than a minute, clips and small music video of very short durations were made and posted on social media. These created a good interaction of citizens with facebook page.
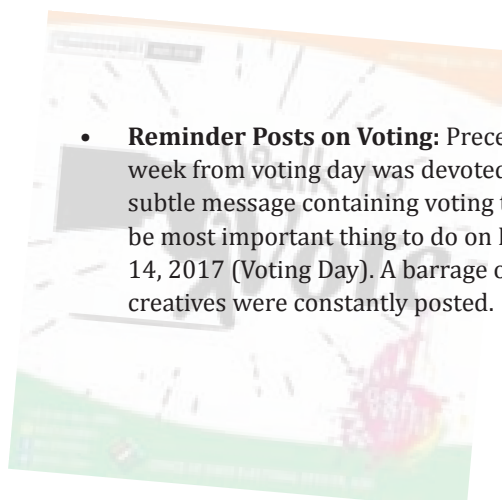
- **Reminder Posts on Voting:** Preceding week from voting day was devoted to subtle message containing voting to be most important thing to do on Feb 14, 2017 (Voting Day). A barrage of creatives were constantly posted.

- **Targeted Campaign on Voting Day:** Come out and Vote.

Engagement Strategy: One sided posting can lead to fatigue among audience and posting should be two way. One important aspect of Digital Marketing campaign was social media competition. It was organised with help of election interns who were college students. EPIC Selfie contest, Slogan Contest

were organised on facebook wherein the winners were decided through number of likes and shares. It helped in spreading the page catchment and also kept youth engaged with electoral processes. The Slogan contest helped the office in getting good content for future creatives which were converted into catchy creatives with good graphics.

Boosting Strategy: Care was taken to identify posts having good footprints. Facebook discourages boosting of heavy text items, so pictorial creatives were boosted and heavy text items were used for awareness building of existing users. The facebook insights and statistics were used to target the different user groups in different geographies. For every ad campaign, facebook provides detailed statistics and expected reach which ensured effective use of boosting.

Two-way communication through facebook: Social Media platforms are useful tool for citizen interaction. Citizens can give comments on posts as well as send private messages. It gives a direct feedback on on-ground activities as in understanding issues of voters and solving specific problems like not getting Voter ID

card or getting report on violations. This was directly monitored by CEO. Prompt replies to citizen's queries were given from CEO Office and prompt action was taken on specific complaints. Facebook "live" is an interesting feature by which with help of a mobile phone with good network connectivity, a direct live video broadcast can be made with audiences. This feature was used in different programs and press conferences. The questions posed by viewers were also answered during the facebook live session. Facebook live witnessed a large number of footprints.

Key Analytics

The audience continued growing gradually each day in form of participation, page likes, views etc. Small clips and songs on ethical voting and participation became viral with large number

of audiences. In a small period of time the page likes increased to 35,000 which corresponds to 3% of voters.

Key Learnings:

- Misinformation spreads fast, so effective monitoring and countering needed.
- ECI's pre-eminence position and reputation helps in conveying message.
- Education of public important to win trust followed by action.
- With social media, citizen-government dialogue has changed, passivity in citizen interaction make the system dependent on other media platforms, with social media, a cost effective real time interaction medium exists.
- Social media creates a unique platform for citizen-government dialogue and it is live.
- Relevant, catchy messages help gain audience and attention resulting in traction and coverage.
- Professional agency support is required. We started with Goa Arts College, poster competition but messages lacked penetration and professionalism.
- Features like facebook live enables administrator to directly communicate to users with a simple smartphone.
- Attention span is low so songs, clips should not be more than a minute.
- On social media when posts becomes viral in no time, constant inflow of fresh content is required.

Key Statistics

- Population of Goa: 15.20 lakhs
- Voters in Goa: 11.1 lakhs
- Facebook Likes: 35000+ which is 3 per cent of voters
- Facebook Engagement during polling week: More than 1 lakh, which is nearly 10 per cent voters
- Facebook View in polling week 2.5 lakhs- 5 lakhs amounting to 25-50 per cent voters
- Digital creatives were also shared on various SM platforms like whatsapp, youtube

Kunal
CEO, Goa

USING DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY AND SOCIAL MEDIA FOR VOTER EDUCATION

Voter Education is an important and necessary stage in any electoral process. In transitional democracies wherever a complex electoral system exists, or using new procedures or modern technology and whenever they call to simplify the concepts and clarify procedures and explain the details of the operation polling day, dissemination of information and voter education becomes a priority.

After accumulating extensive experience in numerous electoral processes and in electoral education over a decade the Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC) has established a new Institute specializing in electoral education to promote a culture of sustainable electoral voters.

Since the next parliamentary elections is bound to happen during the month of May 2018, IHEC will use new sorting and counting machines (electronic ballot box) for the first time, after successfully using electronic voter cards and verification devices during the previous election in 2014. The Iraqi Electoral Commission found it necessary to broaden the definition of advertising and promotional campaign. Election mechanism will be using modern equipment in the future, Voter cards will be received by voters who tag their data. The message on elections was spread through the following methods:

- Programs which were broadcast via satellite channels (these channels were hired for the duration of the campaigns).

- Seminars, programs and interactive sessions to educate voters in all the aspects.

- Use of social networking sites by launching a special hashtag Office of the Iraqi elections, and posting pictures, posters and videos to explain procedures for polling day.

- Coordination with international organizations such as the Organization of NDI through participatory programs to educate candidates for elections in Electoral Education Institute.

- Displaying large advertisements on highways using giant screens, on high roofs in cities and in crowded places as also at intersections within cities.

abroad. After registering online, one should keep the paper mentioning QR code and take the same at the polling station as a proof of his registration.

Other uses of electronic technology is to create a virtual library on the website with a wide range of sources, research papers and surveys on elections and democracy. Electoral Education Institute has another electronic library which is bigger and more diverse. It is useful for researchers and IHEC staff as well as all partners of the electoral process.

Finally, with the use of new devices for sorting and counting in the next elections, the results also will go directly by vesat from the polling centers to the tally-center in Baghdad. Then the results can be announced on big screens to the people so that everyone can see the results directly by using this advanced technology.

Hence, the use of modern technology in electoral education contributes to significantly reduce the time and effort required to sensitize and educate the broad categories and different sectors

The importance of these methods is to use community media, big screens, plus satellite TV as it is an effective medium to reach out to maximum number of voters.

Electronic ballot box facilitates voting and counting electronically. In addition to that, use of updated card for voters, as well as using electronic sealed checks paper ballots instead of the pen, is a fruitful exercise.

IHEC found that using an easy and effective manner and reaching the largest number of voters, special sites on social media platforms can be useful. Pictures and graphics can be included for the purpose of delivering clear information to voters.

Online technology has been used by allowing online registration of Iraqis outside of Iraq and in all countries where this program was put on the official website. Iraqi voter can register his name as an elector entitled to vote in an election

of the electorate, which no doubt will have a positive impact on the transparency and integrity of the electoral process.

Safaa E. Jasim
Commissioner
IHEC, Iraq

HOW KENYA USED SOCIAL MEDIA TO INFORM VOTERS & COUNTER FAKE NEWS

In today's digital age, the internet has emerged as a means of communication, connecting many more people and expanding networks a great deal wider with unprecedented speed. While it has brought about several positive outcomes such as the democratization of knowledge and e-commerce, it has also been used as a conduit for expressions of hatred, bigotry, racism, homophobia, and other such scourges of humanity. Such expressions [often referred to as digital violence] are forms of electoral violence and lead to direct and structural violence and affect the conditions necessary for free, fair and safe participation in election of all voters.

Well established, newly established and transitioning democracies are all vulnerable to the occurrence and ill-effects of fake news and electoral violence. This is increasingly becoming a larger problem as civic engagement today takes place in a rapidly evolving information ecosystem.

Globally, Information Operations, as defined by Facebook, is at the heart of organized actors' digital strategy to use a combination of disrupter methods such as false news, disinformation, or networks of fake accounts aimed at manipulating public opinion and diminishing the civic and political space.

Tools to prevent "fake news" (false news, false amplifiers and disinformation), violent extremism, radicalization and digital violence are in our hands but are not as widely used as we would like, especially during elections. As civic and voter educators, we are able to help constructively shape the emerging information ecosystem by ensuring digital platforms remain a safe and secure environment for authentic civic engagement.

With Facebook's new Explorer function, more and more people are seeing information from their friends and family only, as opposed to paid media. What this means is that they end up seeing more content that reinforces their own ideologies and possibly bogus information that is spread by family and friends such as inaccurate news articles that are widely commented on.

In a world where everyone is a potential amplifier global reach is now possible, we need to do more to counter fake news where it magnifies or drives digital violence or threatens the civic space and create common definitions and tools, because without them, we cannot understand or fully address these issues.

In Kenya, the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission (IEBC) is mandated to conduct continuous voter education in Kenya, so in 2017, ahead of the Kenyan general elections, the IEBC set out to work collaboratively with the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES), through the Kenya Electoral Assistance Program (KEAP) to improve outreach and voter education efforts for meaningful electoral participation.

Through a collaborative effort between researchers, the IEBC's Voter Education and Partnerships Department, the IEBC's Communications Department and IFES' strategic communications specialists a robust voter education effort consisting of the YVOTE (Youth Vote) activation campaign, digital

outreach, voter motivational ads and voter education ads were organized.

This outreach effort was situated in a larger interdisciplinary approach to strategic communications for preventing and responding to false news and misinformation that could lead to digital and electoral violence or disenfranchisement of voters. Expertise was generated through multiple efforts such as primary and secondary research and the development of resources, tools and creative content. The aim was to improve media literacy and implement an effective digital interrupter strategy to compliment voter education efforts.

Together with the IEBC, KEAP designed the target audience based on census, socio economic and voter registration data to help ensure that IEBC resources could be used in a targeted way. This analysis affirmed that 18-29 year olds were the largest population most eligible to register as voters but were the least registered, and that they are the poorest, often living in high density, low income areas.

A variety of digital tools were used such as Google adwords search and display, digital banners, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube ads, graphics and videos, third party social media platforms, Google, Facebook, Twitter and Instagram analytics, paid channel management, content production, digital PR, social listening and landing pages. Segmented audiences were targeted with digital and social media ads based on demographics, geographics and psychographics (interest/user behavior based).

Innovatively, the IEBC sought to leverage new media to interrupt misinformation and fake news on the Kenyan general elections and developed innovative distribution models that served the electoral commission, segments of the public and other organizations in their quest for truthful information.

Facebook recently reported that by developing and disseminating content that incorporates information on how to prevent, deter and recognize "fake news" it will improve media literacy and help people make more informed decisions when they encounter false news.

Myth buster ads were used to quell emerging and potential rumors and misinformation that was circulating on social media and from real time feedback from the 'Get Out to Vote' activation campaign. The aim was to state the facts and dispel the myths, which would enhance the legitimacy of the electoral process, the electoral commission and help improve the likelihood that the voter would cast a valid vote peacefully.

For the most part, myth buster ads were unbranded (did not bear any organizational logo), however the 'Now You Know' brand identity was created to give it a unique identifying factor. This was appropriate for the time and context however will not always work. For myth busting ads to be effective, the message and the messenger need to be credible and reliable. Some of the myth busting 'Now You Know' ads were posted and promoted from the YVOTE campaign social media pages, however on other occasions the 'Now You Know' ads were promoted unbranded on Facebook. KEAP made this strategic decision on case by case basis based on the rumors and myths that were circulating and determined who (if any) would be the most credible messenger at that time. Myth buster nuanced messaging included vote motivators which were pre-tested and that encouraged voter participation.

Communication interventions were prioritized so that we understood 'the most pressing need' of the segmented audience to improve information and awareness of voting processes and maintain credible communications At the end of the voter education campaign, 16,667,755 people were reached through social and digital media.

It is essential that voter educators and electoral management bodies are able to embolden the way that they communicate, educate and engage in order to promote an active and meaningful civic participation.

The digital information ecosystem is rapidly evolving. It is prudent that voter educators stay abreast of recent digital/social developments in order to push digital frontiers with voter education efforts. Many civil society organizations, electoral management bodies and voter educators rely mainly on offline interventions or top down digital and social media communications. We need to document, track and work alongside our counterparts to inspire them and to build their capabilities to think more strategically about how to design

interdisciplinary approaches to civic education that is rooted in social and behavior change communications, and the importance of coupling a strategic communications strategy that is data and insight driven with traditional voter education initiatives. It is hoped this approached will improve the communication conditions for meaningful engagement in the electoral process.

Social Links to YVOTE Campaign

- ☛ YVOTE website: https://www.iebc.or.ke/yvote/
- ☛ Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/YVoteKenya-296869347439324
- ☛ Twitter: https://twitter.com/YvoteKenya
- ☛ Instagram: https://www.instagram.com/YvoteKenya/

Sample Myth Buster Ads

Dead voters	Unbranded animated ad to demystify that people who have deceased can vote	https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B7XOqMhe1uIPa-1JSZUtpcTB4NTA/view?usp=sharing
Ballot stuffing	Unbranded ad which reinforces the measures that are there to safeguard the ballot	https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B7XOqMhe1uIPaH-JkTWZBRGF1b1k/view?usp=sharing
Voting more than once	Unbranded ad which explains that KIEMS kit cannot transmit more votes than there are voters	https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B7XOqMhe1uIP-bUlzUVg2d0xxNUU/view?usp=sharing
Polling	Unbranded social media ad which counteracts the rumor that you can vote in any polling station	https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B7XOqMhe1uIPc-GY3VDlVWkc2VTQ/view?usp=sharing
Form 34A	IEBC branded infomercial to inform the public about Form 34A	https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B7XOqMhe1uIPeW-0waHNWUW8yYUk/view?usp=sharing
Results transmission	IEBC branded infomercial to inform the public about the results counting, tally and transmission processes	https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B7XOqMhe1uIPLX-pBMnBWNkc1V0k/view?usp=sharing
Citizens' role	Unbranded TV ad to encourage citizens to constructively participate. It is a two part ad which leads into the latter	https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B7XOqMhe1uIPNX-BWenFLZWZSREE/view?usp=sharing

Carla Chianese
Civic and Voter Education Specialist
IFES

VOTER EDUCATION THROUGH DIGITAL AND SOCIAL MEDIA IN NEPAL

Educating a voter about electoral process is termed as Voter Education. Latest digital technologies and social media are playing a vital role in Voter Education. Voter education is generally carried out by an electoral authority and is arranged to inform potential voters in advance of each Election Day.

All potential voters and stakeholders—men, women and others are informed about their rights and responsibilities, their political system, who are eligible to vote; where and how to register; how electors can check the voter lists to ensure they have been duly included; what type of elections are being held; where, when and how to vote; who the candidates are; and how to file complaints, value of each vote, secrecy of casted vote and criteria of valid/ invalid vote etc. It is necessary to ensure free, fair, transparent and credible elections.

There are different ways to educate voters depending on time and technology advancement. Voter education was previously done with pamphlets, posters and wall painting; gradually changed to radio, television and newspapers and now-a-days digital and social media. Electoral authority has also taken major steps to reduce the use of pamphlets, posters and wall painting because it distorts the beauty of city/village. Digital and social media are becoming strong communication tools after availability of Internet to reach voters and stakeholder at large scale with minimum cost, labor and time.

The Constitution of Nepal declared Nepal as a Federal Democratic Republican state with three levels of government: federal, provincial and local. After promulgation of new Constitution by Constituent Assembly dated Asoj 3, 2072 (Sep. 20, 2015), all three tiers of elections namely local level, provincial level and federal level elections are to be conducted before Magh 7, 2074 (Jan. 21, 2018). ECN as per mandate given by Constitution of Nepal has successfully conducted all three tiers of election scheduled on different dates of year 2074 (B.S.) with a great effort before the due date. This is a historic achievement in the history of ECN. Because this was the first time in the history of Nepal that so many elections were held in the same year 2074. Hence, the year 2074 is also remembered as Election Year.

The local level election was held at three phases dated Baisakh 31, 2074 (May 14, 2017), Asar 14, 2074 (June 28, 2014) and Asoj 2, 2074(Sep 18, 2017). There were about 14.1 million voters for local level election out of which about 75% voters had cast their votes. Similarly, federal and provincial elections were held at two phases dated Mangsir 10, 2074 (November 26, 2017) and Mansir 21, 2074 (December 07, 2017). There were about 15.4 million voters for federal and provincial elections out of which about 69% voters had cast their votes and 2,056 voters for

National Assembly Election (NAE) held on Magh 24, 2074 (Feb 07, 2018) out of which 99.52 % voters had cast their votes.

Voter education was very challenging for ECN since different tiers of election should be done within a very short span of time. Also, all required legal documents were not prepared at the time of election declared date. Each election was of different type and hence consisted of different types of ballot papers, different vote casting and calculation method to select required members. Six types of ballot papers were fitted into one ballot paper of different size for local level election where voters had to cast seven votes for six posts like one Mayor/Chairman, one Deputy Mayor/Chairman, one Ward Chairperson, one Dalit Member, one Women Member and two Members. Three types of the ballot paper were designed for House of Representative (HoR) and Provincial Assembly (PA) elections where voters had to cast four votes for four members: one vote for first past the post (FPTP) of HoR and second vote for proportional representation (PR) for HoR, third vote for FPTP of PA election and fourth vote for PR of PAE. FPTP was based on majority system where as PR was based on cluster as well as party vote received. Lastly, there were four types of ballot papers for National Assembly (NA) Election where voters had to write priority 1, 2 and 3 on each type of ballot papers of Women and Others group; put a right sign against a candidate on each ballot paper of Dalit and Disability or Minority group. NA election was based on both majority and Single Transfer voting (STV) systems.

As mentioned above voter education was really complex and challenging during different tiers of election for election commission of Nepal keeping time-constraint, heterogeneous geographic location and climate in account. So, ECN had adopted different methodology to educate potential voters and stakeholder. Increase of use of computer in 21st century and availability of Internet enabled ECN to conduct voter education through digital and social media also in addition to using radio and print. Civil society organisations like NGO and INGO and political parties had also conducted voter education using digital and social media.

Digital media is digitized content that can be transmitted over the internet or computer networks. With use of digital media, voter education was conducted as follows:

- **TV Programme** : 'Nirwachan Sarokar' program was broadcast from Nepal TV network and other TV networks during the election. Also, videos illustrating the condition when a vote was invalid, the time for voting, the way of staying in a queue at the polling station, were shown on Nepal TV network and other networks. Discussion programs on Election were also held through different TV networks.

- **Sending message on mobile to cast vote:** With the assistance of Nepal Telecom, the message like following was sent to citizens/voters on Election Day as well as the day before it. They were requested to go to own polling centre on time to use their voting right on Election Day.
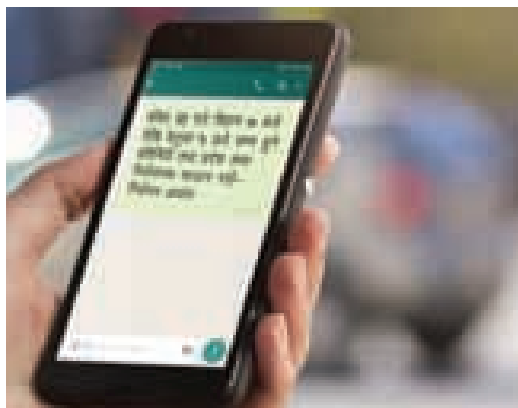
Candidates had also sent the message to the voters though mobile message to cast the votes to them.

- **ECN Mobile App launched:** An ECN mobile app (Nepali & English) was launched for the first time to find voters, polling center, how to vote, candidate, and

election result with media. More than 1 lakh people have downloaded this app.

- **Observing digital content in EEIC:** Voters and stakeholders were brought in Electoral Education Information Center (EEIC) of ECN to show the digital content describing importance of election and how to vote etc.

- **Digital video/audio in CD/DVD:** The videos/audios related to voter education such as when a vote is invalid, the time for voting, the way of staying in a queue at the polling station were put into CD/DVD and made them available to volunteers and participants so that they could go to voters and show them visually.

- **ECN Website:** ECN website *(http://www.election.gov.np/election/np/)* was updated regularly to inform voters and stakeholders about elections. Mainly press release, News, Electoral law, Election program schedule, Different activities like Voting Day, ID distribution Day, Nomination day etc. of election were put on the website. Final candidate list and result were also published on separate website i.e. result.election.gov.np and the pages were accessed by more than 1.5 million people.

- **Government's other agency website**: Government's other agencies like Office of the Prime Minister and Council of Ministers and Ministry of Home Affairs had also played important role for voter education. They also updated their website and kept Election related information on it.

- **Online portals (News media and others):** ECN had given permission to

many private owned online portals to publish potential information regarding election.

Social Media

Social Media are computer-mediated technologies that facilitate the creation and sharing of information, ideas, career interests and other forms of expression via virtual communities and networks. Voter education was conducted through social media as follows:

- **Facebook:** ECN has its own Facebook account *(https://www.facebook.com/ecnofficial)*. A number of photos, videos, music and information mentioning about different tiers of elections were shared through it. A social media campaign: 'I have voted and U?' was initiated on Facebook. Facebook also published reminder regarding Election Day and requested to cast vote by going to respective polling centre. Voters and stakeholders made queries/complaints on Facebook during election. A webmaster was positioned to replied to them.

- **Twitter:** ECN has a twitter account *(www.twitter.com/ec_nepal)*. Election related information was also shared through it during election.

- **YouTube:** The YouTube address of ECN is *(https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCFUMkXQjaA0kGJseLu2EWWg/videos)*. A number of videos related to local level election, house of representative and provincial level election were uploaded on YouTube to educate voters. Videos and music were done in different languages like Nepali, Maithili, Bhojpuri, Tharu etc. Two videos: one "Chunav ko Chaso/

Concern of Election" was used for local level election and second used for House of Representation and Provincial Assembly election were mentioned in following pages.

In addition to ECN, all the major parties and leaders were seen increasing their presence on social media during elections. They turned to social and digital media to reach to voters easily on large scale. It was also cost-effective, environment-friendly and efficient for interacting with voters. Nearly all parties, irrespective of their size, boasted official accounts on Facebook and Twitter, with a dedicated team to use them. The teams did multiple jobs, from monitoring cyberspace, promoting party/candidates, election agendas and increasing their reach.

Voters had enthusiastically participated in all three tiers of elections. Election Commission of Nepal in addition to online portals and Political parties/candidates used successfully digital and
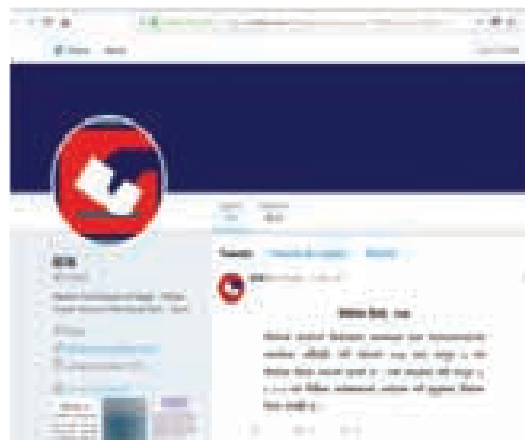
social media to conduct voter education in all tiers of election. However, there is the negative impact of digital and social media. Due to lack of cyber activists, it is difficult to trust fully on it. Proper utilization of digital and social media for voter education cuts off different unhidden costs of election and helps political parties/candidates to reach larger voters and stakeholders easily with less time. It is however, realized that voter education should be carried out very carefully by electoral authority. To do this effectively, reaching out to disadvantaged groups as well as mainstream voters is the foremost important thing. Voter education through digital and social media really cuts barriers and helps reach common voters with low cost, labor and time which naturally boosts democracy.

Read about Chunav ko Chaso - a tele-drama by Officials of Election Commission of Nepal on page no. 34

Shree Chandra Sah
Senior Computer Officer
Election Commission of Nepal

Chunav ko Chaso/Concern of Election

This is a tele-drama named 'Chunav ko Chaso/ Concern of Election' shot by Officials of Election Commission of Nepal. This drama is uploaded into *(https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q2o2_FD8q1M&feature=share)*.

Three ordinary people who have visited in Asan Market, Kathmandu are discussing to go to their home town for the upcoming local level election. Suddenly they see one of their village mates on the road who has come to Kathmandu for searching a job. They are amused to see own village mates coming to the capital during election while others are trying to go home as fast as they can. They raise the question, 'why do you come here knowing there will be election very soon?' He replies that he didn't care about the election because of no trust on any of the candidates. Because all this time there have only been promises instead of action. One of the guy's uncles wants to be a candidate in the upcoming

election whereas on other hand there is a woman who serves the society whole day night from a long time. Being young and enthusiastic, she deserves to be the proper candidate but the welfare of people matters the less.

At one hand, they all want to be a part of election but on the contrary they know nothing about the election. Like, how should they vote? Or what a ballot paper looks like? They have visited nearby a café to take tea as well as to discuss about the election. To find the answers to some of these important questions they decide to go to the head office i.e. office of Election Commission, which is just near the market. They go to Information System Management Section of ECN to know about the concerned officer. The chief of this section told them to visit election operational section. They then went that section and met the chief of election operational section. They interacted with him to know about the ballot paper and procedure of the election. They get

to know that the ballot paper for the election is bigger than they expected. But they soon get to know why they are big. For every district, the ballot papers are different. Like in some districts there may be many candidates from independent as well as from parties whereas for some districts there are fewer candidates. So, on the basis of candidates the ballot paper is decided as for more candidates more election sign is required.

There are six types of ballot paper- 18, 22, 28, 36, 44 and 68 small blocks consisting ballot paper. And the ballot paper over twenty eight is then divided into two columns. And the serial number is written too on top of the head. The big ballot papers are divided into two columns though they are the same ballot paper otherwise it will be long. So, all the things are identical between two columns. If you want to vote for chairman you can vote them at ballot number one in either of the columns on any of the desired election sign. Similarly, for vice-chairman you can allocate at number two and so on. In sixth column, one can vote for two candidates and the sixth column is divided by a huge dark border. These are some basic concepts to elect for the desired candidates during election. But these are not widely known by commoners which is the high reason for invalid ballot papers. After appreciated him for his valuable time, they finally decided to go to own village to teach villagers correct ways of voting in election.

HoR & PA related Video: This is informational video and can be found *(https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2To0eNKwRHA)*. This is describing about HoR and PA elections with different types of ballot papers used for FPTP and PR. It also gives information how to vote and how to put a ballot paper into a box after voting. It also informs about the criteria that make votes valid and invalid.

VOTERS AS MINDFUL CONSUMERS IN THE DIGITAL AGE

Innovations in technology and access to information continue to transform the way people, especially youth, engage with or disengage from their democracies across the globe.

One such shift relates to the direction and flow of that engagement. This change has been brought about by the unprecedented and growing ability of internal and external political and electoral stakeholders to overtly and covertly influence electoral participation through tailored and targeted social media outreach.

Traditional media such as television and radio have been and continue to be potent influencing tools for engaging electorates. However, society is progressing toward a future where, figuratively speaking, the television channel chooses you, rather than the other way around.

The growing ubiquity of smart phones, coupled with social media's ever-expanding datasets and fine-tuned algorithms about our behaviors and preferences, equates to a new reality wherein these powerful tools can be employed to influence voter engagement on a level that far surpasses anything that has been seen by our civilization to date.

Societies that have traditionally categorized their electorates as passive, disengaged, or distrustful of politics, now, face an added challenge in that the competition for the attention of an electorate through social media and new technologies is today fiercer and more efficient than ever before.

While social media and new technologies can and should be used as tools that support informed voter engagement, we must remind ourselves that they are only tools; that can be used for good and for bad.

As technologies continue to evolve, nations must carefully consider what skills, values, and knowledge their electorates should have to be able to responsibly use these powerful tools, rather than being used by them.

This, then, raises a foundational question: where, when and how do we learn to be critical and mindful consumers of information? While there is no single answer to this question, it reminds us that mindful democratic citizens are 'made' not 'born,' and today, more than ever before, citizens must be equipped to face the challenges of oversaturation and disinformation.

Responding to this growing challenge, the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) works across the globe and in partnership with election management bodies, academia, media and civil society to strengthen the critical thinking and media literacy skills of youth. These areas of support represent key components of IFES' broader civic education programming, which is designed to strengthen the skills, values and knowledge that are key for mindful, democratic citizenship[1] in the digital age.

In Ukraine, these efforts are supported by the United States Agency for International Development, Global Affairs Canada, and UK

---

[1]The Council of Europe's Charter on Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education defines education for democratic citizenship as, "Education, training, awareness-raising, information, practices and activities which aim, by equipping learners with knowledge, skills and understanding and developing their attitudes and behaviour, to empower them to exercise and defend their democratic rights and responsibilities in society, to value diversity and to play an active part in democratic life, with a view to the promotion and protection of democracy and the rule of law." *https://rm.coe.int/16803034e5*

aid, and have translated into an innovative, semester-long, university level civic education course named, 'Democracy: from Theory to Practice.[2]' The course, which will be piloted at eight Ukrainian universities in September 2018, was developed by Ukrainian and international experts, is tailored for Ukraine, and is based on IFES' global university-level civic education methodology: Strengthening Engagement through Education for Democracy (SEED). Through SEED, IFES, in 2011 introduced an innovative, university-level civic education course in Georgia that is currently offered at the majority of accredited universities in the country.

IFES' research, conducted over a span of seven years in Georgia and other countries, demonstrates that individuals benefit significantly from participation in such civic education offerings. These benefits include, but are not limited to, the development of a range of skills associated with mindful, democratic citizenship, including: the ability to critically analyze information, to consider issues from multiple perspectives, and to make informed decisions.

As noted by American philosopher and educator John Dewey, 'democracy has to be born a new every generation, and education is its midwife,' and our ability to critically analyze and process the ever-growing onslaught of (dis)information will without doubt continue to strongly influence the health of our modern democracies.

Through its civic education programming, IFES works worldwide to ensure that the next generation of leaders, and today's voters, are equipped to effectively manage the new age of (dis)information, and thus, to contribute to their nations' democratic progress and prosperity.

George 'Gio' Kobakhidze
Senior Operations & Civic Education Officer
IFES

[2]http://www.ifes.org/news/ukrainian-university-educators-learn-new-innovative-civic-education-methodology

DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY AND SOCIAL MEDIA FOR VOTER EDUCATION

The way we vote has changed significantly with the advent of 21st century. Ballot papers and pencils used hitherto have given way to electronic voting machines and e-voting. Online voter registration and biometric voter registration has substituted the conventional methods of registration. Internet and web based voter awareness and educational resources facilitate dissemination of information in a far more efficient manner and even enable a dialogue with the stakeholders including feedback, surveys etc. Citizen engagement, especially the youth through new media and social media have become an integral part of the electoral process. It is said that the voter education connects citizens with the electoral process. Technology integration has improved this connect and made it more efficient and engaging.

Before we look at the integration of technology in electoral systems that have evolved in some of the leading democracies, let us visit some of the basic terms and concepts on the subject.

Digital Technologies

Digital technologies mean and include technologies that facilitate communications through the internet. This expression would include communication through computers, mobile phones and web-ready devices etc. Besides software, middle ware, storage, and audio-visual systems that enable users to access, store, transmit, and manage information. Alternatively, the term 'Information and Communications Technology' (ICT) is also used and as such the term 'Digital Technologies' is used synonymously with ICT.

Web Portal

One specifically designed web page within a website which collects information together from diverse sources in a uniform way.

Social Media

The expression refers to means of interactions among people in which they create, share, and exchange information and ideas in virtual communities and networks. Social media depends on mobile and web-based technologies to create highly interactive platforms through which individuals and communities share, co-create, discuss, and modify user-generated content.

New Media

A number of electoral management bodies (EMBs) and other stakeholders in the electoral process in many countries across the world have demonstrated that social media provide new opportunities for engaging citizens, especially the youth in electoral processes. These opportunities have both *quantitative* and *qualitative* dimensions that may be described as follows:

- The readership, listenership and viewership of traditional media (press, radio and television) are declining among most of the demographic groups, particularly among young people. In contrast use of social media is increasing rapidly and these forms of media offer increased access to voters and potential voters.

- The social media are interactive; they offer qualitatively improved opportunities in mediated communication. Conventional media provide one-way transmission of information in top-down flow, social media provide two-way interactive and participative engagement with citizens as they allow citizens to have a say and be heard, they allow citizens to ask questions and seek information directly relevant to their needs and interests, and

they afford discussion and participation. Analysis confirms enhanced engagement through social media involving voice and participation hither to missing or much less achieved through one-way information flow.

- Social media offer cost savings compared with use of traditional mass media, as well as access to low-cost and no-cost metrics for measurement and evaluation.

- Youth engagement in electoral processes through social media has assumed a larger significance and import to the future of the democracy.

Voter Information and Education Resources: EMB websites

The EMBs provide templates and tools on their websites in the form of voter resources to support voter awareness on providing comprehensive information relating to electoral process in an easily accessible manner. The websites are updated periodically, especially ahead of the elections. In many cases online voter registration facilities are also provided through the website of the concerned EMB. Information provided as 'voter resources' generally covers all categories of voters including women, PwDs, ethnic and linguistic minorities, overseas voters and absentee voters etc. There is also a frequently asked questions page on the website to address questions and quarries from the voters. Voter guides and easy guides for voters are also provided by some EMB's on websites. As such where, when and how to vote information for all categories of voters is available on these websites and is of tremendous help to voters in electoral participation.

EMB Websites: E-electoral Resources for Education and Engagement for School and Colleges

The websites of EMBs in many cases host electoral literacy resources including mock vote and campus engagement resources and a host of related programs and activities. Technological interventions have substantially improved the access to such resources not only for the schools and colleges but also for the young and future voters not covered by the formal education system and the communities. Some of the EMBs have developed civic engagement models and hosted them on their websites for follow up through nonpartisans. The E-connect has helped forge larger and efficient outreach. The technology has acceptably become an important and integral part of voter education.

VoICE.NET Initiative

Two laudable achievements of the New Delhi International Conference on 'Voter Education for Informed, Inclusive and Ethical Participation,' include launch of the VoICE.NET Portal and the New Delhi Declaration on Voter Education. The VoICE.NET (Voter Information, Communication and Education Network) has over two dozen EMBs, International Organizations on board. They share their experiences through a number of E-publications such as VoICE International, VoICE India, international events etc. VoICE.NET carries rich digital resources on global experiences. A separate paper will be presented on the subject.

The instant paper intends to visit the experience of some of the EMBs in use of technology for voter education and what we can learn from such practices.

Australia: ELECTORAL ENGAGEMENT: Maintaining and Enhancing Democratic participation through Social Media

The Australian Electoral Commission (AEC) is charged with the responsibility maintenance of the electoral rolls, conducting free and fair elections, besides all the related matters like voter education etc. The focus of the AEC is on encouraging citizens to:

- Enroll to vote;
- Maintain their electoral enrolment (e.g. when changing addresses); and;
- Vote formally in elections.

AEC's Technology Based Campaigns

To achieve these objectives, AEC conducts ongoing and election-specific campaigns with a view to educate citizens in relation to their enrolment and voting responsibilities. These campaigns use a range of direct and mediated communication.

New Policy of Engaging Citizens through Technology

Australian Government made a public commitment to engage with citizens through technologies such as social media in order to promote greater participation in country's democracy. It expressed its commitment to an open government based on a culture of engagement, built on better access to and use of government information and sustained by the innovative use of technology. In line with this policy, the Australian Electoral Commissioner's Advisory Board on Electoral Research (CABER) recommended that the Commission investigate the potential for new forms of social media to contribute to achievement of the objectives of the AEC, particularly in relation to engaging young people.

AEC Commissions Study report

The AEC commissioned a study report in 2011 to examine as to how social media were used by election management bodies (EMBs) etc in Australia and abroad. It was envisaged that the findings would be used for future engagement with voters by the AEC. The study examined the challenges and potential benefits while maintaining strict political neutrality in the dynamic environment of Web 2.0 based interactive media.

NSW Electoral Commission: A Case Study (Electoral Management Bodies' E-democracy Initiatives and Learning)

The NSW Electoral Commission is located in Sydney and responsible for the registration of political parties, enrolment of electors, electoral rolls, and the conduct of elections in the State.

Objectives

The key objectives of the NSW Electoral Commission social media strategy during 2011 were:

- To spread messages virally online via online social networks and direct conversations;
- To hear what people were saying about the election;
- To reach younger audiences what may be missed by traditional communication methods.

Platforms

NSW Electoral Commission used the following online platforms to reach targeted audiences during the run up to the 2011 State election.

- **Vote NSW Web site**
  The Web site carries a large amount of information for NSW voters and has an 'election clock' counting down until the next election. Social media channel icons/links are shown on the page for citizen engagement. *(http://vote.nsw.gov.au/)*

- **Facebook Community Page**
  Coordinated by NSW Electoral Commission and its advertising agency, the Facebook page was active primarily during the peak period of the election campaign. No significant criticism or conflict between participants was reported. Facebook advertising was employed to increase 'Likes'. This was managed by the advertising agency and was successful in attracting an increased audience. *(http://www.elections.nsw.gov.au/).*

- **Twitter**
  The platform is used for broadcasting messages and primarily linking to items on the Website.

- **YouTube**
  Videos posted range from 'How to Vote' to showing new voting innovations such as iVote.

- **SMS Reminders**

    SMS reminders allowed electors to register for an e-mail and/or SMS to be sent whenever a Local Government or State Parliamentary election event for which they were enrolled was pending. It appeared to be a good 'push' technology, although usage figures were not available.

Planning and strategy

Interest in online civic engagement had already been building up in several States. In 2011 a national level meeting was held for communication staff from all Australian state electoral commissions. Commission staff looked at legislation, requirements, risks and management issues related to online engagement.

The NSW social media initiative came from the Commission's advertising agency which suggested the use of online engagement channels. This was linked with a project within the Commission to set up its own Facebook account.

The stakeholder group was kept very broad and included electors in the age group 18 to 70 years, parliament candidates, participants in the election, registered political parties etc. However, main focus was younger audience in view of the fact that they are the most disengaged from the electoral process and their engagement through traditional media was ineffective and weak.

Social media strategy was developed by the advertising agency and integrated into the overall communication strategy. Online platforms were set up. Community guidelines were developed for each platform to ensure non partisan nature. Content calendars were developed and three weeks of content was pre-prepared for the kickoff of the platforms. An advertising agency was originally employed for content production. However, it was noticed that in reality, the Commission's staff produced much of the content material and the agency continually looked to them for guidance. This has implications for resourcing.

Event-based or ongoing conversation

EC NSW had been planning to review its use of Social Media from simple information transmission to more interactive mode. In view of resource constraints as one of the factors, social media use by EC NSW is predominantly event-based around elections. During the inter election periods, quantum of work is substantially reduced. Accordingly, the Commission planned to bring social media channels 'back to life' only in the second half of 2012 at the time of beginning of the cycle for NSW local government elections.

Management – leadership and oversight

Senior staff of the Commission clearly understands the role for social media and were encouraged by the Commission's advertising agency which discussed the new channels and their use. NSW Electoral Commission was fairly risk tolerant and saw the advantages of it, after the advertising agency put together a brief. However, there is no clear champion or advocate of social media within the organization. A full time social media officer was the need of the day.

Social Media Policy and Guidelines

The NSW Electoral Commission did not have a social media policy for staff during the last election. Instead, general guidelines were issued in the form of a 'common sense social media reminder'. In view of the necessity a more detailed social media policy was still in development.

Training and Resourcing

The Commission worked on a partnership approach with its advertising agency during the start-up phase of the social media engagement strategy. The agency trained internal staff of the Commission besides becoming actively involved in responding to posts and moderating platforms during the peak periods as a part of their retainer agreement. The agency was given guidelines based on the telephone call centre response manual so for efficient response to questions on the online platforms. However, this arrangement was not sustainable in view of lack of efficacy and cost effectiveness. New social media management was necessary.

Monitoring and measurement

The advertising agency supplied weekly metrics reports both qualitative and quantitative regarding each social media platform. The advertising agency also supplied detailed monitoring reports to the Commission, including qualitative analysis such as *sentiment* (positive, negative and neutral). Real-time monitoring was one of the main services

the Commission sought and valued during the election. However, post-election, the Commission's staff monitored social media manually. In terms of assessing the overall effectiveness of social media use, the response echoed the E-consultancy (2010) report on UK public sector online engagement which concluded in relation to measurement that 'success is a lack of failure'.

Key Learning

- **Content** – is a critical component of social media and it is vital to have an engaging content. Initially, the Commission used basic content such as 'how to vote', but is now prepared to look for more interesting content such as photos and videos to enhance engagement.
- **Resourcing** – Be prepared for resourcing implications. Social media use may not be costly in financial terms, but it is in employee time.
- **The 24 x7 nature of social media**–New rules of engagement apply as social media operate 24x7 and response time expectations are considerably demanding.
- **Monitoring** – Even if there is no proactive social media strategy, it is necessary to monitor what is being said.
- **Approval** – Processes need to be simplified and efficient for success.
- **Learning as you go** – It what works in social media. The word 'experimental' was used throughout the interview, reinforcing that many leanings were gained through experience.
- **Tone** – getting the tone right within the content is very important.

As they felt more comfortable with the new media they agreed with the agency that the tone needed to be more engaging "if you're not getting through the messages you want, what's the point.

Main opportunities

- Social media has allowed the Commission to give real time response to users by simply pointing to a link back to the Website. As a customer service style, the tool proved to be very efficient.
- From a financial cost perspective (leaving out the employee time), social media is affordable. Social media platforms are primarily free and setup costs are not prohibitive.
- Using social media to reach CALD audiences if successfully implemented in future, would add a key strength to the online engagement.

Main challenges

- **Resources** – Social media takes a large amount of time; correct levels of staffing are also critical.
- **Content** – Engaging content in the down-period of the election cycle should be readily available in advance.
- **Metrics** – Having time and expertise to interpret the large volume of metrics available from internet-based social media is important. As social media is relatively new, it is difficult to identify key benchmarks for each platform. As the industry matures this should become clearer.
- **Control** – Organizations need to understand that they do not have control. Despite efforts for self-moderation, the Commission reported 'troublemakers on the site' (Facebook) and the need for protocols to deal with problem posts. The spokesperson also commented: "On Twitter, it's truly the Wild West. I mean, people can say whatever they like and there's nothing you can do".

For the purposes of this project, social media have been defined as 'online tools and Web sites that facilitate many-to-many communications between users. Specific examples include Facebook and Twitter, but may also include more regional or niche services, and more longstanding collaborative environments such as web-based forums and wikis' (Australian Electoral Commission, 2011a, p. 3).

More specifically, Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) define social media as internet-based applications built on the technological and ideological foundations of Web 2.0, described by Tim O'Reilly, who coined the term, as a second generation of Web-based services that feature openness for participation, collaboration and interactivity (Boler, 2008, p. 39; O'Reilly, 2005).

Elections Canada: Taking Advantage of Information and Communication Technology

New Technology: Integral to Elections Canada's Functions

New technology is integral to how Elections Canada manages and delivers elections. Many of EC's functions and the processes are based on technology applications. Some of these are listed as follows:

- Managing electronic networks and intranets at headquarters and in the field to enable efficient communications;
- Maintaining and improving applications supporting the National Register of Electors and the Electoral Geography Database, several other mechanisms and tools that support real-time monitoring and reporting on electoral processes and events;
- Developing and expanding Elections Canada's social media presence, developing customized applications that support key services such as the Voter Information Service, real-time broadcasting of election results and online reporting for political entities;
- Developing and supporting customized applications that enable political parties, electoral district associations, candidates, nomination contestants and leadership contestants to complete and submit financial returns required by the Canada Elections Act.

Let us look at how these technology options facilitate the voter and strengthen the electoral process.

Geographic Information System

Elections Canada's geographic databases provide the framework for

(i) locating electors on the National Register of Electors in an electoral district and assigning them to a polling division ('geocoding')

(ii) for readjustment electoral boundaries after the decadal census. Political parties are provided digitized versions of electoral maps and access to the related web application, 'GeoExplore', used by returning officers for managing elections in their electoral districts. Elections Canada website permits electors to enter their postal code to obtain information on their electoral district and Member of Parliament and during elections, the location of their polling station and contact information for their local Elections Canada office.

Elections Canada on the Web

Up-to-date information on the Canadian electoral process is provided to the voters on the Elections website at www.elections.ca. The site provides all relevant information to voters for awareness on different aspects of federal elections including:

- **The Voter Information Service**: It helps electors to learn how, when and where to register and vote just on the basis of their postal code.
- **The Online Voter Registration Service**: It helps electors to find out if they are registered to vote in federal elections, to update their address or to complete their registration.
- **Profiles of individual federal electoral districts** with maps, contact information for the returning officer and a list of all candidates during elections.
- **Voter registration forms** along with instructions for Canadian electors in or outside Canada who cannot or do not wish to vote at a polling station during an election.
- **Sections for political entities** that inform them about their rights and obligations and provide guidance, handbooks and reporting tools.
- **Written opinions, guidelines** and interpretation notes about the application of the *Canada Elections Act* to political entities, issued by Elections Canada on its own initiative or at the request of political parties.
- **A live feed of election results** on election night
- **A search-able section of financial returns** from all political entities media information, publications, teaching resources and materials.
- **Information about federal representation** and electoral boundaries readjustment.

Continuous Connect with Stakeholders

Elections Canada has a constant E-connect with the electorate and the broader environment, including Parliament, the academic community, the media and international organizations. These connections enable it to:

- Refine its knowledge on electoral matters to support the Chief Electoral Officer in developing his recommendations to amend the *Canada Elections Act* and in advising parliamentarians on electoral matters.

- Support strategic planning, monitoring progress in delivering electoral events, and complete corporate projects by conducting regular information gathering and analysis.

- Improve delivery of elections by establishing links with academics, research institutes, provincial and national bodies, and international organizations involved in electoral matters.

- Keep in touch with public by making information available in a number of ways, including through its website.

    EC's Website

    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 works on a continued manner to improve accessibility of its website.

    Details may be accessed at: (*http://www. elections.ca)*

    Elections Canada Blogs:

    EC's blogs are user friendly, informative and interactive instruments for electoral e-interactions and communications for voters and the public as such. Some of the excerpts from the Blog follow.

Canada's Democracy Week Blogs

Chief Electoral Officer Marc Mayrand presents Canada's Democracy Week 2015

This week marks the fifth edition of Canada's Democracy Week, taking place from September 14–21, 2015. As the federal election is scheduled for October 19, 2015, we chose as our theme: '*Let's Get Canada Ready to Vote.*' Canada's Democracy Week 2015 is an excellent time for Canadians to learn about the mechanics of our democratic process and to start getting ready to vote.

Get ready to vote now!

As Canada's Chief Electoral Officer, I encourage all Canadians 18 years and older to visit the **Elections Canada website** to get ready to vote.

It's easy to be ready to vote:

1. Be part of National Registration Day on September 15. Check your registration online.

2. If you are registered, watch for your voter information card in the mail in late September. It will tell you where and when to vote and the accessible services available at your polling location. Or use our online Voter Information Service: all you need is your postal code.

3. Make sure you have the right ID to vote. Consult our Voter ID List online.

4. Choose one of the four options that you have to vote: on election day, at an advance poll, at an Elections Canada office or by mail.

Note: The Elections Canada website, www.elections.ca, is the place for all the information you need to be ready to cast your ballot.

Not 18 yet? You can still be involved in this year's federal election!

As both a parent and Canada's Chief Electoral Officer, I believe there is great potential for Canada's youth to play a more significant role in energizing our democracy and its institutions. Hands-on civic education programs encourage students to discuss politics with friends and family, build their knowledge and understanding of Canada's democratic institutions and awaken their sense of civic duty – all potential precursors to becoming an active voter.

That is why I'm encouraging educators to register their schools in the Student Vote program administered by CIVIX. Participating students research the issues, parties and candidates through classroom and school-wide activities. They then experience the voting process firsthand by casting ballots for the official election candidates running in their school's riding. When a school registers for the program, they receive a customized Student Vote campaign package including activity resources, campaign posters, an election operations manual and authentic voting materials (ballot boxes, voting screens, ballots

and riding maps). The program is free and open to all schools. Teachers can register their school at www.studentvote.ca.

The National Democracy Challenge invites Canadian students aged 14 to 17 to submit a video, image or text related to this year's theme: Show Canadians how to get ready to vote! Prizes include bursaries to participate in civic education programs offered by Forum for Young Canadians and Encounters with Canada in Ottawa and the Canadian Museum for Human Rights in Winnipeg. Students can submit their entry until November 9, 2015, at democracy-democratie.ca.

Let's get ready to vote!

October 19, 2015, is our federal election day. Take advantage of Canada's Democracy Week 2015 to get ready to vote now. Remember: check your registration, watch for your voter information card, prepare your ID and make a plan for voting day.

Marc Mayrand
Chief Electoral Officer of Canada

Canada's Democracy Week 2015 Guest Bloggers Series

Canada's Democracy Week 2015 is excited to have amazing people join our Guest Bloggers Series in the lead-up to and during Canada's Democracy Week 2015.

Starting August 17, bloggers from across

Canada will tell us about how they are helping Canadians be informed about the election, specifically where, when and ways to vote, and how they are engaging Canadians under 18 to be involved in the 2015 federal election.

Institute for Canadian Citizenship

In August, we brought you the results of a national survey of 2,300 new citizens. How and why do new citizens participate in the political process, and what does their level of engagement mean? How can we make the process better – for them, and for all of us? If you didn't have a chance to check out the full results, visit ballotsandbelonging.ca.

We brought you the voices and experiences of Canada's newest citizens. But, we also want to be of direct assistance. We've launched #ReadyToVote, a social media campaign to get new citizens ready to vote and out to the polls.

Visit votequiz.ca to see if you're ready to vote. If you're not, check out our resources at readytovote.ca to get vote ready.

Source: Elections Canada
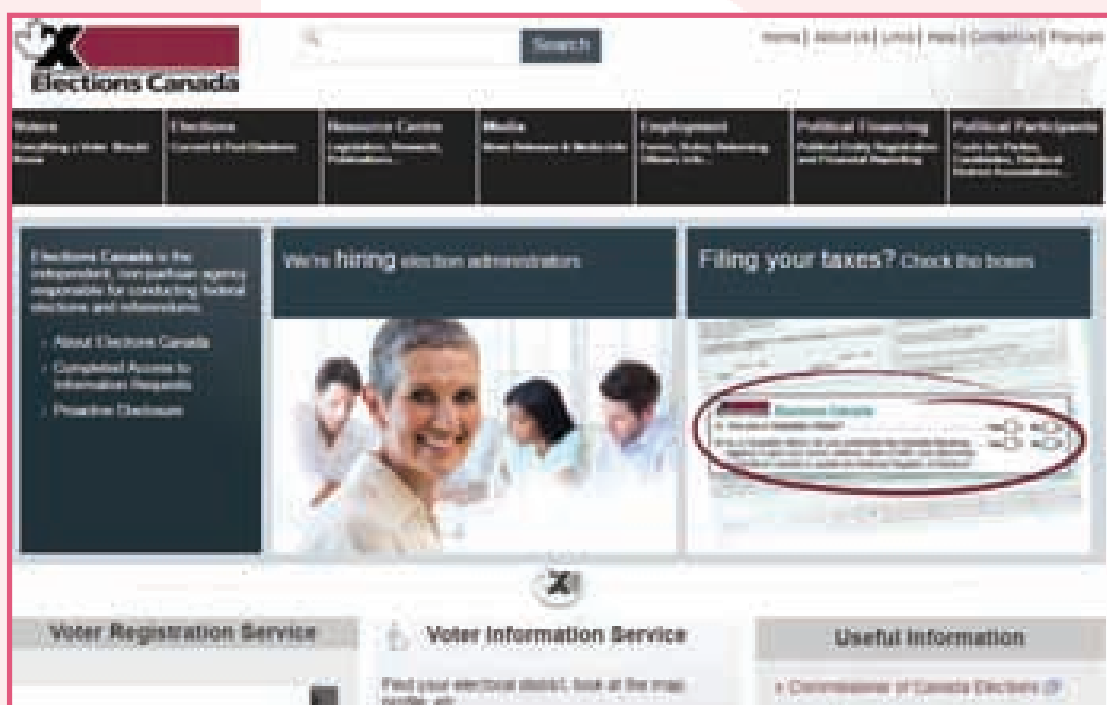
The United Kingdom: E-democracy Initiatives and Electoral Engagement

In 1950, 84 percent of the UK electorate turned out to vote. In comparison only 65 percent turned out in 2010. Among youth, up to 60 percent do not vote in the UK (Bite the Ballot, 2011). A survey of first-time voters carried out for Radio 1 revealed that 30 percent did not believe their vote counts and 20 percent felt that they did not know enough about politics to make a decision. Despite the concerning statistics, more than half claimed they would vote if they could do so online or using text messaging. From the 15.5 million votes cast during the last series of the *X Factor* in the UK, it emerged that the young people do like voting, but they are often not voting in the elections which employ traditional voting methods.

Strategies for Using Social Media and e- initiatives for Electoral Engagement

Strategies for using social media to engage UK citizens, for e-*government* information and service delivery; e-democracy consultation objectives, were publicized and given momentum by the 2008 UK **Digital Dialogues Report.** Since then, a large number of technology based initiatives at national and local government have been launched for civic and electoral engagement. Some of these are mentioned as follows:

- **FixMyStreet** *(http://www.fixmystreet.com)* launched by **MySociety**, a project managed under the registered charity,
- **UK Citizens for Online Democracy** *(http://www.ukcod.org.uk/UK_Citizens_ Online_Democracy).*
- **MySociety** also runs a number of other popular UK citizen consultation, engagement and social media sites such as TheyWorkForYou (http://www. theyworkforyou.com) which help citizens to track the voting, speeches, statements and house and debate attendance of MPs. Details may be accessed at *http://www. mysociety.org/projects/fixmystreet*

2010 UK election

While most research into the 2010 UK election did not specifically examine methods of voter enrolment and information prior to the election, a study of the election campaign by Rachel Gibson and colleagues reported that UK parties and politicians primarily 'operated on old-fashioned, top-down broadcasting principles', rather than through interactive dialogue methods. They reported that 'the internet has become an organisational necessity for election campaigning but it has not brought about that strategic change some have argued we should expect.'

This echoes concerns of other scholars that governments, political parties, companies and organisations are embracing social media, but not adopting the practices of Web 2.0 social media engagement. Rather, they are applying 'old' mass media practices to new media. As observed by Macnamara (2010a), the '21st media revolution' is about emergent communication practices as much or more than new technologies.

2012 London Mayoral election

The 2012 London Mayoral election saw extensive use of social media to engage voters especially the young voters, with some interesting use of social media. One such site is Bite the Ballot – the name itself is reflective of the informal irreverent tone of social media and youth engagement. A visit to the Bite the Ballot site in May 2012 revealed the following invitation:

"Bite the Ballot, Spirit of London Awards, UpRise and media partner Community Channel's London360 are giving you the opportunity to be part of the biggest voting Registration Rally for young people in the UK, in the run up to the London Mayoral Elections on May 3rd 2012. Many youth organizations as well as media partners will be present on the day. Full list of exhibitors and performances will be published later this week**!"**

Bite the Ballot describes itself as "a grassroots campaign created by young people to inspire others to speak up and be a part of the decisions that directly affect us" and calls upon UK youth to:

'Join us, have your say, it's our future! We have now got a direct voice to the people that make the decisions we can't change the laws but we can have our say and if we come together people will have to take notice! Do not wait for someone else to voice what you are thinking – shout it loud and clear for yourself, do not be counted as part of the masses – be counted as an individual, with individual opinions and most of all do not grumble silently about decisions that are made on your behalf – make the decisions for yourself: VOTE! (Bite the Ballot, 2011).'

It is significant and relevant to the focus of this study that the Bite the Ballot campaign calls upon young people to vote, but also noteworthy that it uses a range of attractors such as music, comedy, dance, celebrities and unconventional messages, including its own name and theme.

The site also borrowed the 2008 Obama slogan 'Yes we can' in its campaign for its YouthVoteLondon campaign.

The 'Bite the Ballot' developed a special logo for the YouthVoteLondon campaign. Another major campaign for the 2012 London Mayoral election was conducted by the official site, London Elects (www.londonelects.org.uk).

London Elects is part of the Greater London Authority (GLA), but is an independent body responsible for organizing the elections for Mayor of London and the London Assembly. This includes press, radio, TV and online campaigns to urge citizens to vote and tell them how to vote, designing and printing the ballot papers and counting votes. Information about the London Elects campaign is available at *http://www.londonelects.org.uk/our-public-awareness-campaign.*

The London Elects created a separate Facebook page during the 2012 London Mayoral election.

Independent studies of UK government Online Engagement

A study report by E-consultancy, a London based digital publishing and training company, based on interviews with directors of communication in 20 government departments reported that:

- Information is the area in which government departments have made significant progress in terms of Web sites and use of social media;
- Digital service delivery in all the departments has been set up;
- Digital Engagement and cost effective options be adopted as compared with non-digital engagement options;
- Engagement – departments are starting to move beyond broadcast into true multi-way collaboration with stakeholder.

These findings accord with a previous study by, Nigel Jackson and Darren Lilleker (2009) which concluded that "British political parties have sought to create a 'Web 1.5'" that combines elements of both Web 1.0 and Web 2.0. However, the UK government has moved much beyond these early approaches to seek more open and fuller engagement online.

Social Media Guidance for Civil Servants

In 2012, the UK government released its Guidance on the Use of Social Media for civil servants as part of the UK Government IT Strategy. This document is based on considerable experience by UK government departments and agencies over the past decade. The guidelines propose a social media cycle. They also provide many examples and case studies, such as the Get Ahead of the Games Twitter account @GAOTG which had 23,356 followers, as on 18 May 2012. Overall, a feature of the UK government guidelines is that they are open and encouraging, urging civil servants to engage with citizens, build relations, listen and comment online – albeit always mindful of and in accordance with the Civil Service Code.

Other sites of interest for Voter Engagement

Other key online sites involved in the 2012 London Mayoral election identified were:
www.bitetheballot.co.uk
www.londonelects.org.uk
www.aboutmyvote.co.uk
www.ukpoliticalinfo/london-mayor-election-2012.htm
www.citizensuk.org.

Rock Enrol!® : Engaging Young People in Democracy

Rock Enrol!® is a high quality, interactive resource pack to encourage young people to register, vote and engage them in the democratic processes to be active citizens.

The Rock Enrol!® resource pack creates that opportunity by using fun and interactive activities. The sessions aim to develop political and electoral literacy and inspire young people to engage in democratic debate. They encourage young people to discuss what they care about and why they should register to vote. The pack uses games and activities to get students discussing important issues, whether local or global. There is also an opportunity for students to make their voices heard by registering to vote.

The original Rock Enrol!® lesson framework, which includes the 'Vote with your feet' and 'Show me the money' activities, was co-created by the Cabinet Office and youth-led organisation 'Bite the Ballot'. Session 2 and 3 activities – 'Critical issues', and 'Power game' are taken from the Youth Count! Democracy Challenge toolkit developed by UK Youth.

Anyone including teachers, youth group leaders and young people themselves can use Rock Enrol!®. Sessions are straightforward to prepare and run. The resources provide fresh ideas or innovative ways to engage young people. They are flexible and can be tailored to suit different groups and settings. Rock Enrol!® sessions are aimed at students aged 16+ but can be used for younger age groups without the registration element.

Snapchat Election Story in the UK

Follow 'My Vote' is dedicated to improving the elections through innovative technologies such as block chain technology to ultimately enhance voter turnout and transparency. When the Snapchat election story on the day of the UK elections was demonstrated, it was noted with a positive response. This is a blend of new technology and excitement surrounding voter participation.

Snapchat is a fairly new smartphone app that lets users send messages and images to one another. The unique part is that the message gets deleted after being viewed.

One feature that has been added to Snapchat is called "stories". One can choose to send a message to a friend or one can opt to make the message a story. This means all of one's friends will be able to view this message for the next 24 hours.

Feedback on Snapchat

A feedback on this new tech youth voter engagement blog is as follows:

"We were extremely excited to see a Snapchat election story for the UK election. Hundreds of people had submitted photos and videos of their voting experiences. Young voters got to share their first voting experience with the world, while others simply encouraged people to get out and vote. Either way this was an awesome use of technology to support democracy. We also really liked the fact that the app stayed non-partisan. There was only one story topic and the submitted media was from voters. There were no advertisements or stories dedicated to a certain party. Below is one of the pictures we managed to snag from the Snapchat election story." The details may be accessed at followmyvote.com

The Electoral Commission

The US: Campus Election Engagement Project

Campus Election Engagement Project (CEEP) is a national nonpartisan voter-engagement project that helps colleges and universities in the US to use their institutional resources to get as many of their 20 million students as possible to motivate and engage them in the electoral process. The project operates through a network of its established and reputed allies and partners. It has developed a powerful reservoir of highly analytical engagement resources, bank of best practices including online and other technology tools to achieve its aims and objects.

The main aim of the project is to engage the students in the electoral process as historically they vote at lower rates than other groups but once they begin to participate, their habit of involvement is sustainable lifelong

The Project involves campus administrators, faculty, staff, and student leaders, in providing the support needed to engage their students in local, state and federal elections.

Strategy

As an overall strategy, the project combines its engagement resource and the resources from its allies and partners with resources drawn from colleges and universities throughout the country for engaging students. The process of electoral engagement is being achieved by guiding campuses through well designed and structured interactive and engaging programmes, action plans, exposure to best practices, analytical tools including high technology driven processes on utilization of these resources to navigate students through ever-changing barriers to registering and voting and overall electoral engagement.

Seven Key Ways to Act

The strategy of getting the nonpartisan campus engagement efforts started includes easy-to-follow roadmap with newly updated Seven Key Ways to Act. This roadmap for fully engaging any campus includes contributions from organizers and campus leaders in every state this program has been taken up since 2008 and has over 250 successful approaches that can be

adopted. The seven key ways are briefly stated as follows:

- **Build a Team:** No one can engage an entire campus, so create a core group to coordinate engagement efforts, divide up the work and ensure that the key stakeholders communicate.

- **Register Students to Vote:** It is the first step to student electoral participation. Set campus-wide goals and plan ways to implement them.

- **Educate Students on Issues and Candidates:** Offer clear information on where candidates stand, so students can make informed choices.

- **Help Students to Volunteer with Partisan or Nonpartisan Campaign of Their Choice:** Early civic involvement patterns tend to sustain and this makes further participation more likely.

- **Build Election Excitement and Visibility Leading up to Election day:** use every appropriate channel for this purpose.

- **Get out the Vote :** Make sure students know where to vote, when to vote and what to bring. Combine face-to-face and online technologies to engage all eligible students.

- **Measure the Impact:** Document the work done in a continued manner so as to judge what works and what does not work, monitor the progress and build a base for the future.

Technology Driven Tools for Electoral Engagement

CEEP and its allies and partners provide technological tools including web based on line tools for the campus engagement programs. The main objective of this brief is to apprise the reader of technology application in voter education in US with specific emphasis on what CEEP and its allies and partners provide the students for electoral engagement through online IT tools.

Brief notes explaining the use of technology and social media on these online tools are given in the Supplement.

Helping Students Surmount Political Cynicism:"MY VOTE DOES NOT MATTER."

Defining the Problem

One of the interesting areas addressed by CEEP relates to the political cynicism amongst the students emanating out of complex outcomes of political engagement. Reactions such as 'My Vote does not matter' or the complaint that politicians are 'all the same and all corrupt' are expressions of cynical resignation to political engagement. CEEP initiative attempts to address this problem in an analytical manner and engaging students through resources developed by them with a view to encourage students to register and vote despite their conviction of cynicism to political engagement.

Survey Based Analysis Reports

CEEP has looked at different survey Reports in this regard. A few illustrations would help appreciate the dimensions of the problem. 'Rock the Vote Survey' shortly before the 2010 election reveals that 59 percent of students said they were more cynical than two years before, 63 per cent of those who doubted they had vote justified their likely withdrawal by agreeing that " no matter who wins, corporate interests will still have too much power and prevent real change". The CIRCLE youth research center reported that four million fewer students participated in 2010 elections as compared to 2008 elections. Youth electoral participation rates then dropped 17% more in 2014, reaching the lowest levels since 18 year olds got the vote. In a Harvard Survey, just 36 percent of 18-29 year olds believed it was honorable to run for a public office. Uncertain job prospects, cuts to higher education, and massive student debt and similar other factors are a cause of students despair about their power to make a difference in the electoral realm through electoral engagement.

CEEP Engagement for Increase in Voter Confidence

CEEP initiative in handling this problem includes inter alia the following action areas:

Engage the students in registering and elections especially in non presidential years, organize debates, discussion forums to improve credibility of election engagement and make them realize that their vote does matter.

Make classrooms and campuses venues for thoughtful debate, reflection, and discussion, bending over backwards to ensure students of all political perspectives feel welcomed.

Full participation requires creation of a common platforms where the students can reflect on issues and candidates, and providing them a rationale for why their involvement matters.

Familiarize students with the tool box of social change; explore the way they can reach out on issues they care about and build broad coalitions.

CEEP Media Strategies for Engaging Students

Student Social Media Reporting

CEEP recognizes that media coverage through peer groups can be used as an important tool for attracting students pay attention to important elections, especially in a non-presidential year. Student newspapers can do a lot to make elections salient, giving students clear information on how to participate and help them sort through candidate positions and claims. The students, particularly from journalism, communications, and political science streams, can also create valuable coverage through other channels, like social media.

Student Newspapers and the Elections

As the prime newspaper for your campus, you can play a key role in getting students to vote. The national nonpartisan Campus Election Engagement Project has developed a resource base for engaging students in this activity. Students may not read mainstream newspapers, but they do read campus papers, which at most schools can set the tone for campus discussions. If you address issues well enough, students are far more likely listen, respond, and participate at the polls.

Supplement

CAMPUS ELECTION ENGAGEMENT - ONLINE TOOLS

Check our collection of election engagement sites with registration and voter information, maps, widgets, webinars & more!

ROCK THE VOTE'S REGISTRATION WIDGET

As we enter the 2013 and 2014 election seasons, Rock the Vote (RTV) wants to work with you to deliver this free service to your fans, friends, and community. Start registering voters today – sign up for RTV's online voter registration tool, embed the widget on your website, promote your customized tool via email and mobile lists and on your social networks, & more. To download RTV's Registration Widget Guide, click here. For next steps to downloading the widget, click here and get ready to register voters!

ELECTION PROTECTION APP

When it comes to registering and voting, having the right information can often mean the difference between casting a ballot and being left out of the process. Americans are much more accustomed to receiving information via their mobile phones. This election cycle, it's vital for voters to be able to access key information right in the palm of their hand.

In order to meet the needs of the Digital Age, the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law, National Association of Latino Appointed and Elected Officials Education Fund, New Organizing Institute, Rock the Vote and Verified Voting Foundation have joined forces to deploy the Election Protection Smart phone Application to provide all information and resources, in English and Spanish (branded Ya Es Hora), that voters need to fully participate in the elections. The Election Protection App will is now available on all Smart phones and provides all the information and resources voters need to register and cast a meaningful ballot in the palm of their hands. The app allows voters to:
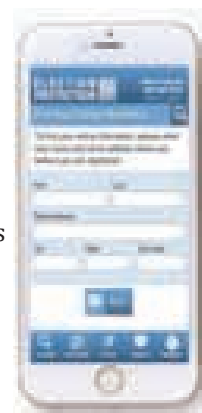
- Verify their registration
- Register to vote
- Look up their polling place
- See what type of machine they vote on
- Review key voting rules and regulations for their state
- Contact Election Protection via phone or email to report a problem or get answers

It also allows schools to get a customized sign-up page (modeled on Rock the Vote widget) where you can track student registrations and follow up with customized emails or text messages to highlight key dates, like deadlines for them to help their friends register, early voting information, or campus Get Out the Vote events. To get your sign-up page, so you can distribute the app to your students, fill out this form

STUDENT PIRGs NEW VOTER PROJECT

WThe Student PIRGs' New Voter Project supports massive registration and "Get out the Vote" drives and provides support and a national voice for student groups involved in the election. They also have their own modified version of the Rock the Vote online registration tool, which you should use if you have PIRG chapter on your campus.

Registration Tool

VOTE WITH FRIENDS

Leverage your network on Facebook to get out the vote! Set up a voting block on Vote With Friends and rally more people who care about your issue to vote than ever before. Set up your custom Vote With Friends portal, activate your networks, and empower all of your supporters to become their own get-out-the-vote operations.

VOTE411

Launched by the League of Women Voters Education Fund (LWVEF) in October of 2006, VOTE411.org is a 'one-stop-shop' for election related information including:

League of Women Voters

State Voting Tool

- State-by-state voting and registration information, with requirements & deadlines
- Online registration tool
- Polling place finder
- Candidate and ballot information
- Absentee ballot information
- Ballot measure information (where applicable)
- Early voting options (where applicable)
- Election dates

- Factual data on candidates in various federal, state and local races
- General info on such topics as how to watch debates with a critical eye
- ID requirements
- Polling place locations
- Registration deadlines
- Voter qualifications
- Voter registration forms
- Voting machines

GOOGLE POLL FINDER

Google Poll Finder: The Google Poll Finder tool is now live! It uses official information from state elections offices and Secretaries of State to provide voters with current voting information. Type in your address to find your polling place and directions. Use the Ballot Summary Menu Bar on the right to view your candidate choices for president, Congress, and state legislatures.
- Embed the tool on your website to raise the profile of the election.
- Share the link with your audience.
- Set up a computer in your lobby on Election Day to allow voters to check their voting information.

MORE FROM ROCK THE VOTE

Rock the Vote

Voter registration tool that you can add to your website, blog, and Facebook page profile. (For campuses with student PIRG chapters, use the similar PIRG tool below)

Electionland is the place where you can ask and answer questions on everything related to elections in your state. You can find out about the elections, register to vote, and learn more about the voting process. You get access to experts and election officials. In some states, you can even ask candidates questions directly.

Registration Widget

Electionland

Voting System Scorecard serves as a national benchmark that measures state laws and policies in three key areas: (1) voter registration, (2) casting a ballot and (3) young voter preparation. The 21-point scale evaluates each state's implementation of policies that increase access to the political process. Rock the Vote also created a video on the history of American voting!

Voting System

FAIR ELECTIONS LEGAL NETWORK'S CAMPUS VOTE PROJECT

Fair Elections Legal Network's Campus Vote Project

FELN is an excellent source on new voting rules, doing webinars and giving expert advice on how to work within them, as well as advocating for policies that expand the electoral franchise and challenging those that narrow it.

- Their Campus Vote Project has an excellent toolkit on organizing a campus. It can help campuses organize, activate, & reach election and voter engagement goals.
- FELN's Best Practice webpage offers excellent examples of election engagement efforts from previous elections.

Toolkit

Best Practice Webpage

Nonprofit VOTE

NONPROFIT VOTE

NonprofitVOTE.org - hosts direct links to state registration and voting rules.

- Nonprofit VOTE also has live and archived webinars, and voter engagement, staying nonpartisan, research, and other resources.
- NonprofitVOTE's Starter Kit offers an introduction to nonpartisan voter registration, voter education, & get-out-the-vote work. It emphasizes how to integrate voter engagement into your organization's ongoing activities & services.
- With one click on NonprofitVOTE's widgets and badges, visitors are taken either to the home page of Nonprofit VOTE or to your state's voter information page (depending on the badge you choose).
- If schools (or community groups their volunteer centers serve) are unsure about 501(c)(3) guidelines, they can watch Nonprofit Vote's relevant webinar on YouTube, download their PowerPoint presentation, or their audio portion.
- Here's a list of their upcoming webinars.

Webinars

Widgets

Widgets

Concluding Notes

The practice and experience of different countries discussed in the paper reaffirms the fact that the digital Technologies have become an integral part of the voter education across the democracies of the world. New Media, Social Media, with the help of technology tools have been used especially for engaging young and future voters as an investment in culture of citizenship development for enhancing electoral participation. There are challenges in terms of resources, manpower, obsolescence, security and tendency to get out of control, beyond the focus areas. Regular interactions, research and investments would help in strengthening the connect between the voter and the electoral processes.

S D Sharma
Senior Fellow
Election Commission of India

References:

Bridging Science, Technology and Politics in Election Systems; R Michael Alvarez and Eric K. Antonsson, The Bridge Vol 37, Number 2,2007.

Campus Election Engagement Project CEEP http://www.campuselect.org/voter-education-resources

Citizen Participation and Technology; National Democratic Institute, USA.

Guidelines for Development of a Social Media Code of Conduct for Elections; Seema Shah International IDEA.

Macnamara, J., Sakinofsky, P., & Beattie, J. (2012). E-Electoral engagement: Maintaining and enhancing democratic participation through social media. Report to the Australian Electoral Commission by Australian Centre for Public Communication, University of Technology Sydney, 2012.

The Use of Technology in Electoral Process, Final Report, Mexico City, Nov 10-14,2014, Instituto Nacional Electoral., Mexico.

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON INCLUSION OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES IN ELECTORAL PROCESSES

The Election Commission of India organized a one-day International Conference on the Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities (PwDs) in Electoral Processes on Jan 24, 2018 at New Delhi as a part of the National Voters' Day celebration. 'Accessible Elections' is a priority area for Election Commission of India and has been adopted as the central theme for the year 2018. The theme, seamlessly integrates into the constitutional mandate of universal adult suffrage and the underlying concept of the Commission 'No voter to be left behind'.

The Conference was organized under the aegis of VoICE.NET, the global knowledge network which has 27 members that include Election Management Bodies (EMBs) and reputed international organisations across the world. The International Conference was organised with the purpose of sharing the experience of different EMBs, international institutions and experts with regard to analysis of barriers, policy interventions, strategies, programmes,

good practices and technological innovation for inclusion of PwDs in electoral processes.

Delegates at the Conference included Chairpersons, Commissioners and Senior Officials of five Election Management Bodies (EMBs) namely Australia, Bhutan, Guinea, Moldova & Zambia and Heads of two international organisations viz. International Foundation of Electoral Systems (IFES) and International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA).

The Conference was divided in to three technical sessions. Session I on 'Nature and extent of Barriers to Accessibility in Electoral Participation of the PwDs: Analysis and Strategies for addressing the Barriers' witnessed presentations from Mr David Lang,

Member, Assistant Commissioner, IT, AEC and Mr Mani Kumar Ghaley, Chief Planning officer, Election Commission of Bhutan.

Session II on 'Innovation and Technology in facilitating Electoral participation of PwDs/ Efficiency and Efficacy of the existing facilitation to the PwDs for electoral participation: Scope of the Outreach and campaigns' included detailed presentations by Mr Umesh Sinha, Senior Deputy Election Commissioner, ECI followed by Mr Corneliu Pasat, Acting Head of Media Division, CEC, Moldova and Mr Antonio Spinelli, International IDEA, Nepal.

Session III on 'Nature and Role of International Organizations, Non-Government Organizations in promoting access to the PwDs' witnessed technical papers by Mr William Sweeney, President and CEO, IFES, Mr Dylan Kasonde, Director IT, Election Commission of Zambia, Mr Navin Chawla, former Chief Election Commissioner of India and Mr Yves Leterme, Secretary General, International IDEA. Each session ended with detailed discussions on various issues related to inclusion of PwDs and also concluding remark by the Chair.

The Conference also witnessed signing of Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for cooperation in the field of election management between Election Commission of India and National Independent Electoral Commission (CENI) of

Guinea. Another MoU was signed between Election Commission of India and Central Election Commission (CEC) of Moldova. An MoU was also signed between India International Institute of Democracy & Election Management (IIIDEM) and International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA). The MoUs provide for an institutional framework and aim for promotion of exchange of knowledge and experience in the field of organizational and technical development, with an aim to strengthen the administration of electoral processes; exchange of information, material, expertise and technical knowhow related to electoral processes and systems; training of personnel and organizational development and capacity building.

The conference was successful in its objective of sharing knowledge and learning from the experiences of each other. In the concluding session, O P Rawat, Hon'ble Chief Election Commissioner of India remarked "The deliberations of the Conference have offered us a rich experience sharing on the subject and undoubtedly there is a lot of 'Take Away' emanating from the conference for each one of us. The Conference has the set the tone for consolidation and further action on the subject. I am sure we will take positive steps to ensure higher inclusion of PwDs."

**Dr. Aarti Aggarwal**
Senior Consultant, ECI

AEC SERVICES TO SUPPORT PERSONS WITH A DISABILITY

As one of the few countries in the world to enforce compulsory voting, the Australian Electoral Commission (AEC) works hard to meet the needs of a diverse range of people when managing electoral events and preparing information for the public.

This paper describes the AEC's strategy to provide services to people with a disability and provides details of the specific operational activities the AEC undertakes for each federal electoral event. The AEC can provide further information on these activities as required.

Disability Inclusion Strategy

The AEC's Disability Inclusion Strategy (2010-2020) outlines the high-level targeted actions and outcomes the AEC is pursuing under the Council of Australian Governments' National Disability Strategy 2010-2020.
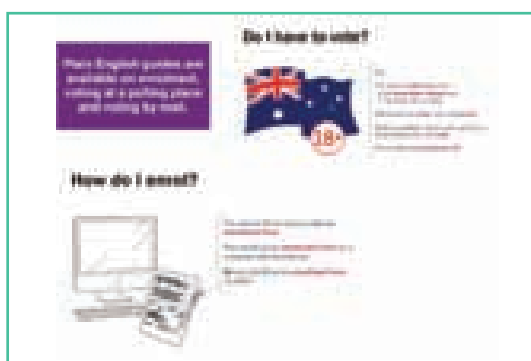
The key principles of the AEC's approach to disability inclusion are to:

- Support Person with Disabilities to fully participate in the electoral system, and
- Provide a workplace inclusive and supportive of employees with disability.

The AEC's strategy shows how we aim to provide an inclusive workplace for staff in our workforce with disability, as well as to provide assistance and support to electors with disability to ensure they are not disadvantaged in the electoral system.

Disability Advisory Committee

The AEC's Disability Advisory Committee is the primary mechanism through which the AEC communicates with, and understands issues for, Person with Disabilities.

The aim of the Committee is to enable the AEC to promote greater accessibility, inclusion and participation in the electoral process by Person with Disabilities.

The role of the Committee is to:

- Seek feedback from relevant Australian peak disability organisations on the programmes and services that the AEC delivers
- Understand new and emerging issues of concern for Person with Disabilities
- Collaborate with our Electoral Council of Australia and New Zealand (ECANZ) partners in the delivery of accessible electoral services across jurisdictions
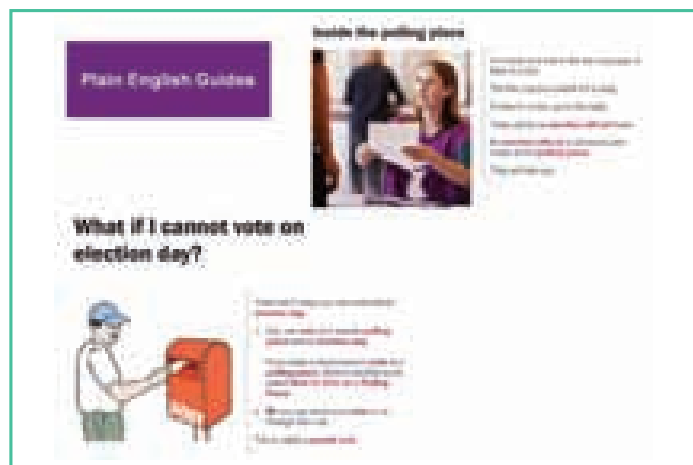
- Learn about initiatives being developed in other sectors for Person with Disabilities
- Seek the assistance of Committee members in promoting relevant AEC initiatives to their members.

AEC website

The AEC website includes Read Speaker functionality, which allows the text on our website to be read out aloud to ensure that people who suffer from reading related disabilities can access information about electoral participation.

The AEC website also includes a dedicated page for people with a disability - *http://www.aec.gov.au/Voting/people-with-disability.htm*

A guide to enrolling and voting

The AEC's guide to enrolling a voting is also produced in large print and e-text formats, which are always available on the AEC website.

Election briefings

To support the participation of Australians with disability in the 2016 federal election, the AEC held a dedicated information briefing for representatives of peak disability organisations, providing specific information on the range of services. These include blind and low vision voting and the National Relay Service for voters with a hearing or speech impairment. This also provided an opportunity for representatives of the disability sector to discuss matters related to the upcoming election.

Specific resources provided to electors

The AEC offers a range of accessible information and resources to electors to improve democratic participation, including:

Easy English Guides

The AEC provides a set of guides written in an easy to read way that also use pictures to help explain some of the concepts. These guides describe how to enrol and how to vote at a polling place or by postal vote. The guides can be found here - *(http://www.aec.gov.au/About_AEC/Publications/easy-english/)*

AUSLAN guide

The AEC website features a series of videos that contain information on enrolling and voting for federal elections and referendums. The videos include AUSLAN (Australian Sign Language), a voiceover and plain English captions.

Blind and low vision voting

During Australian Federal Elections, voters who are blind or have low vision can cast a vote in secret by telephone from any location.

The Blind or Low Vision (BLV) voting method is to enable BLV voters to vote in secret, without the need to attend a divisional office or polling
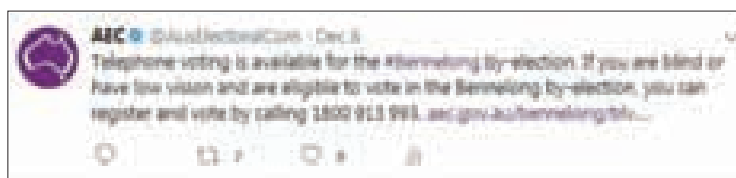
place on election day. This provides a more independent and secure voting option to the BLV community.

In order to use this voting method, eligible voters must register by telephoning the BLV call Centre. Registered voters will be issued with credentials, which they are required to quote when they call to vote. This allows voters to be marked off the roll without disclosing their names.

The system used to register and accept votes was hosted by the AEC for the first time at a full federal election in 2016, and for a federal by-election in 2015.

The AEC promotes these services through the AEC's Twitter page.

Election specific accessible information

At each electoral event, the AEC's official guide to the federal election produces is produced in braille, e-text, audio file and large print. This information includes polling place locations and accessible voting options.

Special enrolment options

If people with a disability find it difficult to get to a polling place on election day, electors can become a general postal voter and will then automatically receive ballot papers in the mail at each electoral event.

Polling places

The AEC makes sure that wherever possible polling place premises are accessible and provide wheelchair access. The key points the AEC looks for are:

- The doorway width must be wide enough (at least 740mm or wider) for a wheelchair user to pass through, and

- Where there are step/s, there must be a ramp or lift available to overcome the step/s.

This consideration is built into the AEC's polling place inspection process, which includes an accessibility calculator and quick reference guide.

Polling place information on the AEC website includes whether or not the place is wheelchair accessible. The AEC is also developing an app for smart phone devices that will feature information relating to disability access of polling places.

Working with stakeholders

The AEC works with stakeholders to distribute information. In 2016, Vision Australia provided information on the AEC's accessible voting options to more than 40,000 Australians who are blind or have low vision.

David Lang
Assistant Commissioner, IT
Australian Electoral Commission

ANALYSIS AND STRATEGIES FOR ADDRESSING THE BARRIERS TOWARDS INCLUSIVE ELECTORAL PARTICIPATION

Bhutan is a young democracy. It was in 2001 when Bhutanese citizen was stunned by the Royal Decree on the drafting of the Constitution and path towards democracy. Bhutan has never looked back since, with every passing year Bhutan is making unprecedented achievement in deepening and consolidation of democracy. This is possible only with clear vision and political will from non-other than our beloved Monarchs to whom the people have given their sovereign power century ago.

The Election Commission of Bhutan recently celebrated the 12th Anniversary of its establishment and with four major elections (two parliamentary and two local government elections) under its belt, has already made decent progress in election engineering. However, like most EMBs around the world, an inclusive participation, especially from people living with the disability has been felt more than any other challenges today.

The responsibility to elect representatives of the people through the conduct of free and fair elections rests with the Election Commission of Bhutan. To ensure maximum participation from people of all walks of life has always been the priority of the Commission from the very First Parliamentary Elections in 2008.

Bhutan is a signatory to UN Convention on the Rights of Person with Disabilities (CRPD). The High-Level Inter-Agency Task Force established last year under the Chairmanship of the Foreign Minister to study the readiness to ratify the instrument and where the Election Commission of Bhutan is a member. The study and report from the task force may take some time to study the gaps and come up with recommendations but the Election Commission of Bhutan is making an all-out effort in realizing the core mandates under the CRPD.

Legal Provision

The Constitution of the Kingdom of Bhutan provides rights to every citizen to vote, elect leaders of his or her choice and participate as a candidate in the Parliamentary and Local Government Elections.

Apart from the provision of equal freedom to every citizen the Election Act, Section 323 provides assistance to Persons with Disabilities (PwDs) on the Poll Day. They are assisted with physical assistance to the voting compartment, preferential access not having to wait in the queue, voter awareness with special attention and special arrangements in remote places.

Barriers and Intervention

The political participation by PwDs has been an issue for all of us. Many International Conventions, CSOs, and relevant stakeholders have deliberated, articulated and formulated disabled-friendly policies to facilitate PwDs for better political participation. Bhutan being a late entry to the institution of voting and democracy had a clear advantage to resolve such disparity in the formulation of the Act, Rules and Regulations and Guidelines. Nevertheless, the country with just about

7, 50,000 people and over 400, 000 voters do face challenges in translating the participation of the PwDs in the election process due to various barriers. Some of the major barriers faced and intervention from the Commission to ease the political participation are as follows:

1. **Polling Station – Accessibility**
    The polling stations in Bhutan consist of schools, hospital, government buildings and few temporary sheds. Except for few sheds, most of the infrastructure were built many years back without much consideration of the requirement of having facilities to accommodate the need of the voters with the disability. Bhutan's inhospitable geographic terrain is one of the chief barriers to accessibility, even for the bodily fit person. Much of the polling stations in the country as of now do not have facilities to cater to the need of Persons with Disabilities.

    Though most of the villages are connected with the road but still house to house connectivity needs to be established to encourage the participation. The PwDs living in such remote villages faces difficulties to reach the polling station due to inaccessibility.

As stated above, much of the polling stations in Bhutan are located in already established government buildings which are centrally situated around the voter population. The Election Commission make every effort to reach out to such voters. The good news is that the Election Commission of Bhutan in preparation for 2018 Parliamentary Elections will be facilitating the PwDs with the postal ballot. The Mobile Postal Ballot in each district will be personally delivering and collecting the ballot specially set up for PwDs, long stay hospital patients and prisoners. The Electoral Officers in the districts have compiled and registered the name list by visiting very villages and hospitals. The Commission anticipates that most of the voters under these categories will be able to participate and make their choice in upcoming 2018 Parliamentary Elections. This is just a temporary measure and it's hoped that the situation will be better in coming years where PwDs proudly participate without any facilitation from the Commission.

Male	Female	Total	Registered &Voted	Registered but not Voted	Not Registered not voted	Total
2083	1708	3791	1804	911	1100	3816

The first raw data of PwDs is collected and further registration drive will be carried out before the finalization of the list.

2. **Discrimination/Attitudinal Barriers**
    The negative attitudes toward persons with disability pose the biggest challenge to electoral access and political participation. The belief that impairment is a karmic consequence of the person's past life and such superstition induces negative attitude to both the family members and as well as the person themselves. In many instances, family member ostracized and isolate them from the social and community engagement creating the barrier to their everyday life. Such social stigma in the community encourages the families to abandon them to avoid embarrassment from the community. Many

advocacies on attitudinal barriers in the country by CSOs and government agencies have not worked to break the barrier.

However, the Royal patronage under the Queen of Bhutan and awareness campaign by CSOs is making a strong presence. The Government's initiatives for policy on disability and the Election Acts' guidelines for implementation of section 323 for assistance to physically challenge voters are some of the important issues which will over the years help break the attitudinal barrier.

The Election Commission of Bhutan in its pursuit for wholesome participation has included enhancement in facilitating the PwDs with relevant stakeholders in the 12th Five Year Plan which will start from July 2018. We hope that many of the issues

regarding PwDs would be resolve within next 12th Five-year Plan.

3. **Awareness**

Every vote counts. The right to vote is universal and Civic and Voter Education is of paramount importance. Reaching out to PwDs is a tough task. In general, PwD focused awareness as of now are not carried out. Lack of capacity of the officials involved in voter education and the very low population of PwDs scattered all over the country make matter more difficult. At the same time, Disabled People Organizations (DPOs) in the country are new and lack the ability to organize and impart basic necessary facilitation.

Social media and engagement of youth through Democracy Clubs, Children Parliament, and Celebrities in street shows and inspirational video clips from the speeches of His Majesty the King are other techniques extensively used for encouragement and motivate people to participate in electoral process.

The Commission is optimistic that all section of people will be able to get information from one way or the other and get inspired to participate in the upcoming Parliamentary Elections.

Conclusion

Political participation is the cornerstone of democracy. The people living with disability data has shown a good percentage of participation in elections in Bhutan. The

To ensure mass voter turnout, the Commission has put in place comprehensive strategies. Each district to make it more efficient and realistic, have come up with their own customize strategies in-sync with the National Strategy to suit the local population and needs under their jurisdiction. The customize strategies of each district have clear plans and facilitation program for PwDs. The awareness programs are carried out in every village. Diverse methodology is used for the voter education to capture the voters of all types by the Commission such as lecture, animations, theme songs, brochure, notification, and advertisement in print media, television and radio.

government, Election Commission and CSOs have recognized the importance of facilitating the PwDs. The 12th Five Year Plan has been drafted with a clear direction to uplift this section of the population and the High-Level Task Force (HLTF) will be coming out with recommendations very shortly. The suggestions made by the HLTF will be given priority and we see there is a silver lining for PwDs in the country. Bhutan is a Buddhist Nation, we are optimistic that in few years down the line if all conditions work on our side we are confident that we will be able to break this jinx over PwDs.

Mani Kumar Ghaley
Election Commission of Bhutan

STRENGTHENING OF DEMOCRACY THROUGH INCLUSIVE ELECTORAL PROCESS

Without a doubt, one of the key concepts of democracy is that all individuals from a society must enjoy the same rights and comply with the same obligations. In the practice, this fundamental principle could be considered a utopia. One of the challenges on this matter is to enable persons with disabilities to express their decision in the polls on the same terms like those of the rest of the citizens of the nation to which they belong. For the States, it should be a priority to guarantee the full exercise of this right.

This task is not impossible nor can only be settled in the countries of the so called "first world". The National Electoral Council of Ecuador (CNE, for its initials in Spanish), being at the forefront of the electoral management bodies in the region, and under the provisions of a Constitution that guarantees an effective democratic participation of the citizenry, has implemented programs and mechanisms to reduce obstacles that could undercut the access to the suffrage for persons with disabilities.

> " *To deny people their human rights is to challenge their very humanity – Nelson Mandela*

Among those, the Preferential Vote and the Vote for the Elderly Residing in Geriatric Homes are emphasized. These programmes will be implemented in the process of Referendum and Popular Consultation 2018, along with the program Vote at Home, which has been replicated in other countries with the contribution of our technical assistance. Its implementation has managed to increase the participation of persons with disabilities. In the General Elections 2017, an approximate of 77% of the persons with disabilities registered in the Electoral Register exercised their right to vote.

The work done by the Ecuadorian Electoral Management Body to guarantee the inclusion of persons with disabilities in the electoral processes and to foster the exercise of their political rights is recognized internationally. Last December 5, the CNE was granted the Accessibility Award in the International Electoral Awards Ceremony 2017. It is an honor for us to have obtained such recognition, and to contribute to consolidate a true democracy.

Dr. Guido Arcos
Consejo Nacional Electoral, Ecuador

STRATEGIES FOR ADDRESSING THE BARRIERS OF INCLUSIVE ELECTIONS

In its preamble, the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) recognizes that disability is an evolving concept and the result of the interaction between a person with impairments and a wide range of barriers. These barriers, in turn, can be attributable to environmental issues or attitudes coming from other persons, societies or cultures. This sub-theme –barriers– is a matter of deep concern for Electoral Bodies all around the world.

Different countries have found varying solutions to address the problem of physical and/or architectural barriers. Some examples are e-voting, voting by mail and some other ideas about accessible cities. But, even now, the main issue is how to deal with the social barrier that Person with Disabilities (PwDs) face in their political and public life.

In the aforesaid treaty, a distinction is made (article 29) between achieving equal rights to elect and being elected and the need to promote the right environment for PwDs to freely interact with others on public affairs. This difference provides a guideline for Electoral Bodies to design specific strategies focusing on PwDs and the social environment around them.

The first barrier an Electoral Body has to destroy is the one impeding PwDs to vote freely during an election day. As stated previously, there is a variety of solutions. For example, architectural barriers are being eliminated by two different ways: removing them physically from the cities and creating alternate ways for PwD to vote from their homes. Concerning the second one, Ecuador has a unique vote strategy called "Home Voting".

Home Voting is implemented for people over 65 years and presenting a physical disability of over 75%. Persons with these characteristics may express the desire to vote from home. The Electoral Council establishes a moving electoral station that will visit the beneficiary two days before the Election Day so he can cast his "home vote". The secrecy of the vote is guaranteed by the presence of policemen through the moving and transport of the ballot boxes until they reach the Electoral Council head quarters and are secured in storage until the Election Day when these votes are counted.

But because it is limited to people over 65 years and with physical disability of over 75% it is important to face the barriers for the rest of PwDs on election day. And that is the second barrier Electoral Bodies have to destroy.

Ecuador has a mix voting system: compulsory and voluntary voting. It is compulsory for civilians between 18 and 65 years old, living in the country and without disabilities. It is voluntary for public forces (such as police and army), Person with Disabilities of over 30%, people between 16 and 17 years old, people over 65 years old, Ecuadorians living overseas and foreign people living more than 5 years in Ecuador.

The abstention rate has been below 20% in the last 11 electoral processes. That means that around 9 to 12 million people cast their votes on the same day. Because of our inclusive legislation, PwDs has preferential treatment. On Election Day this means that they don't have to wait in line to cast their vote. In addition, the Electoral Council has decided to create the Preferential Station. At the entrance of every electoral precinct there is a group of electoral

officers that assists PwDs who doesn't want to or can't walk to their voting stations. When a person calls for help, the officer goes to the voting station and asks the chairperson to accompany him so that the PwD can cast his or her vote. During this process the voting finishes in that station.

When the election process pauses in a station, people tend to become aggressive not only against the Electoral Body, but also against the PwDs trying to cast their votes. Because of this reaction, many people decide not to participate during Election Day. And this is why it is so important for every country to work on the second point of article 29 of the CRPD, referring to the need of creating the correct environment so that PwDs can interact freely. It means that each country has to create social campaigns to inform and create awareness of equality. Not only for PwDs but also for all humankind. Only then humankind around the world will be able to say we are trying to live according to the Human Rights Declaration more than 70 years after its enactment!

Under letter 'A' of article 29 of the CRPD, it is compulsory for state parties to ensure that PwDs can fully exercise their right to being elected. That is an issue most countries prefer not to address because it is not without complications in the initial stages. Legislation has to be set straight so that everybody has the same opportunity to standing for election and that comes with more cultural and political awareness of the rights of women, LGBTQ+, native or ancestral ethnic groups, and the reality that there is no room for them in 'modern democracies'. In Ecuador, the support for PwDs rights has brought a national effort to secure equality for human beings, regardless of the specific characteristics of each.

It has been a subject of discussion how to guarantee equality for all people to elect and be elected. If a country starts by setting quotas for everybody, the list of candidates will no longer be a political or civil affair, but the compliance of legal articles meant to include some people just to observe the law and not because they are fitted to represent citizens in different levels of government.

Having a specific characteristic doesn't make you eligible for representation. So, to achieve equality in the opportunities to be elected, first the Electoral Council has to establish a set of rules leading to a real democracy within the political parties. Doing so, rejection can be overcome because you choose a person that really represents your interests and needs and not the one that can move masses. The second strategy towards the right to be elected in conditions of equality is to set guidelines for the citizens to choose ideals and proposals over faces and attitudes. Ecuador has designed a structure that allows people to opt for a government proposal and commit the candidate to fulfill it or risk to be put out of office through impeachment. Not only corruption or felonies can become a reason to be removed out of office, but also the non-compliance of the proposal expressed during election campaigns.

It's my strong belief that countries should focus more on how to open opportunities for PwDs to participate in common day life activities until the day we end labeling people according to their specific characteristics. It is better to benefit from a person's abilities rather than typecasting people and pretend to decide for them.

Mauricio Tayupanta Noroña
Councillor
National Electoral Council, Ecuador

ACCESSIBLE ELECTIONS

One of the laudable features that the Founding Fathers of the nation embedded in our Constitution is Part XV Elections; that provides for an Independent Election Commission, Universal Adult Suffrage, maintenance of electoral rolls and all the other fundamentals for conduct of free, fair and inclusive elections. These features have helped the polity evolve into a vibrant and a rich democratic culture marked by faith of Indian People in the electoral exercise, its non partisan nature, and with the basic tenet of 'No Voter should be left behind.' - a perfect blend for inclusion and the consequent everlasting determination and endeavor for maximizing of the base of democracy in India.

Guiding Principles for Accessibility

Article 324 of the Constitution provides for the Election Commission, its powers and functions for maintenance of the Electoral Roll and conduct of elections in a free and fair manner. Article 325 provides that no person shall be ineligible for inclusion in the electoral roll on the grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex or anyone of these. Article 326 provides for the Universal Adult Suffrage to be the basis of elections. The concerned provisions of the Constitution and the law that flows there from cast an obligation on the ECI for conduct of free, fair and inclusive elections based on Adult Suffrage.

While the scope of Part XV Elections of the Constitution is very large, this article intends to focus on 'Accessible Elections' that has been selected as the central theme of this year's 'National Voter's Day' celebration. The theme, that seamlessly integrates into the underlying philosophy of Universal Adult Suffrage and the concept of 'No voter to be left behind.'

A larger recognition to the rights of 'Persons with Disability' came from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the United Nations Convention of Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) that stress upon respect for inherent dignity, individual autonomy and independence of voter, freedom to make one's own choice, full and effective participation and inclusion in society, respect for difference and acceptance of persons with disabilities as part of human diversity and humanity, accessibility etc.

The Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016 defines a 'Person with Disability' as a person with long term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairment which, in interaction with barriers, hinders his full and effective participation in society equally with others.' This would in effect mean inherent barriers to inclusion of such persons in the electoral process.

Elections Provide Choices

Elections provide for exercise of choices by the voters to elect their representatives based on adult suffrage and it calls upon the Election Machinery to provide for that (i) eligible citizens are registered as voters in the electoral roll and (ii) voters are empowered to make choices for their representatives by casting the vote. Persons with Disabilities (PwD) constitute a special section of society that requires an affirmative action wherein the electoral machinery has to reach out to them for registration as voters and provide suitable facilities at the polling stations to enable them exercise their franchise.

Barriers and Redressal

The barriers in access to electoral participation that may be perceived by the PwDs relate to

difficulties in voter registration, inaccessible registration materials or facilities, inadequate or inaccessible voter education and related materials, difficulties in physical access to polling stations, inability to vote independently and privately, absence of or inappropriate assistance from poll workers etc. The list is only illustrative but in effect it means discouraging PwDs from exercise of their right to franchise.

Barriers do dissuade persons with disabilities from voting

In a democracy in true spirit of universal adult suffrage, every vote matters, every vote counts. Given this fundamental premise, equal access is vital to participation for PwDs. The Barriers can be obliterated if they are addressed appropriately and effectively under a well designed Policy Framework.

Directions and Guidelines of the Commission

Directions of the Commission on the subject focus on the following broad areas in Election Management and Planning:

- Identification of PwDs including polling station wise lists;
- Facilitation in filling up voter registration forms;
- Assured Minimum Facilities at Polling Stations , preference in obtaining facilities at polling stations, Matdata Sahayata Kendras and other election offices in the field;
- Involvement of NGOs, CSOs/DPOs,RWAs;
- System Sensitization and Training;
- Use of technology to provide help to PWDs;
- Cooperation of Political Parties
- Building a comprehensive Statistical Data Base.
- Utilizing the services of volunteers;
- Training and Sensitization of Officials handing the work relating to PwDs.

SVEEP

Voter Education and Outreach for PwDs is an integral part of the SVEEP Plans. Broad areas of coverage are as below:

- An officer well versed with provisions of facilities for PwDs, shall be designated for each of the Assembly Constituencies.
- Wide publicity through various modes

shall be ensured. Basic publicity material shall be prepared with simple language, sign language, Braille.

- Special/Mobile camps should be organized to educate and motivate PwDs.
- Efforts should be made to prepare volunteers from NCC, NSS, NYK etc to motivate and create awareness among PwDs.
- Publicity regarding services offered by CSC, MSKs should be enhanced.
- Efforts shall be made to have renowned PwDs as District Ambassadors and District, State icons.

Lok Sabha Elections 2014

During the Lok Sabha Election 2014, ECI initiated several measures that made registration process voter-friendly.

- Online registration & name search facility in Electoral Roll on ECI's & CEOs' website.
- SMS based services for searching name and polling booth.
- Information on election laws, guidelines and details regarding ROs, AROs, BLOs on CEOs' website.
- Voter Facilitation Centers (VFCs) for E-Roll issues and EPIC.
- Forms 6, 7, 8 & 8A at prominent places including banks, post offices, colleges, universities & schools.
- Nation-wide Special registration camps held in weekly haats, during festivals and through mobile vans to facilitate voters for checking their details on the voters' list.

ECI has implemented several measures to ensure basic facilities at the polling stations making them conducive for PwDs to cast their vote. Some of them are as below:

- Braille signage on the Ballot Unit of EVM.
- Construction of ramps – temporarily installed where permanent ramps had not been provided.
- Entering polling stations without waiting in the queue.
- Facility granted to take wheel chairs inside polling stations.
- Polling personnel briefed about the provisions of Rule 49 N of the Conduct of Election Rules, 1961, for permitting a

ECI's Broad Policy Framework

ECI's broad policy framework on Accessible Elections emanates from the guiding principles and the mandate as discussed above. Further, its Strategic Plan for 2016-25 spells out long term strategic interventions and the current focus of in a continued endeavor for enhancement of inclusion of PwDs as an integral part of its election management including voter education.

STRATEGIC PLAN OF ELECTION COMMISSION OF INDIA 2016-25

STRATEGIC PILLAR 6: PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Goal 1: Inclusive Special facilitation for registration of certain category of voters including – Differently - abled electors etc.
Activity 1: Electoral Roll to be made PwD friendly by identifying such voters in a dedicated section of ER, within each part. It envisages constitution of a Working Group on Facilitation and Inclusion of PwDs.

Goal 2: Accessible Improving and strengthening accessibility for electoral registration with envisaged outcome of Barrier free electoral registration.
Outcome: Barrier –free electoral registration.
Activity 1: Making available one voter's facilitation center at every District Head quarters.
Activity 2: Making available one Voter Facilitation center at every Block Head quarters.
Activity 3: Integration with CSCs- Integrating the facility of Common Service Centers voter related services throughout the country by adopting service area approach.

STRATEGIC PILLAR 5: ELECTION MANAGEMENT

Goal 1: Strengthening planning processes
Activity 3: Strengthening Basic Minimum Facilities in Polling Stations.
Activity 4: Lowering Physical and administrative barriers for voting.

STRATEGIC PILLAR 8: ELECTORAL LITERACY AND EDUCATION

Goal 1: Activities 1 and 2 cover information, motivation and facilitation inter alia for PwDs.

companion to accompany a blind/infirm elector.

- Electors with speech & hearing impairment were given special care as in the case of other disabled persons.
- Poll personnel were trained & sensitized regarding special need of PwDs.

  Special Directions of the Commission were given for providing adequate facilities to the PwDs

Provided Basic Minimum Facilities (BMF) at the Polling Station, such as

- Location of polling stations preferably at the ground floor in good quality buildings with separate entrance and exit
- Drinking water
- Toilets
- Provision of first aid
- Adequate space with ventilation, sufficient lighting & amenities like chairs, benches & covered shelter

Voter information and Awareness

Wide publicity to all available facilities by means of print and electronic media including social media has been given besides holding meetings with political parties and candidates.

Initiatives in the Year 2018

During the year, the Commission has launched the theme 'Accessible Elections' on the eve of the National Voter's Day 2018. An international seminar has been organized on 'Inclusion of the Persons with Disabilities in the Electoral Processes'. The seminar is hosted on the VoICE. NET Platform for knowledge sharing across the world.

The Commission has already set up a Steering Committee to deliberate on the major challenges faced by the PwDs with a view to consolidate the status of facilities and address the challenges in this area. A series of guidelines have already been issued on the subject. We intend consolidating our efforts on accessible elections during the year.

A Premise for Way Forward

ECI directions and guidance is based on the premise that the PwDs have the right to full electoral participation, on basis of equality and shall not be discriminated against on any grounds. The rights of PwDs have to be respected, protected and promoted as per the mandate. In this context 'Accessible Elections' and enabling environment for the same provide an opportunity for electoral participation. ECI continues support in its endeavor to provide effective and efficient information, awareness, facilitation for enhanced participation for PwDs. And as such ECI is committed to ensure that PwDs feel encouraged and confident to enjoy their rights of electoral participation without any discrimination whatsoever.

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

ACCESS OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES TO THE ELECTORAL PROCESS

The number of stable population in the Republic of Moldova is around 3557,6 thousand persons. According to the State Register of Voters, a number of 3.2 million citizens with the right to vote are registered. According to the data of the Ministry of Labor, Social Protection, and Family, the total number of the persons with disabilities accounts for 183415 persons, representing about 5.2% of the total population.

Central Electoral Commission of the Republic of Moldova pays a special attention to enhance the accessibility of the electoral process for the persons with disabilities. This represents one of the main objectives of the institution, also established in its strategic plan for 2016-2019.

The voters with special needs were not subject to international observation. The monitoring reports of the biggest observer's mission, OSCE/ODIHR reveal that the following categories of voters were most frequently under focus: the ones residing abroad, ethnical minorities, voters from the separatist region of Transnistria, and women.

The participation of persons with disabilities in voting has represented a topic of observation for one national nongovernmental organization, during the Parliamentary elections in 2009, 2014 and the local elections in 2011. The mass-media monitoring reports during the electoral campaigns also do not reflect to what extent the persons with hearing and visual disabilities had access to the information about the candidates or about their electoral platforms.

More than a half of the polling stations are opened in public buildings. According to the data revealed by the Ombudsman reports, about 46% of the public buildings (premises of public institutions and authorities, law enforcement

bodies, courts, etc.), complied to a certain extent with the accessibility conditions set for persons with mobility disabilities.

Starting with 2015, Central Electoral Commission (CEC) and the Center for Continuous Electoral Training under the CEC, have assessed the accessibility of the polling stations established in the country through the
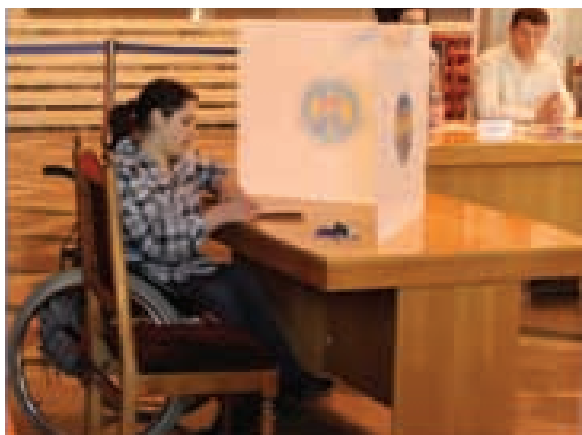
interview method and questionnaires addressed to the polling stations officers. Only 15% of them met the technical access conditions for the persons in wheelchairs.

Characteristics of the electoral system in the Republic of Moldova

The citizens elect via direct vote: the Parliament, Local Public Administration and the President of the Republic.

The voting right is held by the citizens who have turned 18 years old, except for those who have been deprived of the respective right. One single restriction is set for the exercised of the right to elect and to be elected – the persons whose incapability has been recognized by a final court decision. This provision refers to the persons

who 'as a result of a mental disorder (mental disease or mental deficiency) cannot be aware of or manage their actions' (Civil Code, art. 24). This category of citizens also covers the persons with psycho-social disabilities. Currently, a draft law initiated by the Ministry of Labor, Social Protection and Family to abolish the respective restriction undergoes the legislative process of the Parliament. The given draft was positively endorsed by the Central Election Commission.

The Electoral Code of the Republic of Moldova regulates 3 voting possibilities:

• Ordinary voting – according to the general procedures (art.53, par. 1).

• Assisted voting (art. 54, par. 1) - provided when the 'Voter cannot fill in all by himself/ herself the voting ballot and is entitled to invite in the voting booth another person, except for the members of the precinct electoral bureau, representatives of the electoral candidates and of the persons authorized to assist the electoral operations. These cases shall be registered separately in the report of the precinct electoral bureau'. The assisted voting may be considered both, in case of persons with different disabilities, as well as in case of other persons (e.g. illiterate persons, persons with reading deficiencies).

• Voting at the place of stay (with the mobile ballot box) (art. 55 par.4) - if due to health reasons or any other well-grounded reasons, the voter cannot come to the voting premises, the precinct electoral bureau shall appoint, upon the voter's written request, at least 2 members of the bureau who will go with a mobile voting box and the necessary material for voting to the place where the voter stays,

for him/her to vote. The requests may be lodged in written form, starting with 2 weeks before the voting day till 18.00 o'clock of the day preceding Election Day. During the Election Day, the requests may be lodged in written form till 15.00 o'clock, if a medical certificate is presented. These persons vote according to the voters' list for voting at the place of stay, compiled by the precinct electoral bureau based on such voters' requests, and the persons who are not included in such a list cannot vote at the place of stay. In the voters' list, the note 'voted at the place of stay' is mentioned in the row with the name of the respective person. These provisions may be also applied in case of the persons with disabilities.

Legislative safeguards

The *UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* was signed by the Republic of Moldova on March 30, 2007 and ratified by the Parliament on July 9, 2010. For the purpose of implementing the UN Convention, the Parliament has adopted the *Law No. 60 dated 30.03.2012 on Social Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities*, guaranteeing a number of rights to participate in public life and provides for:

• The right to adequate, accessible and easily understood and used voting procedures and materials (implementation of alternative voting modalities),

• The right to free opinion about political parties and their candidates, including by organization of electoral debates and radio/TV shows in mimic-gesture language, printing out electoral materials using the writing systems used by the persons with visual deficiency, and by using other information tools accessible for persons with disabilities.

The *Electoral Code of the Republic of Moldova*, that regulates the organization of all types of elections and referendum, sets forth that the premises of the polling stations should be established, as a rule, in public buildings and shall be equipped so as to facilitate the access of elderly persons and persons with disabilities. The task to endow the respective premises with everything that is necessary is held by the local public authorities. CEC has only the

role of developing the regulatory framework for uniform enforcement of the legislation in the area. Hence, via one of its decisions, the CEC provided for the polling premises to be established only at the first floor of building, in more accessible places.

Also, the Commission has approved and adjusted its own normative acts. Before the parliamentary elections from 2014, the CEC has approved an *Instruction regarding the infrastructure of the polling station*. This document sets forth the conditions to be met by the premises of the polling stations for conducting the voting process in good conditions. Thus, based on CEC's request, the Local Public Authorities (LPA) have organized the polling stations at the first floor of buildings so as to facilitate the access of persons with special needs.

In April 2015, before local elections, CEC has amended the *Regulation on the electoral campaign media coverage* that established recommendation for all electoral subjects to ensure accessibility of disseminated information to people with special needs by all available means - subtitles, sign language language etc.

In 2015 CEC also adopted the *Declaration on the accessibility of the electoral process for disabled persons* that later was transformed into the *Regulation on the accessibility of the electoral process for Person with Disabilities* (26/01/2016). According to this documents the Commission has taken the obligation to broadcast informative spots with the translation in sign language, to equip polling stations with informative and illustrative materials with enlarged font, and to adjust its websites to easily accessible format for the persons with visual impairments.

The Precinct Electoral Bureaus were given the task to provide the necessary assistance for persons with disabilities and/or those with special needs. At the same time, the local public authorities were asked to adapt the polling stations, as well as the roads/paths to this polling stations, to the needs of the voters with disabilities. The documents called for political parties, election candidates and media that broadcast the electoral events, to ensure the information of voters with visual and / or hearing impairments by alternative means.

Recent achievements of the Central Election Commission

CEC cooperates actively with the civil society organizations dealing with promotion of rights and interests of the persons with special needs, so as to identify solutions for ensuring personal exercise of the right to vote.

During the parliamentary elections from 2010, CEC tested in a pilot project, a solution for the blind persons to vote without assistance. It included the use of a template-envelope with the help of which the voter identified the preferred electoral candidate. The template-envelope was manufactured of some hard material (carton), having the form and the size of the ballot paper, and having some circles cut in it, which coincided with the circles printed on the ballot paper, within which the voter should apply the stamp "voted" in line with the preferred electoral candidate, according to the rules of the Electoral Code. The ballot paper was introduced in this envelope, the voter was palpating with the fingers the cut holes, afterwards identifying the preferred candidates and applying the stamp 'voted'. Hence, the voter did not need any assistance anymore. A polling station was equipped with such a template-envelope,

around which persons with visual disabilities live compactly. The project was extended during the Parliamentary Elections in 2014.

Starting with General Local Elections of 2015, all the opened polling stations are equipped with special envelopes (2 envelopes per station). They were improved – besides the perforated circles (for the application of voting stamp), it had the order numbers of the candidates in Braille language. The design of the envelop permits the voter to use it independently.

> Remark: The ballot is organized in a linear form, all the electoral candidates are listed from the top to the bottom in the order of their registration, maintaining the same positions during the entire electoral campaign, except for the cases when they withdraw from campaigning.

A new tool meant to facilitate the electoral procedures for the blind persons and persons with poor eyesight was implemented starting in 2011 – the special rulers for identifying the voter in the voters' list. This ruler contains two cuts, which correspond to the respective fields in the list: name and signature of the voter. This cut helps the blind voter to sign within the quadrangle exactly in line with his/her name in the list.

It was for the first time during the 2014 parliamentary elections when CEC has standardized the electoral logistics equipment. Special voting booths (with the size of 50 cm*30cm*150cm) were procured for the persons with mobile disabilities or other persons with special needs. In case of persons with visual disabilities, the voting booths were equipped with additional light source. To facilitate the access of persons with mobile disabilities in the polling station, special ramps were established at the entrance of some polling stations. These premises were selected together with the local public authorities and 'Motivation' NGO.

For the presidential elections of 2016, CEC has equipped all the polling stations with magnifying glasses, for voting of persons with partial visual impairments. Also, the Commission approved the implementation of the project 'Social policies for realization of electoral rights by persons with disabilities' by a group of NGOs. The project provided two

opportunities: the first is to offer the persons with visual impairments to vote by using TV closed systems (STVCI) that will be installed in polling stations and the second - to facilitate, by request, the communication process for persons with hearing impairments. STVCI systems were installed in 3 polling stations. The interpreters for persons with hearing impairments were present in 3 polling stations from the capital.

For the successful electoral education and information of persons with disabilities about the voting procedures, CEC has developed and printed, in cooperation with NGOs, the Voter's Guide in Braille language. There was developed an audio version of this guide and a poster which shows the voting procedure. Also we shoot a methodical-didactic film "Direct and Secret Voting of Persons with Disabilities through the Special Envelope" and organized trainings for the voters with special needs All these informative materials are sent via mail to all the territorial organizations of impaired persons from Moldova. As well, trainings, Information campaigns conducted by CEC, namely video spots, are produced with sign language translation and subtitles. Similarly, press briefings and meetings of the CEC from the Elections Day, are assisted by the sign language interpreters. Also, the trainings for the electoral officials from lower electoral bodies, held by the Center for Electoral Training, includes a module dedicated to the insuring of the accessibility of the polling station, including behavior rules of the polling stations officers when they are dealing with persons with disabilities.

Inclusion of persons with disabilities in organizing the voting process

It was for the first time, during the parliamentary elections on November 30, 2014, when a person with mobile disabilities was included as member of a precinct electoral bureau. CEC organizes information campaigns to encourage the voters with special needs to become future members of electoral bodies.

As well, during the parliamentary elections in November 2014, the CEC has accredited 31 national observers from the 'Motivation' Association from Moldova, of whom 16 were persons with mobile disabilities and 2 were with heating disabilities.

Objectives to be achieved by CEC in the area of inclusion of persons with special needs
CEC's short-term objectives in the area of accessibility to voting:
- Setting a special column in the State Register of Voters dedicated to persons with special needs: this group of persons will be easily identified and thus it will be known to which polling stations to provide special attention. Preparation of an interactive map of the polling station, that will include information on accessibility;
- Involving more persons with disabilities as electoral officials (members of precinct electoral bureaus);
- Completing the normative framework with provisions related to the binding duty to ensure mimic-gesture translation of all informative materials related to electoral topics and of the electoral debates organized at the radio and TV;
CEC's long-term objectives in the area of accessibility to voting:
- Improving continuously the normative acts so as to ensure full accessibility of the polling stations and to facilitate the electoral procedures for the persons with disabilities;
- Developing alternative voting means: remote voting, voting with the help of special equipment for blind persons.

Corneliu Pasat
Central Election Commission, Moldova

INCLUSION OF PwDs IN THE ELECTORAL PROCESS

Zambia, in southern Africa, is a landlocked country of rugged terrain and diverse wildlife, with many parks and safari areas. It has a population of 16 million with 6.6 million registered voters.

Elections in Zambia take place with in the framework of a multi-party democracy and a presidential system. The President and National Assembly are simultaneously elected for five-year terms. The country has 10 Provinces, 109 Districts, and 156 Constituencies, 1624 ward and 7700 polling stations.

The guiding principles are Electoral Commission Act No.25 of 2016, Constitution of Zambia Amendment Act No.2 of 2016, PwD Act of 2012.

In the previous election in Zambia, the country developed and implemented measures to ensure that persons with disabilities effectively participate in the entire electoral process. The Electoral Commission was compelled through litigation and advocacy to produce an action plan and budget to ensure that persons with disabilities are catered for in the approaching elections.

Disability Rights Watch (DRW), a leading human rights watchdog on disability in Zambia has been closely following the enforcement of the High Court Judgment in the case of Selah Brotherton vs. ECZ.

Current facilities provided by the Election Commission are ramps at the polling station, Biometric Voter Registration System (VRS), Voter Jacket for the blind, information dissemination in the accessible format. In addition to that, PwDs are recruited as polling staff and quota is given to support their participation in future.

Use of technology is very crucial. E- Voting, Internet Voting, AI and Robotics are being developed to further facilitate the voting process especially for the Persons with Disabilities.

Dylan Kasonde
Director, IT
Election Commission of Zambia

2016 General Elections - PwDs Voter Statistics

Description/Age Group	18-25 Yrs	26-35Yrs	36-55Yrs	Over 55Yrs	Sub Total
Deaf	343	442	262	118	1,165
Wheel Chair	88	107	271	142	608
Blind – Literate in Braille	94	273	483	609	1,459
Blind – Literate not in Braille	66	1,075	2,447	2,268	5,856
TOTAL	591	1,897	3,463	3,137	**9,088**

MOVING TOWARDS MORE INCLUSIVE ELECTORAL FRAMEWORKS

With 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 with

> ### 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

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 18th 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.

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

A VOTE FOR EVERY VOICE:
HOW EMBs CAN BE MORE INCLUSIVE OF PERSON with DISABILITIES

The World Health Organization estimates that 1 out of every 7 people in the world has a disability – over a billion people – yet Person with Disabilities are often not included in the political lives of their communities. They often do not have the necessary documents required to register to vote, do not receive voter education information in accessible formats, like sign language or braille, encounter physical barriers to enter and maneuver within polling stations and poll workers who do not welcome their participation. It is assumed Person with Disabilities are not interested in politics or that they do not add value to the political process. This misconception could not be farther from the truth – Person with Disabilities have the right and desire to engage in political life and it is the election management body's responsibility to ensure the process is inclusive.

The International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) focuses on advancing good governance and democratic rights. To advance that mission, IFES emphasizes empowerment of Person with Disabilities to participate in political life. Not only does making the electoral process accessible ensure truly representative democracy, it is also the duty of the state to uphold the rights of all citizens and enforce international standards, like the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which has been ratified by nearly 90% of member states.

To facilitate inclusion, IFES works to spread awareness of CRPD obligations, especially among election management bodies (EMBs), as many of the commitments outlined in CRPD Article 29 are fundamental responsibilities of the EMB. Additionally, observer groups now count accessibility as a key indicator in their checklists – inclusion is expected, it is no longer considered something "extra" that you only think about if time allows.

> " As a person with a psychosocial disability I exercised my right to vote thanks to inclusion support that UDPK gave to IEBC in conjunction with IFES on voter education.I realized that everyone has a right to vote (I actually did not queue because I have a card that identifies me as having a disability!). In an exercise that many may take for granted, I felt included."
>
> **- A voter with psychosocial disability from Nairobi**

Person with Disabilities are among the most under served citizens in most countries. There are steps EMBs can take to make the electoral process more accessible – a few simple policy and procedure changes can make a big difference to the experience of a citizen with a disability during the electoral cycle. These adjustments are within an EMB's power and do not require law reform. If EMBs collaborate with Disabled Person's Organizations (DPOs) from the beginning of the electoral cycle, it is easy to be inclusive. EMBs must be careful not to perpetuate discrimination by establishing

entirely separate policies and procedures for Person with Disabilities. For example, mobile ballot boxes are a good stop-gap in the absence of accessible polling stations and for people who genuinely cannot leave their homes, but this tool should not be considered a substitute for selecting accessible polling stations and working with other government stakeholders to make polling stations accessible. Person with Disabilities would prefer to vote in person alongside their neighbors. There are many good practice examples from EMBs around the world. Some of these ideas might seem complicated at the first time, but can very easily become routine.
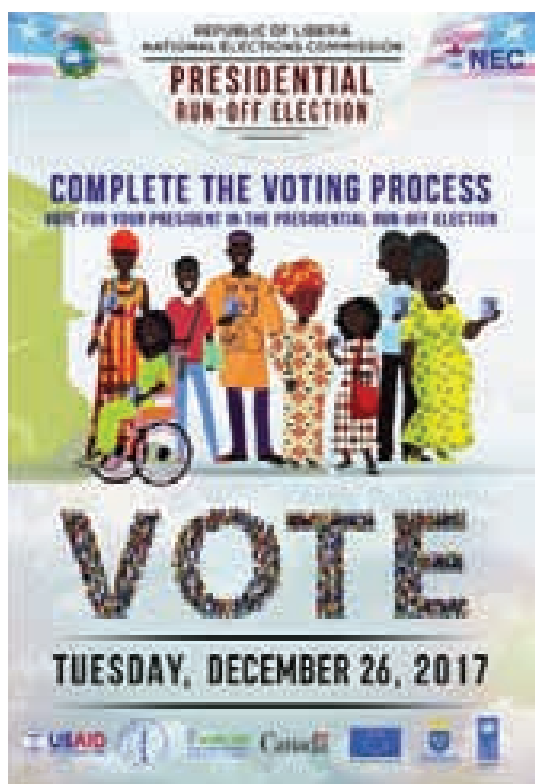
Voter education poster from Liberia

Voter registration is arguably the most crucial part of the electoral cycle to make inclusive. If Person with Disabilities do not have access to register, any of the changes made later will not matter. The EMB in the Philippines developed a unique solution to address physical access barriers – they set up voter registration centers in shopping malls. As some of the most accessible buildings in the country, this allowed for ease of access, but malls were also a more convenient location for Person with Disabilities

to visit, as opposed to a government office. Additionally, the voter registration form in the Philippines asks voters what type of assistance they might need on election day. By collecting this information in advance, the EMB can better prepare to welcome voters on Election Day.

In the Dominican Republic, the EMB hired Person with Disabilities to serve as workers during their 'Verificate' campaign. These workers went to locations like rehab centers where they were likely to find Person with Disabilities, to confirm their registration details. By both hiring Person with Disabilities and targeting their campaign, the EMB ensured Person with Disabilities were included.

Voter education is the next key area for EMBs to think about in terms of inclusion. Person with Disabilities should be mainstreamed in broader messages to the public and unique content targeting Person with Disabilities in accessible formats should also be developed. Mainstreaming is simple – it does not cost anything extra to draw an image of a person with a disability in a brochure or comic. Ahead of Liberia's December 2017 Presidential run-off election, the EMB produced posters which included an image of a woman with a disability alongside her fellow citizens.

It is also important to develop materials in accessible formats, like sign language, braille or large font. In Nepal and Kyrgyzstan, voter education information has been produced in braille. There are disabled person's organizations in every country, they can help EMBs identify where Person with Disabilities live in order to better target dissemination of accessible materials.

Entering and maneuvering around the polling station is often another barrier. In Zimbabwe, Person with Disabilities conducted audits of polling stations and shared their findings with

Accessible voting booth from Georgia

the EMB. The EMB has begun adding ramps to many of the polling stations identified as inaccessible. This is a long-term process, but also has the added benefit of making schools accessible to students and teachers with disabilities.

Once inside, polling stations should be set up with enough room for wheelchair users to freely move and materials should be accessible. In Georgia, the EMB procured lower voting booths, which are often also appreciated by older voters, who would prefer to mark their ballot sitting down. In addition to accessible voting booths, EMBs should also strive to develop tactile ballot guides. These tools allow people who are blind to vote on their own and in secret. The EMB in Armenia developed a good example which includes both braille and tactile dots, for those who are not literate in braille.

The experience of voters with disabilities, just like with their fellow citizens, can be greatly improved if they have positive interactions with poll workers. Inclusive poll worker training encourages poll workers to be responsive to the rights of voters with disabilities. For example, in Guatemala, all poll workers learned how to say hello, goodbye and thank you in sign language. Imagine how much more welcome Deaf citizens would feel if they were greeted in their language!

Lastly, EMBs should think about how their messaging and policies may impact people who identify with multiple marginalized groups. In Myanmar voter education materials included images of women with disabilities in broader

efforts targeting women. In Kenya, the EMB produced inclusive materials as part of their Voter Education for Schools Project by integrating images of young Person with Disabilities.

These are just a few examples of good practices from around the world. IFES has developed several resources to disseminate additional good practices and lessons learned. These include:

- Election Access. org – an online resource dedicated to the global political rights of persons with disabilities, which features a library of legal excerpts from relevant laws and examples of inclusive voter education from around the world;

- BRIDGE module – IFES developed the first Building Resources in Democracy and Elections (BRIDGE) module on disability rights and elections; and

- Equal Access manual – offers election and disability rights professionals an in-depth review of ways to involve persons with disabilities as leaders and equal participants in the electoral cycle.

By learning from these good practice examples, all EMBs can ensure a vote for every voice.

William Sweeney
President & CEO, IFES

Poster for January 2017 local government election in Haiti- This wordless poster shows citizens discussing how local elections lead to local development. Using images helps to mitigate any communication challenges that may occur for people who have low literacy skills.


Pamphlet for Myanmar by-elections in April 2017- This pamphlet shows the process of voting in Myanmar. In addition to depicting men and women – including persons with disabilities – as electoral stakeholders, it also uses animal images and minimal words to be accessible for voters with low literacy.
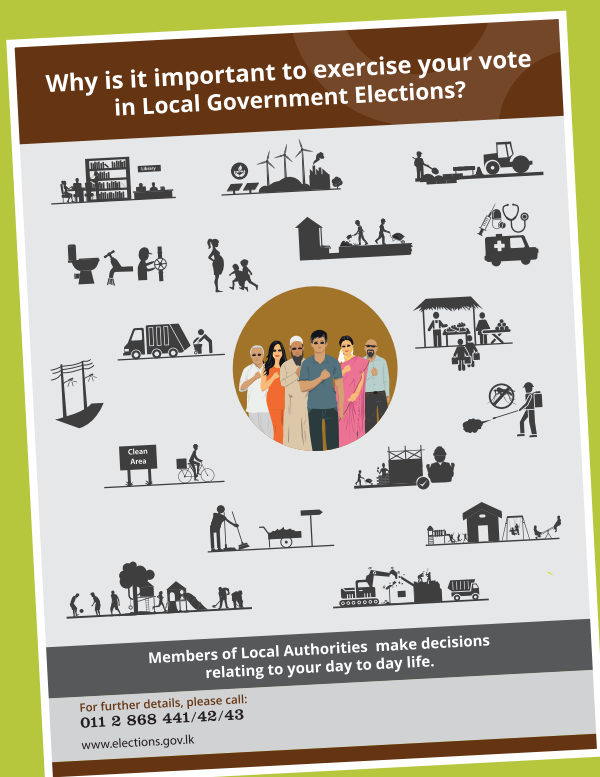
Poster for local government election in Sri Lanka (February 2018) – Distributed by the Election Commission of Sri Lanka, this poster highlights the important role that local government representatives play in citizens lives, and encourages voters to participate actively in electing their own representative.
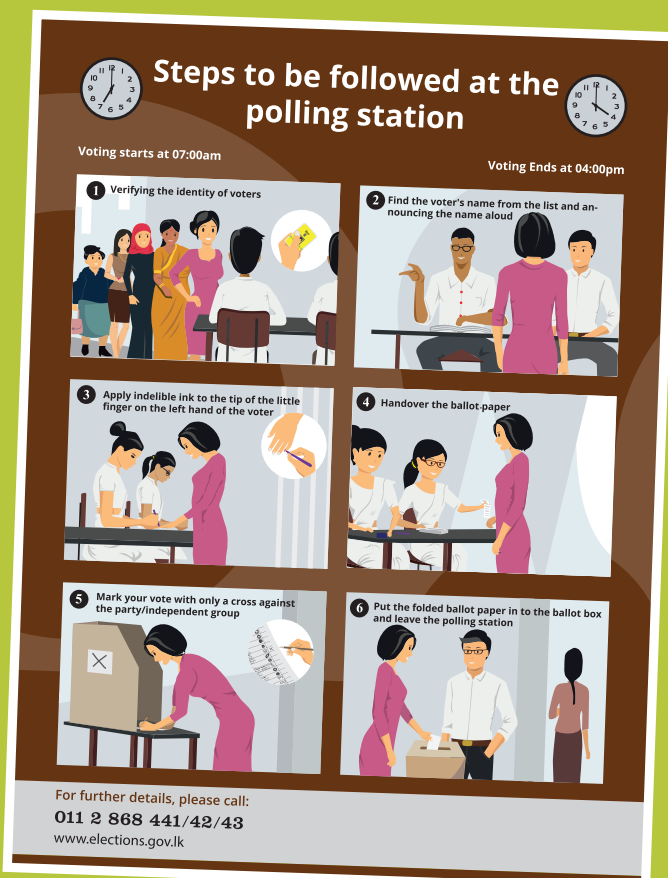
Poster for local government election in Sri Lanka (February 2018) – also distributed by the Election Commission of Sri Lanka, the images and concise language explain the step-by-step process for voting on Election Day.
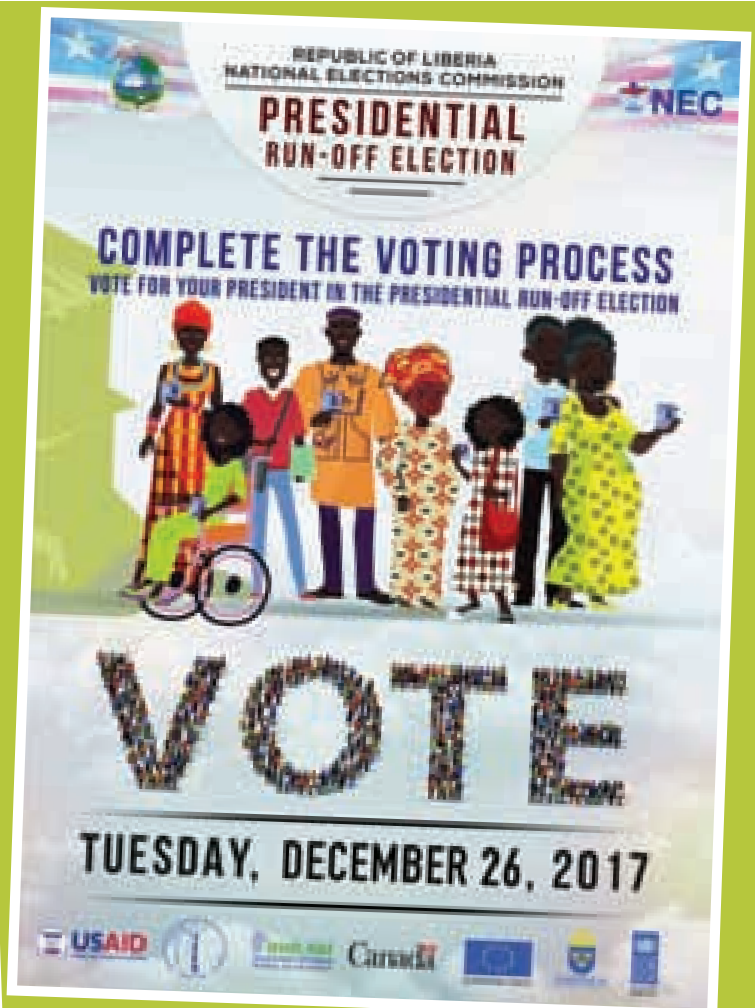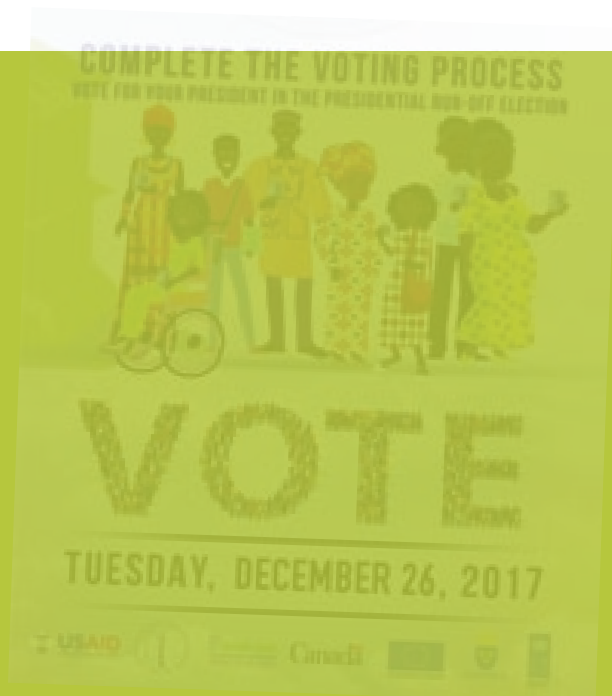
Poster for Liberian election in December 2017- *Produced with the National Elections Commission of Liberia (NEC) and IFES, the poster aims to encourage all voters, including voters with disabilities, to participate in the run-off elections.*

Polling process poster for July 2017 Timor Leste election- *This poster captures through clear images the entire polling process on Election Day, including the role of observers, the opening and closing time of polling stations, and how to mark one's ballot.*

The State of Gujarat

The State of Punjab
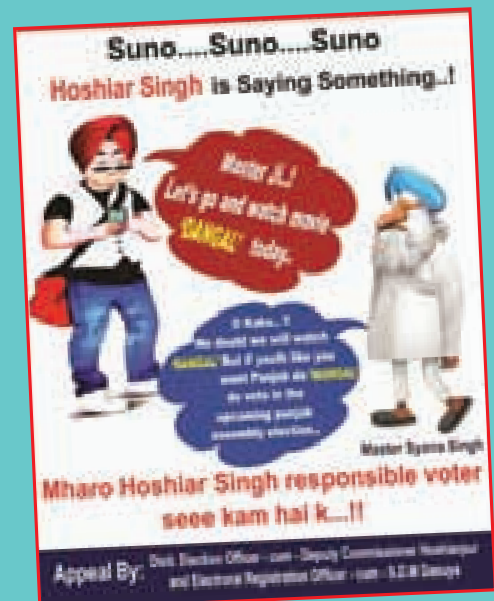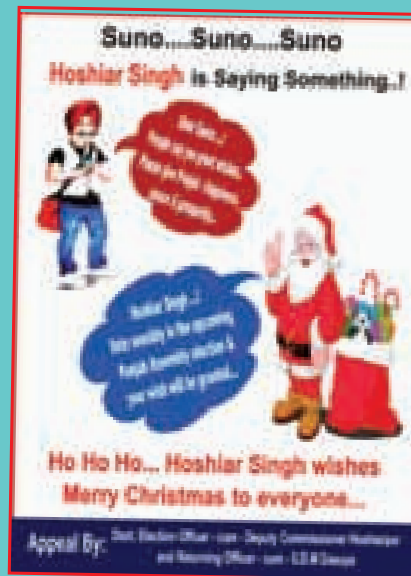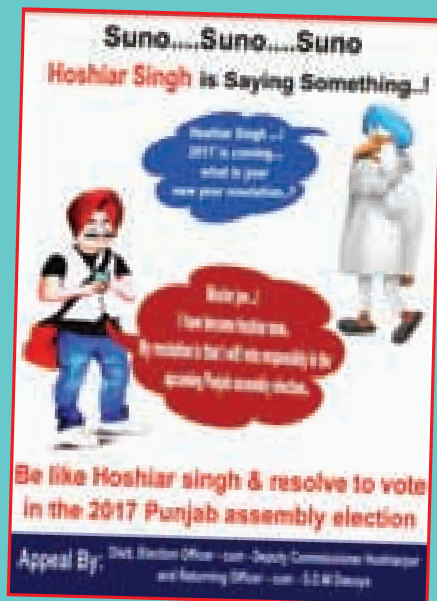
Hosiyar Singh —The District mascot of Hoshiarpur is true to its name (as Hosiyar means Intelligent)

Pammi Aunty inspires youth to register

While Hoshiar Singh and Syana Singh became the talk of the town, there was another character from the district that was busy becoming the talk of the social media. Laughter is the best medicine — so we have heard. But not everyone may know that it can even cure ignorance and bridge information gaps. The example of Pammi Aunty will easily prove this statement to be a fact.

For the Election Officers in Hoshiarpur, enrolment of young voters was a priority task and thus naturally,

hindustantimes

Video: In campaign for voter enrolment in Punjab, help from Pammi Aunty!
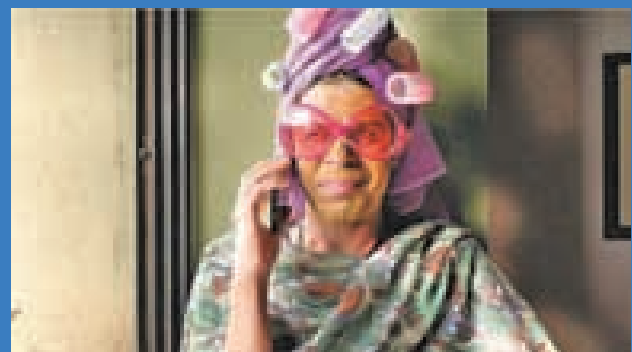
more stress was put on reaching out to them. The realization that a massive engagement with the youth can be through social media prodded them to come up with ideas for utilizing the potential of the platform.

Doing the rounds of social media, where humor is the preferred flavor of the audience, was Ssumeir Pasricha's Pammi Aunty the quintessential Punjabi Aunty with gossiping second nature to her. Identifying the opportunity, Pasricha was made the district icon of Hoshiarpur. In return, Pammi Aunty in her own distinct style inspired eligible electors to get them registered through her humorous video. The video quickly went viral on the internet and as thousands of youth watched, Pammi aunty drove the message of voter registration home.

The State of Meghalaya

Ariel view of mega logo formation undertaken by 2,800 young and future voters on the occasion of state wide launch of Special drive on Enrolment of 18 to 21 years, Meghalaya 2017.

I HAVE SCALED
THE HIGHEST PEAK
I HAVE ENROLLED
I AM ON A HIGH

JOIN DOLYNE KHARBHIH
AND ENROLL NOW!

State Women Everester, Ms. Dolyne Kharbhih as SVEEP Icon

18 YEARS OLD ?...
Register Yourself.

you'Ve
gOt
The
powEr

Just ONE
A Video Presentation
Duration - 4.09 min

Music Video "Just One"

Lyrics of the song Just One

Verse 1
I stumbled, now I stand
Alone or in a crowd.
I sing out loud
Time i took that charge
All i need is a need for all

Chorus
Oh .. O oh oh......

Verse 2
Question marks all round
Grab the answers n'
bring 'em
To the ground
The roads a maze for sure
But the key is you and me

(we know our responsibility.
yeah)

Chorus
Oh .. O oh oh......

ENROLL
NOW!

ENGAGING FUTURE VOTERS

As per the Census Data 2011, there are 9.68 crore children in the age-group of 14-17 years. Of these 6.97 crore were enrolled in schools. There are around 2 lakh secondary and senior secondary schools as per the Statistics of School Education 2011-12, MoHRD, Bureau of Planning, Monitoring & Statistics.

Election Commission of India, under its flagship voter education programme 'SVEEP', has taken up some activities in schools like celebration of National Voters' Day on January 25, issue of '*Sankalp Patras*' ahead of elections and some competitions like drawing, quiz etc. Sankalp patras are letters issued to parents through the school students during election period whereby the parents and other eligible members of the family are asked to append their signature to a pledge for participating in the electoral process. The same pledge letter is then submitted back to the school and they further submit it to the District Election officer.

While these activities were aimed at sensitizing the school children for carrying the message to their parents, there was a growing realisation in the Commission that systemic intervention need to be taken up through the existing educational structure so that continuous electoral literacy can be taken up rather than voter awareness in spurts.

Thus Continuous Education in Electoral Democracy was included in the Strategic Plan 2016-2025, under the Strategic Pillar

8- 'Electoral Literacy & Education' as one of the goals. Designing and implementing extra co-curricular activities in Schools and Colleges was one of the defined activities to achieve this goal. Taking forward this specific goal, the theme for the 7th National Voters' Day 2017 was 'Empowering Young & Future Voters' which set the tone for the interventions planned for the year.

Future voters or those in the age-group of 14-17 years became the new significant target for voter education. On one hand a comprehensive approach was being developed in terms of 'Mainstreaming of Electoral Literacy' through Electoral Literacy Clubs and curriculum interventions, on the other, it was decided to initiate the first pan-India intervention into this segment through a quick pilot approach.

Interactive School Engagement (ISE)

A brain-child of the then Chief Election Commissioner, Dr Nasim Zaidi, a plan was devised whereby each Chief Electoral officer, District Election Officer and Electoral Registration Officer were asked to have an interactive session with the students of class 9-12 in any one school within their area of

Interactive School Engagement (ISE) activities

jurisdiction. Rural and Urban schools were to be equitably covered under the plan. Dr Nasim Zaidi was invited by Shiv Nadar School Noida, where he responded to the queries of the students on all topics related to election and electoral process.

A quick programme was chalked out which came to be named as Interactive School Engagement (ISE). A kit was shared with the CEOs consisting of a presentation in English covering all important aspects of the electoral process. Informed and ethical voting and the motivational aspect was also keeping in mind while designing the presentation. Badges stating 'I am the Future Voter of India' were given to the students, the design for which was also included in the kit shared with the CEOs alongwith an edutainment film on electoral process and some games on electoral process.

Taken up in January 2017 just ahead of the NVD, around 11,800 schools were covered across the country covering 25,11,594 students. Buoyed by the success of the programme, it was decided to conduct it in July/August

Interactive School Engagement (ISE) activities

ahead of summary Revision. 16,855 Schools and 32,58,080 students were covered under the ISE programme in July 2017. Under the two phases conducted in 2017 more than 28000 schools and around 58 lakh students were covered.

The questions asked by the students during the interactive session with the EROs, DEOs and CEOs were compiled. These make very interesting reading and gives an insight into what the young students perceive about the electoral process.

#NEQIndia

Looking at the enthusiastic response of the students during ISE, and the various queries put up to the Election Officers during the ISE, the idea of conducting a Quiz came up. While Quizzes have been an important and regular component of various SVEEP interventions taken up by the individual DEOs especially ahead of election, there had been no precedent of a National Level Quiz programme on elections.

A detailed structure of the National Elections Quiz - Inter School Competition was devised. The first round was envisioned as the round with most extensive coverage and accordingly it was decided to take up an Intra-School round as an exercise of voter education. The Intra-School round questionnaire was accordingly developed by ECI covering the basic and most important part of the electoral process from a voter's perspective. Information about registration and voting process was covered under the set of 30 questions, which was shared with the States for local translation and further sharing with Schools. Around 13 lakh students from more than 38000 schools participated in the Intra-School round.

The District round and the State round were conducted by the concerned DEOs and CEOs and the questions were prepared independently with increasing difficulty level. While many states conducted their State Rounds in the studios of Doordarshan for state telecast, some organized it as a stage event and invited school students to attend and cheer for their school teams.

For the national rounds, the 36 States and UTs were grouped into six zones, North, West, East, South, North-East and Special Central Zone. The six Zonal Winners qualified for the Grand Finale. Rajya Sabha TV collaborated with ECI on the national rounds and 7 episodes were shot covering the six zonal rounds and the grand finale. The national episodes were also live-streamed on social media platforms like Facebook and You Tube.

While the State Winners were felicitated at the National Voters' Day function at the States/UTs, the National Champion - Jharkhand Team from Delhi Public School, Ranchi was felicitated by the Hon'ble President of India at the NVD function in New Delhi.

With the overall goal of citizenship development for effective electoral engagement, the NEQ was aimed at sensitizing the target audience about their role and rights in the democractic electoral process and fill the gaps in information.

While, the primary target audience for the NEQ 2018 was the more than 13 lakh future voters who had participated in the competition, the wider secondary target audience were the viewers who were reached out through the television telecast and social media live-streaming of the NEQ episodes. The estimated population reached out to through NEQ 2018 is around 300 million Indians.

Padma Angmo
Director, ECI

The State level rounds of NEQ

72 State level Winners of NEQ from all States/UTs of India at ECI headquarters

MAINSTREAMING OF ELECTORAL LITERACY THROUGH EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS AND COMMUNITIES IN INDIA

Studies suggest that participation in the first one or two elections of an elector's lifetime helps to inculcate the habit of voting and make participation in future elections more likely. The importance of developing the practice of citizenship for electoral participation is vital to investment in the future of democracy. It is necessary to focus on the younger generation for civic education leading to robust electoral participation. Keeping in view, this rationale, the Election Commission of India took a massive step towards the cause of electoral literacy with its initiative of establishing Electoral Literacy Clubs (ELCs) in educational institutions and *Chunav Pathshalas* for out-of-school and communities.

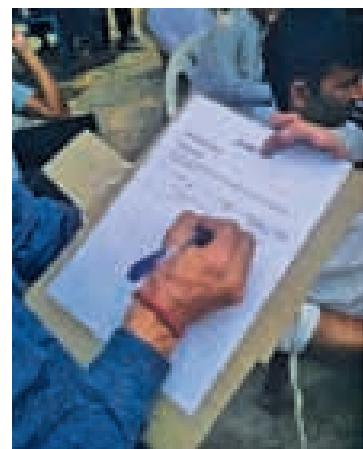*Community watches the movie on elections*

The entire project revolves around keeping voter education relevant, practical and renewed every time through a host of curricular, co-curricular and extra – curricular methods for the young and future voters of the nation. The project is anchored by the Systematic Voters' Education and Electoral Participation (SVEEP) team of the ECI.

Focused on the young citizens, especially the ones in the age group of 14-17, the future voters, ELCs will aim to serve as a long term, sustainable solution to the humongous task of spreading voter education in a country of 1.2 billion. ELCs are proposed to be established in the 0.2 million Secondary and Higher Secondary Schools, 25 thousand colleges/ universities and in rural communities in the form of *Chunav Pathshalas,* at the polling station level throughout the country. Currently the project is in its execution phase. However, in the past two years, much work has gone into its development.

After a complete situational analysis where possible challenges for each target group were listed, the SVEEP team set out on its journey of developing engaging activities in order to impart voter education through ELCs. An exhaustive list of key messages was created and learning expectations of school students from class IX-XII, colleges and members of rural communities were individually expressed. Guided by these learning outcomes, games and activities imparting messages of electoral education were developed. This resource development phase continued for about 6 months which was immediately followed by three enthusiastic rounds of field trials in different schools and communities in Delhi and NCR.

The field trials proved to be that phase of the project that provided the team with the much required insights and feedback that was required for deciding on a functional structure of the ELCs, identifying the possible barriers it would face in the set up, problems associated with conduct of activities and games, rural sensitivities etc. and evaluating the overall reception of these learning tools and their effectiveness. It was realized,

Creating the Mock Voter List

Students listen about electoral process with rapt attention

ELCs will continuously churn out young adults across the nation, who will be well prepared and informed voters of tomorrow. These aware and educated voters of tomorrow will also be the ones who will act as ambassadors of democracy who will share their knowledge, inform and educate their peers, their family and their community at large.

that the success of the program depended on the persons convening the ELC, their language and communication skills, and their correct understanding of the messages that we intend to impart. Following these trials, another round of modifications was carried out to further fine tune the activities. Finally, the learning tools were all set for a pan India review.

On December 19 & 20, 2017, ECI organised a two day workshop aimed at concentrating efforts for a final review of tools prepared for the Electoral Literacy Clubs(ELCs) which will be set up in schools, colleges and educational institutions as well as rural communities all across the country. For this purpose, ECI invited Chief Electoral Officers, Master Trainers, representatives from Civil Society Organisations, educators from schools and colleges as well as development communicators from different corners of the nation to the two day workshop, where their suggestions were sought to further refine the tools, check their viability and deliberate on an effective roll-out plan to set up the ELCs.

By January 25,2018, which is celebrated as the National Voters' Day in the country, model ELCs had already been set up in Punjab, Jharkhand and Noida. These model ELCs proved without a doubt the fact that

A major component of the project in its execution phase was the training of Electoral Club conveners. Considering the sheer magnitude of the numbers the project is dealing with, devising a training program itself in such projects always proves to be a challenge. How ECI tackled it was by utilizing its current machinery that is already effectively in place. Beginning from February 2018, ECI started calling upon State Level Master Trainers (SLMTs) from the 36 states of the country in 4 batches of 40 each.

The State Level Master Trainers were trained by the Election Commission of India. Considering the creative approach the team has already undertaken in developing the program and the inherent vibrant quality that the learning tools posses, the training sessions were transformed from boring lectures into two days of pure

The Commission interacting with participants at the ELC Workshop

energy with the SLMTs trying out the learning tools themselves and engaging themselves in the various activities designed for students. These State Level Master Trainers now hold the

ELC members attending the talk on voter registration at St. Xavier's College, Ranchi, Jharkhand (a Pilot ELC).

Sr. DEC Umesh Sinha interacting with State Level Master Trainers.

responsibility of further training District Level Master Trainers who will then train the specific club conveners falling in their respective districts.

To make the developed resources available for all to use, the Election Commission of India is also working towards developing an online portal where all tools and instructions can be easily accessed by club conveners. The portal would also serve as a mechanism for collecting feedback and data for evaluation of the project.

The SVEEP team of the Election Commission of India has put in all its efforts in nurturing this project from the it's very conception and developing it, bringing it to its crucial turning point of execution and roll out. Like the fruits of a seed sown today can only be reaped a couple of years later, this project of mainstreaming electoral literacy will take some time, but without a doubt bear the fruits of active citizenry and participative democracy.

Simran Sachdeva
Executive, SVEEP

State Level Master Trainers (SLMTs) Workshop

NEQ DECODED

It comes from Greek for "affairs of the cities", and is used to refer to the process of group decision making, and achieving and exercising positions of governance. What's the good word? (Zonal Finals)

In this method of election, nine hereditary sultans from the states elect one among them to become the Agong or the Head of State of the country. Which country is this? (Grand Finale)

A former FIFA World Player of the year and winner of the Ballon d'Or in 1995, George Weah has just been elected president of which African country? (Grand Finale)

As a part of its theme for the year 2017- *'Empowering Young and Future Voters'*, the Election Commission of India undertook a series of initiatives focused on sensitizing and generating awareness about elections and electoral processes among the youth, including the two-phased Interactive School Engagement (ISE) programme, the recently launched Electoral Literacy Clubs (ELC) project and the National Elections Quiz (NEQ).

Aimed at high-school students studying in Classes IX, X, XI and XII (falling in the age-group

NEQ State Champions of Assam - Vishal and Sarfaraz.

of 14-17 years), the National Elections Quiz, planned as a pan-India knowledge venture began from November 01, 2017 with the initial Intra-School Round. Carried out independently by nearly **38, 160 schools** with content support being rendered by the Election Commission of India's Systematic Voters' Education and Electoral Participation (SVEEP) Division, the questions set comprised easy, essential questions concerning elections and electoral processes. Following a ladder-like structure of progression, the questionnaire format of the Intra-School Round gave way to the first on-stage level of the quiz- the District Round. Organized by the District Election Officers in partnership with the District Education Departments, this round included within its ambit, questions of relatively moderate difficulty and customized to incorporate local/regional tint, like-

In which year did Nagaland participate in the Lok Sabha Elections for the first time?

(District Round in Nagaland)

Further ahead, the State/ UT Round, pivotal in determining the final 36 representative teams (72 participants) conducted in the on-stage format, with the Chief Electoral

NEQ District Round in Punjab.

The Delhi Darshan for 72 NEQ Semi-Finalists began with a visit to the President House

Officers (CEOs) in-charge, saw the difficulty-level move a notch higher with participants facing questions like-

During the 1930s, committees were formed to create a system for the Indian election. Because the literacy rate in India was very low, the officials had the idea of using symbols to denote each party so that voting would be easy.

This idea was given by Bernard Bourdillon, who was a Colonial Secretary in which neighboring country?

(Tamil Nadu State Finals)

With the National Semis and Grand Finale scheduled to take place in the middle of January, 2018 in New Delhi, the Election Commission of India tied up with Rajya Sabha TV to produce and air 7 episodes (6 Zonal Finals- North-East, South, West, Special Central, East, North and the Grand Finale). To ensure a greater reach

worthy of World's Largest School Quiz on Elections with a record participation of **13, 63, 982 students**, Facebook was also roped in as the event's social media partner. Two well-reputed higher educational institutions of Delhi, Jesus and Mary College and Ambedkar University volunteered to generate high-quality questions pertaining to topics and sub-themes including- *Elections in India, the Election Commission of India, History of Democracies and Elections, Voting Processes, Voter Education and Literacy, National Voters' Day & its Inception, Electoral Technology, Electoral Terminology Rules- The Model Code of Conduct, Landmark Steps and Measures, Popular Stories, Personalities, Elections across the world, Electoral Management Bodies, Types of Elections, International Electoral Organizations and Foundations, Popular Culture and Elections, Election Symbols, Elections to Local Bodies, Women and Elections, Constituent Assembly Debates on Universal Suffrage, Famous Parliamentary Debates on Elections.* Well known within the Indian quizzing circuit, Vikram Joshi- World Quizzing Champion of 2014, was entrusted with the task of the anchor and Quiz Master for all the 7 National episodes.

Arriving on the January 13, 2018, all the 72 State Winners were felicitated at the headquarters of the Election Commission followed by a guided-city tour- Delhi Darshan which included numerous tourist places like, the Rashtrapati Bhavan, the Qutb Complex, the Red Fort, CEO- Delhi's Elections Museum, Gandhi Smriti, Birla Temple, Humayun's Tomb and Facebook India's office in Delhi.

An NEQ contender from Jammu & Kashmir at the Elections Museum

NOVEL INITIATIVES

Clubbed into 6 groups, the first day's Semi-Finals witnessed Manipur's Ashmaan Mainali and Shangker Singh Laishram (Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalaya, Senapati), Puducherry's V. Vishnu Priya and R. Mithun Krishna (St. Patrick Matric Higher Secondary School) and Goa's Ashlesha Naik and Sachin Panicker (People's Higher Secondary School, Panaji) see home their respective States/UTs in the North-East, South and West Zonal Finals, followed by Delhi's Vani Saini and Shubham Khatri (Jain Bharti Mrigavati Vidyalaya), Jharkhand's Madhur Jain and Aditya Kumar (Delhi Public School, Ranchi) and Jammu and Kashmir's Sonali Sehotra and Atul Khajuria (GHSS Pallan and GHSS Parnalla, Kathua) sealing it successfully on behalf of the Special Central, East and North Zones in the second and third day of the contest.

With Rajya Sabha TV Studios serving the perfect setting and venue for the Finale, the Grand Finale of the first edition of NEQ took place on January 16, 2018, witnessing DPS, Ranchi doing an encore of their Zonal Finals feat, scoring 105 after 4 intense rounds of quizzing clinching the mega prize of Rs 1,00,000. Following close behind, the teams from Puducherry and Manipur finished 2nd and 3rd position respectively, securing prizes worth Rs 80, 000 and Rs 60, 000. In sequence, the teams from Delhi, Goa and Jammu and Kashmir completed the final points table.

Premiering on January 25, 2018- the National Voters' Day, the national telecast of NEQ 2018 on Rajya Sabha TV extended over one and a half

months till March 11, 2018, featuring a special audience question in each episode guaranteeing a broader engagement and outreach with the larger populace. With parallel simulcast being carried out by Facebook India, Rajya Sabha TV along with Election Commission of India's own social media profiles/ handles, NEQ 2018, as of March 12, 2018 holds an online viewership figure of **more than 2,00,000** as it races to stake a claim to being one of the most watched shows on Indian Elections.

Vinayak Sen
Executive, SVEEP

NEQ 2018 National Champions- Madhur and Aditya (from Jharkhand) being felicitated by the Commission.
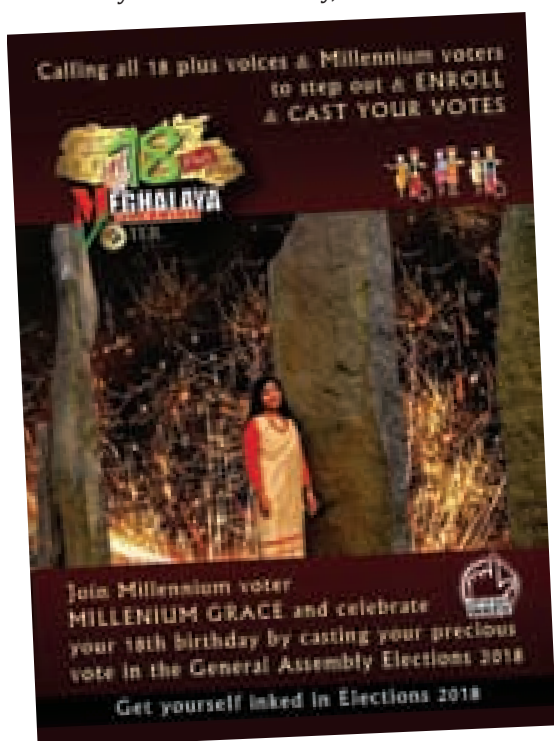
'MILLENNIUM' GOALS FOR ECI

Building upon its year-long outreach initiatives and programmes of 2017 dedicated to the youth, the Election Commission of India recently launched the Millennium Voters campaign in consonance with its commitment to empower young and future voters. An exercise to enrol those who turned 18 years old on January 1, 2018 i.e. those who were born on January 1, 2000 or, the first day of the 21st century, the Millennium Voters

initiative is expected to have a direct reach out to more than 75,000 young-adult Indians having a claim to the rare distinction apart from generating consequent engagement with the larger populace via its unique design.

Inaugurated on January 25, 2018- the National Voters' Day with the presentation of Electors' Photo Identity Cards (EPIC) to the six Millennium Voters by the Hon'ble President

of India- Shri Ram Nath Kovind and Hon'ble Chief Election Commissioner- Shri Om Prakash Rawat, the campaign witnessed a simultaneous felicitation of nearly 60,000 Millennium Voters across the country at State and District-Level functions marking the occasion. Developed as a part of the Commission's 'Special Drive for Left out Voters' and Summary Revision, the campaign is presently being directed by the SVEEP Division of the Commission.

At present, the campaign is harnessing the pan-India elections management machinery [Chief Electoral Officers (CEOs) at State-Level and District Election Officers (DEOs)] for seamless execution of a process involving a preliminary stage identification followed by targeted outreach. Beginning with the first-stage identification through DEOs/CEOs offices/ social media networks, special invitations for enrolment or, via records maintained by Panchayat Offices, Hospitals, Registrar and Sub-Registrar Offices, the subsequent campaign outreach include micro-engagement initiatives such as Doorstep visit by Booth Level Officers (BLOs), issuing of EPICs and Millennium Voter badges on National Voters' Day functions at the National, State and District Level, felicitating them with personalized certificates signed by the concerned DEO and involvement via social media.

Integrating presently-operational programmes directed at the youth for building electoral awareness, further and continued engagement with Millennium Voters has been planned by appointing them as Assistants to Campus Ambassadors and enrolling them as the first members of the recently launched Electoral Literacy Clubs (ELCs).

Aradhana
Executive, SVEEP

COLOMBIA GEARS-UP FOR PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS 2018

Scheduled for May 27, Colombia is all set to witness a contest between Coalición Despierta led by Centro Democrático's Iván Duque Márquez and Coalición Decente led by Gustavo Petro of Movimiento Colombia Humana in the country's Presidential Battle of 2018. The incumbent President and Nobel Peace Prize recipient of 2016- Juan Manuel Santos of Partido Social de Unidad Nacional, following a tenure of 8 years (two-terms) presently stands ineligible for re-election. This year's selection would also mark the debut of the rebel group now reorganized as a political party- the FARC or, the Revolutionary Alternative Common Force.

Source: Reuters.com
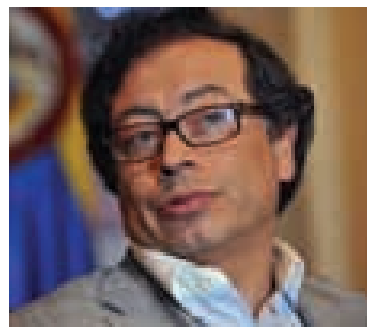
Source: AFP

Source: Creative Commons

'KNOW YOUR ELECTION' BEFORE 2018 FIJI POLLS

As a run-up to the 2018 General Elections, the Fijian Elections Office (FEO) recently launched the 'Know Your Election' campaign as a part of an effort to build awareness and promote electoral education within the South-Pacific island country. Comprising 45 trained voter awareness teams, the programme seeks to reach out to communities, settlements and villages in a bid to sensitize, motivate citizens and communicate information vital to the electoral process. Employing engaging voter communication tools and resources like polling station models and Election Information Booklets, the cross-national campaign outreach is expected to span for the next 6 weeks.

Source: The Fiji Times

Source: The Fiji Times

ORBÁN WINS THIRD STRAIGHT TERM AS HUNGARIAN PM

Securing a two-third majority, the recently concluded parliamentary elections in Hungary witnessed a landslide victory for the Fidesz- KDNP (Christian Democratic People's Party) alliance with Viktor Orbán claiming a third consecutive term as the country's Prime Minister. Finishing a distant second with 25 seats was the Gábor Vona-led Jobbik, the Movement for a Better Hungary, followed closely by the alliance of Hungarian Socialist Party- Dialogue for Hungary with 20 seats. The country's key Green Party- the Lehet Más a Politika (LMP) ended the electoral race with 8 seats in the fourth position.

Source: BBC News

Source : News.sky.com

ITALIAN ELECTIONS DELIVER A FRACTURED VERDICT

Taking place on March 4, 2018 elections in Italy to the Chamber of Deputies (630) and the Senate of the Republic (315) threw-in a fractured verdict resulting in a hung parliament. While, Lega Nord or, the League led by Matteo Salvini of the Centre-right Coalition won 265 seats in the Chamber and 137 in the Senate, Luigi Di Maio's Five Star Movement secured the largest number of votes acquiring 227 seats in the Chamber and 112 in the Senate.Garnering the third position, the Democratic Party led Centre-left Coalition headed by former Prime Minister Matteo Renzi opted to serve as opposition in the legislature.

Source: The Guardian, Express
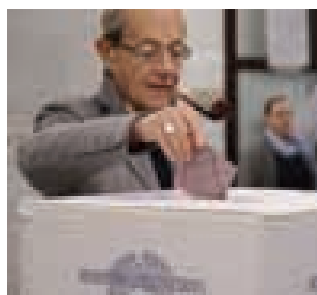
Source : The local
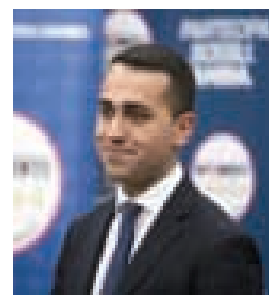
Source : Bloomberg

Source : Alchetron.com

IEBC SIGHTS COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS

The Kenyan Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission (IEBC) has taken up new initiatives and seeks to venture into the fields of civic education, capacity building, community development and service delivery. Projecting the new expansion as a trust-building endeavour, the IEBC has planned to initiate county-level, public participation programmes in collaboration with community organizations and local communities.

Source: Hivisasa

Source: Agnes Bitutu; Hivisasa.com

BHANDARI ENCORE FOR NEPAL

This March, saw the Himalayan country elect former vice-chairperson of the Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist- Leninst) - Bidhya Devi Bhandari as its President for a second consecutive term. Securing 39, 275 votes, Bhandari prevailed over contender Laxmi Rai of the Nepali Congress Party who trailed with 11, 730 votes. Taking oath on March 14, 2018, the swearing-in ceremony was presided over by Chief Justice Gopal Parajuli in the presence of Prime Minister K.P Sharma Oli. Serving as the country's second President, Bhandari previously served in the same capacity following the 2015 Presidential Elections holding the distinction of being the first woman to hold the office in the country.

Source: Deccan Chronicle
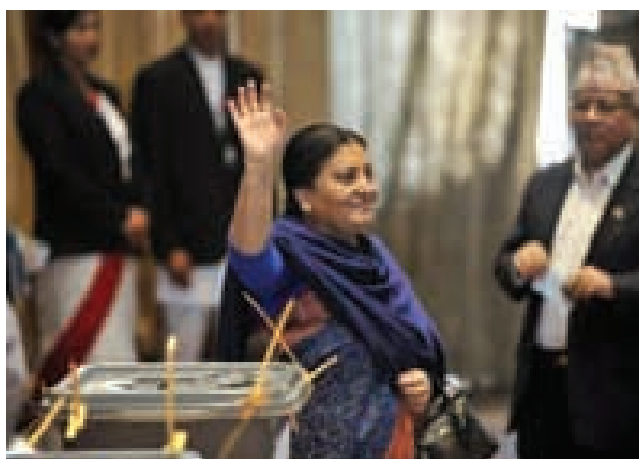
Source: www.ndtv.com

NZ RENDERS INFRA-SUPPORT FOR FIJIAN ELECTIONS

As a part of its preparation for the 2018 General Elections, Fijian Elections Office (FEO) received 15,015 cardboard voting screens from the New Zealand Electoral Commission on the March 9, 2018. Pacific country's contribution in Fiji's electoral facilitation can be viewed as a continuation of an association that witnessed the Election Visitor Programme for the 2017 NZ Elections.

Source : The Fiji Times, Fiji Sun

Source : Fiji Elects

ANNOUNCEMENTS | Election Commission of Pakistan

EVENT MARKING INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY ORGANIZED BY THE ECP

On March 13, 2018, the Election Commission of Pakistan organized an event observing the International Women's Day. With sensitization and awareness-building being central to the programme, Chief Election Commissioner- Justice Sardar Muhammad Raza spoke about ECP's commitment and efforts to enrol every eligible woman as a voter. Representatives of Political Parties present at the event extended their support and cooperation to ECP's present venture ensuring the registration of women across the 103 districts of the country.

Source : UrduPoint

Source : Hina.pk

SIERRA LEONE WITNESSES WORLD'S FIRST BLOCKCHAIN ELECTIONS

Held on March 7, 2018, the first round of General Elections conducted via a modified two-round system in Sierra Leone to the office of the President, Parliament and local councils witnessed the world's first ever use of the Blockchain Technology in carrying out polls. Votes cast in the Western District of the country were recorded via a permissioned blockchain devised by Agora, a Swiss digital voting solution for governments and institutions. Involving the use of a security mechanism through cryptography, blockchain is at present, widely used in the finance and banking sector.

Source : Reuters, Quartz

The first round of polls saw a close contest between the former Minister of Foreign Affairs- Samura Kamara of the All People's Party and former military Head of State- Julius Maada Bio of the Sierra Leone People's Party with each, securing 42.7% and 43.3% share of votes respectively. The second round is scheduled to take place on March 27, 2018.

Source : Quartz, Agora.vote

EU OBSERVER MISSION CALLS FOR ELECTORAL REFORMS EXPEDITION IN UGANDA

Following up on its last visit during the 2016 Presidential, Parliamentary and Local elections when it identified 11 key areas of reforms, the European Union Mission to Uganda headed by Eduard Kukan recently visited the East African country to assess the implementation headways of its recommendations. While making it explicit in its observation that little of any note has been achieved and electoral reforms are yet to gain ground as the country continues to suffer from serious deficiencies pertaining to legitimacy, transparency, credibility, inclusivity and

Source : dispatch.ug

irregularities related to state resources, the Mission, appreciated the fact that institutional awareness concerning the recommendations and the need for reform, which holds crucial essence, had taken strong roots. As a part of its visit, the Mission met President Yoweri Museveni, Attorney General William Byaruhanga and several civil society organizations.

Source : dispatch.ug

INDIA CELEBRATES ITS EIGHTH NATIONAL VOTERS' DAY ON JANUARY 25, 2018

The National Voters' Day (NVD) is celebrated all over the country on January 25 every year since 2011 to mark the foundation day of Election Commission of India, which was established on this day in the year 1950. The main purpose of the NVD celebration is to encourage, facilitate and maximize the enrolment, especially for the new voters. Dedicated to the voters of the country, the day is also utilized to spread awareness among voters for effective participation in the electoral process.

Constitutional Mandate of the Election Commission

Article 324 of the Constitution vests the Election Commission with the powers of superintendence, direction and control of preparation of electoral rolls, and the conduct of, all elections to Parliament and to the Legislature of every State and of elections to the offices of the President and Vice-President. Article 326 provides that elections to the House of the People and the Legislative Assemblies of States shall be on the basis of adult suffrage. Other provisions under Part XV of the Constitution spell out comprehensive framework of provisions relating to aforesaid elections. The law that flows from the 'Part XV Elections' of the Constitution casts the obligation on the ECI for conduct of free, fair and inclusive elections based on adult suffrage. The Commission has demonstrated fulfillment of its mandate through successful conduct of successive elections in the country right from 1950 onwards. The strength of its electoral processes is seen both with awe and

NVD 2011

respect among democracies of the world. Today the electoral processes of India are the largest in the world covering almost one million polling stations and about 900 million voters.

Brief History of NVD

Established on January 25, 1950, the Election Commission of India celebrated 60 years of its illustrious journey on January 25, 2010. The Hon'ble President of India inaugurated the Diamond Jubilee celebrations on this occasion. Valedictory function of this celebration was organized on January 25, 2011.

Seized of the voter apathy and low enrolment among new voters (18+), the Commission

NVD 2012

decided to take up a vigorous exercise to identify all the eligible voters attaining the age of 18 years as on January 1 every year, in each of the polling station areas of the country. It was also decided to enroll youth on time and hand over their Elector's Photo Identity Cards (EPICs) on January 25 at a brief felicitation in each polling station area. The initiative was aimed at providing youth a sense of citizenship,
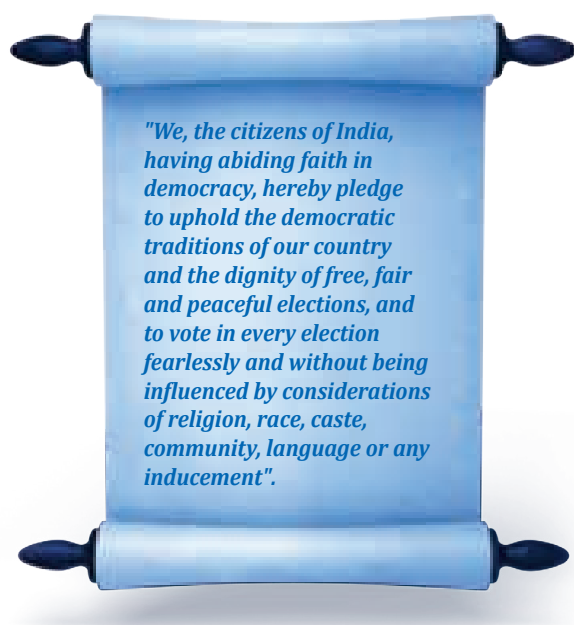
empowerment and pride in electoral participation as also to inspire them for exercise of their newly acquired franchise on time.

Since then a series of events including public functions are organized on NVD every year in coordination with all the stakeholders through a very vibrant and robust expression of voter participation at the national, state, district and down to the polling station level along with all other stakeholders. The new electors are felicitated with EPIC and they are provided with a badge with its logo 'Proud to be a voter-Ready to Vote' and also administered a pledge.

Voters' Pledge

Citizens of the country especially the participants in NVD celebrations at all levels express their abiding faith in democracy and the electoral process through the following Pledge.

"We, the citizens of India, having abiding faith in democracy, hereby pledge to uphold the democratic traditions of our country and the dignity of free, fair and peaceful elections, and to vote in every election fearlessly and without being influenced by considerations of religion, race, caste, community, language or any inducement".

National Awards

NVD celebration at the national level is marked by grant of National Award for excellence,
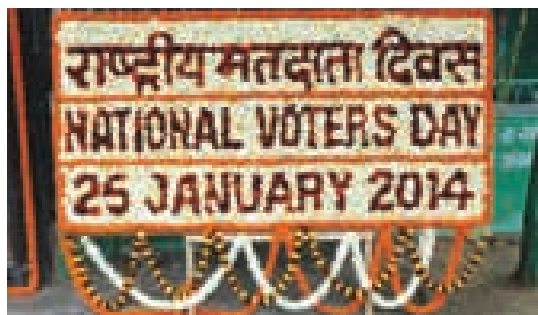
proficiency and innovation in electoral process and outstanding performance. Best Practices in various components of Election Management such as Voter Education and Electoral Participation, Security management, Infrastructure Management, Expenditure Monitoring and Tackling Money Power, Use of Technology, Management of Electoral Rolls and Innovation etc are considered. The selection process is comprehensive and aims at eliciting the best of the talent and performance among stakeholders. Similarly awards are given at the State level NVD functions.

NVD Greater Participation for Stronger Democracy

3rd NVD 2013	Inclusion
4th NVD 2014	Ethical Voting
5th NVD 2015	Easy Registration, Easy Correction
6th NVD 2016	Inclusive and Qualitative Participation
7th NVD 2017	Empowering Young and Future Voters

Based on the theme of the NVD, a series of new initiatives are taken during the year that help in providing a continuity in voter education and a renewal of a citizens faith as a unit of democracy and its electoral process.

8th NVD, January 25, 2018

8th NVD was celebrated with the theme 'Accessible Elections' across the country at State, District down to the Booth level. The national level function at New Delhi was graced by the Hon'ble President of India. Activities taken up during the run up to NVD were focus around this theme. The 8th NVD celebrations had the following components in addition to other components as decided by the CEOs/DEOs:

(i) **Basic Activities** (Organised each year) :

- NVD celebrations are organized at State, District and the Booth levels in the country in association with the Panchayats, academic institutions, Media and Youth volunteer organizations such as NSS, NCC, Scouts and Guides, NYKS, Corporates etc. State Election Commissioners are also involved with functions at the State level.

- New electors are provided with badge with its logo and the slogan 'Proud to be a Voter - Ready to vote' during the felicitation ceremony along with their EPIC.

- Roles of the different election officers at different levels have been clearly demarcated as also the stakeholder participation in organizing the celebrations. Training of BLOs is done for effective and efficient celebrations.

(ii) **Millennium Voters**

Millennium Voters identified during the Summary Revision were felicitated during the NVD functions during the celebrations.

(iii) **Electoral Literacy Clubs (ELC's)**

ELCs were launched on the 8th NVD.

- 'Young Voter's Festival' held every year ahead of NVD in Colleges and Universities were taken as launch pad for the setting up of Electoral Literacy Clubs

NVD 2015

(New Voters) in identified institutions for the first phase of ELC roll out and all subsequent voter outreach activities in these institutions will be conducted under the aegis of the ELCs.

- Similarly, school engagement were carried out for launch of ELC (Future Voters) in identified secondary and senior secondary schools.

(iv) **National Election Quiz (NEQ), 2018**

The winners of the national Election Quiz were felicitated during NVD at New Delhi. Further the winners at district and state level were felicitated at the NVD functions at District and State levels respectively.
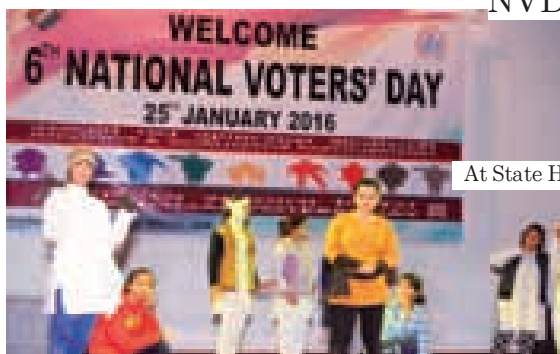
(v) **Service Voters**

Special awareness drive were undertaken for Service personnel utilizing the Army Day that falls on January 15, just ahead of the NVD. Service personnel were associated with the NVD celebrations as well.
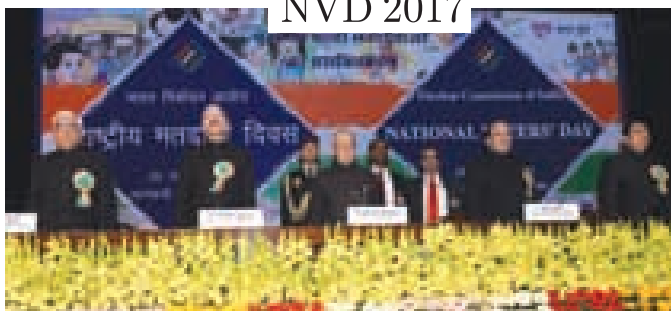

At Delhi

NVD 2016

At State Headquarters

NVD 2017

(vi) **Environment Building**

Environment building is carried out through engaging various forms of media such as print, audio-visual, outdoor advertisement, troupes etc. Services of FM and Community Radio will be widely utilized. SMS's, e-mails, messages on social media etc. for propagating the NVD theme as also through schemes and programmes run by the Government for non-election going states. The NVD theme and related messages in form of posters and banners will also be prominently displayed in the offices of the CEO, DEO, ERO's and the VFCs.

(vii) **Partnerships**

NVD is celebrated in all schools and colleges and administered the NVD Pledge. Media including Door Darshan, All India Radio, Print Media, Directorate of Field Publicity, Public Sector Undertakings, Railways, Civil Society, Corporate Houses, and Local Icons have been taken on board for maximizing the, coverage, publicity and coverage of the NVD.

(viii) **Photo Exhibition**

A photo exhibition is being organized to showcase the best photographs covering all aspects of Election Management, voter Education and Ethical Participation, Electoral Roll Management, security

Management, Innovative Measures, Voting & counting, during NVD, 2018.

(ix) **International Seminar on 'Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities (PwDs) in the Electoral Processes'**

ECI organized an international seminar on 'Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities (PwDs) in the Electoral Processes' as a part of the run up to the NVD celebration. The invitations along with the concept note was sent out to about 30 countries besides the International Expert Institutions for participation and contribution of papers. The seminar was organized on VoICE.NET Platform to maximize the knowledge and experience sharing at the international level in addition to the strengthening the practices in our country.

Epilogue

NVD initiative has been institutionalized as an annual feature for celebration of democracy and electoral participation in the country. It sets the tone for continued and vibrant participation among different stakeholders with 'Voter' as the central figure and sets the agenda for activities for the year. It also provides an opportunity to consolidate and take stock of progress of connecting the voter with the electoral processes and acts to inspire all the stakeholders especially those who have done well in the elections and related processes.

GLIMPSE OF 8TH NVD

The Election Commission of India celebrated its 8th National Voter's day on January 25, 2018. The event was graced by the Hon'ble President of India, Ram Nath Kovind as the Chief Guest along with Minister of Law & Justice, Ravi Shankar Prasad. The celebrations revolved around the theme 'Accessible Elections', which expressed ECI's pursuit of working towards making the electoral process more inclusive and friendly for Persons with Disabilities (PwDs).

Hon'ble President also conferred the National Awards 2017 for the Best Electoral Practices to officers deputed in the election machinery. He congratulated District Election Officials for conducting awareness campaigns successfully.

The Hon'ble President of India, Ram Nath Kovind stated "Our Constitution empowers an independent Election Commission. And our election process makes every vote important, with the right to equality and freedom. As such Indian Democracy is known through the world for its maturity and stability."

The Hon'ble President also inaugurated the first edition of VoICE India- a biannual magazine which brings forth best practices, innovations, knowledge derived from practical experience and success stories of election machinery that exists in every corner of India.

The NVD event also witnessed the facilitation of the National Champions of the National Election Quiz 2018. National Elections Quiz, the largest elections quiz in the world, had an astounding participation of 13.5 lakh students of class 9 to 12 from across 38 thousand schools across the country.

Hon'ble President of India congratulated and presented Electors Photo Identity Cards (EPICs) to young voters who have just turned 18 years old and got the right to vote for the first time.

STATES OF INDIA TOWARDS EFFECTIVE ELECTIONEERING

Gujarat takes 'Nine Vows of Democracy'

The wave of the SVEEP campaigns is enlightening millions in the country and the motto of 'No voter to be left behind' isn't a distant dream anymore. Painstaking efforts are being made at national and state level to pass on the torch of voter awareness to the nooks and corners of the country. One such story is of Gujarat's conscientious awareness programs where specific strategies were formed for every target intervention.

Two distinctive logos conveying different phases (Enrolment and Elections Phase) were created and widely used in all the campaigns to catch public's attention. Along with the conventional measures to reach out the public, extra steps were taken to infuse motivation among the citizens to vote. Festival based interventions have been a unique initiative by Gujarat since last two General Elections. Festivals are cultural threads that bind the society together. And SVEEP has attempted to ride on this common cultural cohesive spirit to establish a close connect with people in all parts of the state.

'Nine Vows of Democracy' were formulated for each of the nine nights of Navratri with catchy and festival – appropriate slogans. The 'Nine Vows of Democracy' included messages on enrolment participation and ethical voting. Along with that a scripted Garba on electoral awareness was created and recorded with voice by a visually challenged District Icon. Different scripts were prepared to motivate and facilitate for the forthcoming 'Festival of Democracy' (General Election) and also focusing on Introduction of VVPAT in the elections.

To improve participation of women, 182 'Sakhi' Polling Stations were established in the State, which were managed entirely by women functionaries. Moreover, in accordance with the ECI slogan, 'No Voter to be Left Behind', polling was ensured at remote locations like Ajad Island in middle of the sea for 40 electors and even for a single voter at Banej inside the deep forest of Gir.

Use of social media to spread awareness among young voters was done effectively where messages were designed on the posters of famous films to get their attention. Elections were omnipresent as State Icon Cheteshwar Pujara administered a pledge on ethical voting with an audience of more than 30,000 in an open ground. Efficient use of technology was prioritized as SUVIDHA, an IT application for Single Window System for permissions for candidates and political parties was made operational.

'Inclusive Election' was one of the focus areas of ECI and Gujarat worked diligently towards achieving maximum inclusion of groups like PwDs, Senior Citizens, Third Gender and Excluded Groups. An exceptional number of PwDs, Senior Citizens and Centenarians casted their vote with enthusiasm, which was the ultimate achievement for all the efforts, put in by Gujarat.

Special creatives on EVM/VVPAT awareness were made and 100% matching of VVPAT slips with EVM votes in 182 polling stations was noted. Awareness drives on NOTA were conducted following the finding of low awareness in KAP Survey. De novo Enrolment of Service voters and ETPBS was also carried out successfully.

The State achieved a Roll EP Ratio (64.64) closest ever to the Census EP Ratio (65.22) with a gap of just 0.58%; no major complaint related to Electoral Roll was recorded. Along with that, achieved a Roll Gender Ratio of 921 against the Census Gender Ratio of 918 and a net addition of 17, 46,082 electors in the year 2017 with a addition of 959,675 women electors was recorded.

Himachal Pradesh Records Highest Voter Turnout Ever In State

To improve the shortfalls of KAP survey, Himachal Pradesh drafted a strategy especially focusing on the enrolment of the age group of 18- 29 years old, as citizens of this age group move to other states for pursuing higher studies resulting in low E.P ratio of the state. Moreover, the focus was on removing gender gap and inclusion of excluded groups/ communities and marginalized groups like PwDs and migrants etc.

The effectiveness of SVEEP programs largely depends upon the variety of partnerships with Government and Non- Government organizations at all levels viz State, District, Assembly segment and even at polling station level. Hence, the partnership was extended to Departments such as Department of Education, Rural Development, Women and Child Development, Labor and employment, National Service Scheme, National Cadet Corps, Doordarshan, All India Radio Songs and Drama Division.

Youth Voter Festival was organized and campus ambassadors strengthened in schools/ colleges to tackle urban apathy; collaboration with Department of Labor initiated to reach out to youth working in industrial areas. Form 6 were made available along with the admission forms in educational institutions.

Also, to improve gender participation, a team of "Mahila Preraks" (Five per Panchayat) groups were constituted for informing, motivating and facilitating the women exclusively, Inclusion of substantial number of women in Booth Awareness Groups (BAGs) turned out to be an effective approach.

To propagate the idea of Inclusive Elections, Election officials were sensitized at first regarding the special needs of PwDs and special modules were developed in the form of brochures, audio material etc. with the specialized agencies and departments. Awareness drives were also initiated to enroll PwDs children in colleges with the help of Campus Ambassadors. Skill development programs were organized with Department of Social Justice and Empowerment.

Besides the usual programs, Folk art and specific activities were drafted to attract the local populace targeting specially the nomadic groups living in Chamba, Kinnaur, Lahaul and Spiti Districts. Posters of icons with motivating messages were made available even in small valleys along with their promos on registration, participation in electoral process, NOTA, EVM along with newly introduced VVPAT and ethical voting. This initiated the discussion in the remotest areas.

The success of record voter turnout can be accorded to Himachal's inclusive strategy as special registration camps were organized in old age homes and retiree's clubs also. Service and overseas voters were also approached at their convenience.

The Voter Verifiable Paper Audit Trail machines were used for the first time in this election. As per the media report, Web-casting was used in 2,307 polling stations for live monitoring of polling activities and as many as 7,525 polling booths were set up with each booth equipped with electronic voting machines (EVMs) and VVPAT.

ECI LAUNCHES SOCIAL MEDIA HUB

Social Media has occupied a very important place in the world of Communication. There has been an increasing demand for the use of social media for a better outreach and communication programs. Considering the relevance of social media for dissemination of information, The Election Commission of India launched its Social Media Hub in January, 2018 comprising Facebook and Youtube as part of its outreach programme for public at large.

ECI aims to engage, empower and educate its voters and all other stakeholders and facilitate them in the voting process through these platforms. The Facebook page provides a platform for dialogue and interaction related to the various activities and initiatives taken by the Commission. The major events are being updated on the portal as well as the Voter education channel of the Commission.
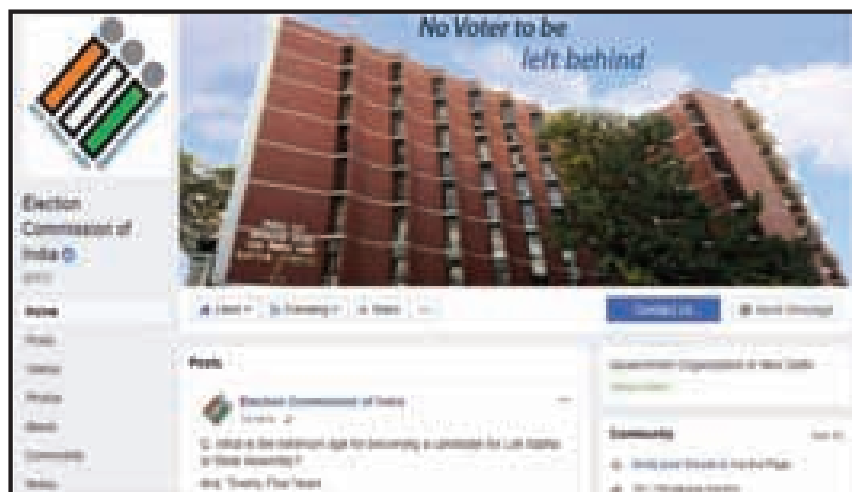
FOREIGN DIGNITARIES VISIT IIIDEM CAMPUS

On the occasion of National Voters' Day on January 25, 2018, the India International Institute of Democracy and Election Management (IIIDEM) organized a special visit for foreign delegates from Election Management Bodies and International Organizations at its upcoming state-of-the-art campus in Dwarka, Delhi, India. Dignitaries from Australia, Bhutan, Guinea, Moldova, Zambia and representatives from International IDEA and IFES visited the campus and learned about the various facilities provided by IIIDEM. IIIDEM is the training institute of Election Commission of India which imparts trainings to election officials. The visit concluded with plantation of saplings in the campus by the dignitaries, encouraging a greener and clean environment.

EVENTS BY THE CHAIR COUNTRY

Election Commission of India (ECI) and India International Institute of Democracy and Election Management (IIIDEM) hosted a number of knowledge- sharing training programmes on Capacity Building and Election Management. These witnessed participation of Election Officials, Diplomats and UN representations across the World.

21 ITEC COUNTRIES PARTICIPATE IN CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

Election Management Bodies of 21 ITEC countries participated in a twelve day training programme on "Capacity Development for Election Management" organised by IIIDEM, ECI under the Indian Technical and Economic Corporation (ITEC) programme, Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India. The sixth programme, held from March 5 to 16.,2018, witnessed the participation of three more countries from the last programme. The programme delivered an exhaustive coverage of the entire cycle of electoral process and gave an opportunity to the participants to get a glimpse of the Indian Culture. The participants shared experiences from their countries related to election management.

NIGERIAN DELEGATION TAKES UP A STUDY TOUR

A six member delegation comprising Election Commissioners and Senior officials from Independent National Electoral Commission of Nigeria (INEC), Nigeria were welcomed by ECI for a four day Consultation/Study Tour from February 5 to 8, 2018. The Study Tour, organised by India International Institute of Democracy and Election Management (IIIDEM), ECI aimed to conduct a round-table conference on various subjects related to election process and management like Legal Framework for Voter Registration, Engaging with Stakeholders, Online Voter Registration, National Voters Service Portal of ECI etc. The delegation also shared their country practices on various themes of election management.

19 ITEC COUNTRIES JOIN ELECTION MANAGEMENT TRAINING PROGRAMME

Thirty senior and mid-level officials from EMBs of 19 ITEC countries participated in a twelve day training programme on "Capacity Development for Election Management" organised by IIIDEM, ECI. This was the 5th programme in association with the Indian Technical and Economic Corporation (ITEC) under Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India. The programme, conducted from January 8 to 19, 2018, the twelve day training touched upon various aspects related to election management and gave a holistic view of election management. The participants shared experiences from their countries related to election management.

MADAGASCAR DELEGATION ATTENDS THREE DAY CONSULTATION

A 3-day Consultation/Study Tour for the delegation from the Independent National Election Commission (CENI) of Madagascar was organized by the India International Institute of Democracy and Election Management (IIIDEM) from February 7 to 9, 2018 at Nirvachan Sadan, Headquarters of Election Commission of India at New Delhi. The three-member delegation comprised of the President of CENI, Madagascar and other Senior Officials. The delegation visited ECI to understand its skills and experience in conducting elections in view of their forthcoming Presidential Election in December 2018.

Hon'ble Chief Election Commissioner of India, O. P. Rawat met the delegates at the programme and discussed the best practices in election management of the two nations. Several Senior Officials and Electoral Experts from the Election Commission of India served as the resource persons for the consultation.

The thematic topics of the consultation included Legal and Administrative Framework for Voter Registration, Code of Conduct, Voter Registration and Voter Education Campaign, Planning for Election, Vulnerability Mapping, Election Schedule and Nomination of Candidates, Media Monitoring, EVM & VVPAT and Counting of Votes. The consultation also featured field visits, for the participants, to the Voter Registration Centre and the Election Museum in New Delhi.

BRIDGE WORKSHOP CONDUCTED BY INTERNATIONAL IDEA AND AEC

Members of International IDEA and Australian Electoral Commission (AEC) facilitated a two-day BRIDGE showcase and implementation workshop at India International Institute of Democracy and Election Management, Election Commission of India on November 2 and 3, 2017. BRIDGE stands for Building Resources in Democracy, Governance and Elections and is a modular professional development program with special focus on elections. The workshop aimed at demonstrating BRIDGE methodology to participants. The workshop was based on electoral principles and key areas using the BRIDGE adult learning theory and was filled with a number of case-study and role playing activities.
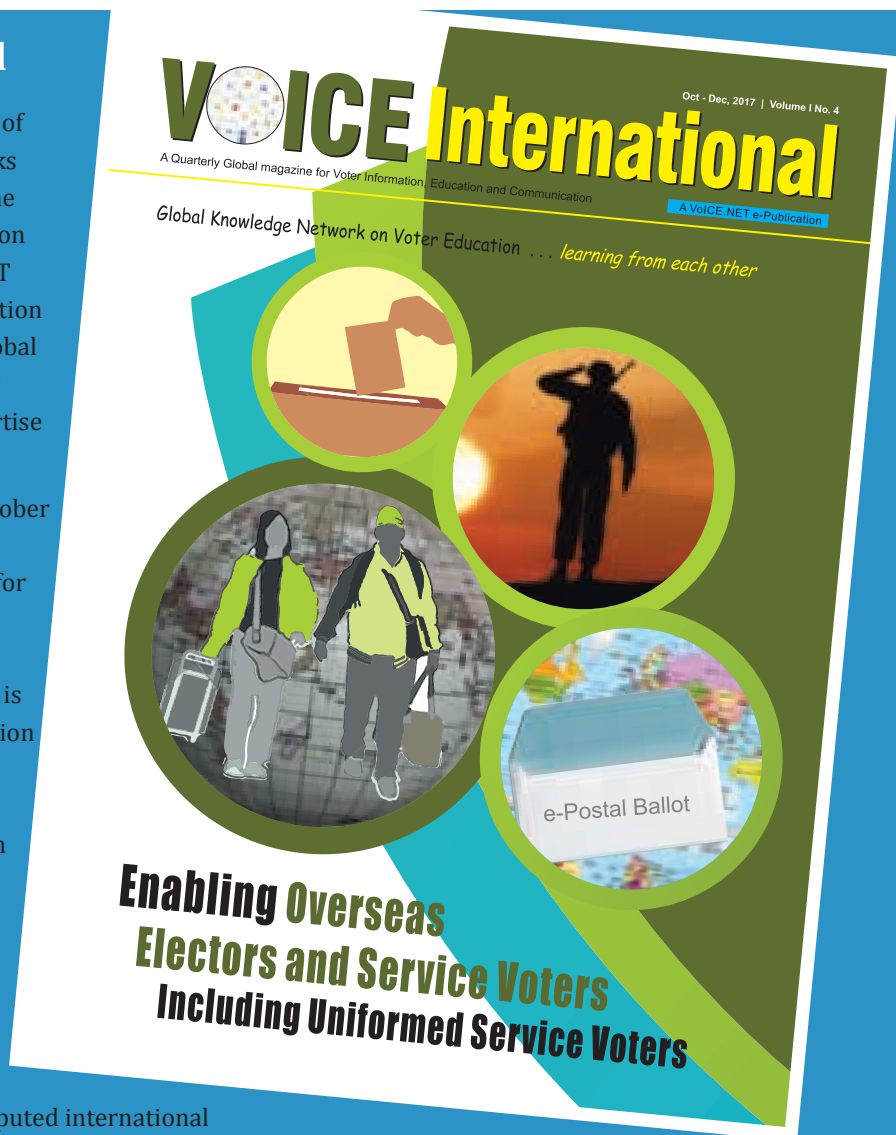
VoICE International

The launch of fourth issue of VoICE International marks the culmination of Volume 1 of the quarterly e-publication on the VoICE NET portal. VoICE.NET (Voter Information, Communication and Education Network) is a Global Knowledge Network for sharing knowledge, resources and expertise on Voter Education.

VoICE.NET was launched on October 20, 2016 at the International Conference on Voter Education for Inclusive, Informed and Ethical Participation held at New Delhi. The Global Knowledge Network is a part of the New Delhi Declaration adopted at the Conference by the 25 Election Management Bodies and representatives from UNDP, International IDEA, IFES and Malaysian Commonwealth Studies Centre.

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.

The fourth issue of the magazine was dedicated to **Overseas Electors and Service Voters**. It comprises of rich contributions from EMBs of Brazil, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Fiji, India, Iraq, Nepal, Sri Lanka and besides from International IDEA and IFES. In the Issue, numerous articles on different topics have been covered. It also includes contributions from new members of VoICE. NET, an article from Chairman of National Electoral Council Ecuador on 'Participation of the Public Force and Integral Security in Electoral processes: A perspective from Ecuador' and a new initiative regarding Electoral Education from Independent Electoral Education of Lesotho.

Overseas Electors and Service Voters including Uniformed Series Voters are distinct category of voters whose registration as electors and participation in the elections- both remain a challenge for most of the countries. To bridge the deficit both in registration and participation, there is a need to have greater support of legal instruments, enabling technology as also efficient and effective methods of voter awareness. The support and cooperation from the countries of residence is also equally important. The issues and challenges of voting from out of the country are complex and their dimensions are also different for different countries. Learning from each other can definitely help in resolving the issues to a great extent.

VoICE India

VoICE India was released on January 25, 2018 – the Eighth National Voters' Day at New Delhi in the presence of the Hon'ble President of India, Ram Nath Kovind with the first copy handed over to him.

VoICE India is a bi-annual magazine that aims to showcase the national initiatives and innovation in the field of voter education and outreach in India. The magazine focuses on maximizing the national experience sharing in voter education and learning and would be a repository of good practice from across the country to inspire the election officials to emulate and implement successful endeavors.

The cover story for the edition revolves around a challenging enterprise undertaken under the last year's theme 'Empowering Young and Future Voters' main streaming of Electoral Literacy through setting up Electoral Literacy Clubs. The issue also throws light on recently conducted National elections Quiz (NEQ) which witnessed a participation of 13.5 lakh students from 38,000 schools.

Released on the Eighth National Voters' Day, the issues details on the concept of Accessible elections and lists the Best Electoral Practices Awards, 2017. New initiatives in the field of Voter Education by Election Commission of India as also the different Indian States too have been included.

The aim behind the publication is to share knowledge and experience so that good practices can be emulated and challenges and concerns shared. Voice India would also serve as a platform for bringing forth stories and experiences from the grass roots so that the exchange of information and learning is not just uni-dimensional.

The Magazine is being sent to all the BLOs (Booth Level Officers) pan -India to get them together in the vision. The publication is also being shared with various public libraries, Schools and Colleges/ Universities.

VoICE India — Inaugural Issue | January 2018

A National Magazine on Voter Information, Communication & Education

Best Practices National Awards 2017 Publications

Electoral Literacy Clubs | National Voters' Day 2018 Theme : Accessible Elections | National Elections Quiz

State of Local Democracy Assessment Framework

Author(s): Brechtje Kemp, Mélida Jiménez

The State of Local Democracy (SoLD) assessment framework is designed to facilitate a citizen-led and -owned approach to assess the quality of democracy at the local level.

It is a practical resource for citizens to conduct self-assessments of democratic life in their locality, identify democratic strengths and weaknesses, and translate these into reform agendas for further broadening and deepening of their local democracies.

SoLD assessments capture the voices of men and women at the local level, and contribute to strengthening local and national governments' responsiveness to the needs and aspirations of its citizens. It is intended to be as much an exercise in assessing the quality of local democracy as it is an opportunity for citizens to further deepen their democracy and democratic accountability.
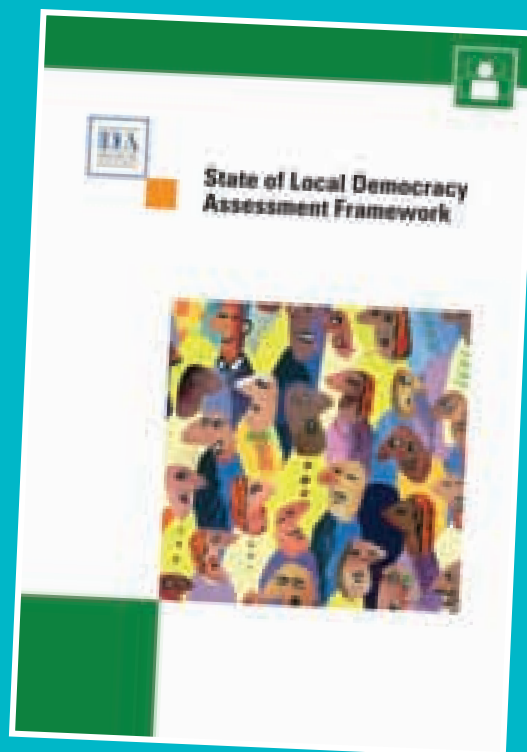
Digital Solutions for Political Finance Reporting and Disclosure: A Practical Guide

Author(s): Samuel Jones

One of the major challenges related to money in politics is the lack of transparency surrounding political party and electoral finance.

This is the case across the world and applies to established and newer democracies alike. Information on political party and candidate income and expenditure is rarely published online in a searchable and user-friendly manner.

Transparency can be greatly increased by introducing a system where political parties and candidates file reports online to the political finance oversight agency, with the data then publicly available in the form of a searchable database on the agency's website. This data gives voters a more informed picture of where parties and candidates get their money from and how they spend it, as well as assisting the work of civil society organizations and journalists to hold them accountable.

Currently, only a small number of countries have political finance online reporting and disclosure systems in place. International IDEA has collected their experiences and lessons learned from building their systems and consolidated it into this Guide. The hope is that the knowledge contained here will help other oversight agencies interested in building similar systems in their countries.

Regional Organizations, Gender Equality and the Political Empowerment of Women

Gender equality and the political empowerment of women are key elements for the consolidation of sustainable democracies worldwide.

Global and regional organizations play an important role in the development of legal and policy frameworks, as well as in the design of effective action plans to better support the advancement of the gender equality agenda at the global, regional and national levels.

This report presents key instruments for promoting gender equality and political empowerment of women that are currently in place at the global and regional levels, highlighting the challenges, opportunities and successes that each organization has encounter in the implementation within their respective regions.

International IDEA, the Community of Democracies and UNDP present this report as an instrument to inform policymakers and relevant actors on what is the current situation of gender equality, what has been done in terms of the political empowerment of women, and what is expected from the global community in order to successfully advance Sustainable Development Goal 5 to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls by 2030.

Preventing violence against women in Elections: A programming guide
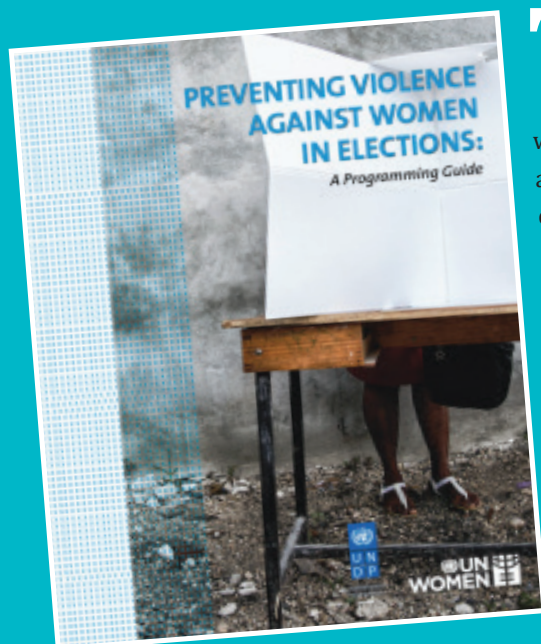
This publication, jointly produced by UNDP and UN Women, brings to light the scourge of violence against women in elections.

It seeks to identify the specific components of violence against women in elections, including types, tactics, victims and perpetrators, and presents options for policy and programming responses based on current good practices. It also provides examples of definitions and methods from all regions that may prompt ideas for actions according to each country's national context.

This guide is intended for those best positioned to prevent and mitigate violence against women in elections, including national electoral stakeholders, international organizations such as UNDP, UN Women and other UN agencies, as well as those providing programming support on electoral assistance, women's political participation, human rights monitoring and ending violence against women. It will also be a resource for members and especially leaders of political parties, electoral management bodies, civil society organizations, women's groups and gender equality activists.

GLOSSARY

1. Electioneering: Efforts involving activities that politicians and their supporters carry out in order to persuade/influence people to vote for them or their political party in an election. Electioneering includes distribution of printed material, verbal endorsement, or, signage, visiting voters and public speeches.

2. Redistricting: A process of drawing electoral/political/administrative district boundaries in the U.S. Usually done once in every 10 years following the Census, redistricting rules differ from State to State. The process takes into the account the risks of gerrymandering and redrawing boundaries based on race, colour and language.

3. Swing: As defined by Nicholas Comfort, 'Swing' describes- The statistical measure by which the switch of voters from one party to another on a national or constituency basis can be judged. It is calculated by adding the rise in one party's vote to the fall of the other, and dividing by two.'

   Despite the difficulty in predicting their voting behaviour, swing voters play a crucial role in determining the final electoral result.

4. Writ of Election: Applied in the countries of the Commonwealth to refer to writs issued to announce and hold general elections post the dissolution of the Parliament, in the U.S, they are issued to call for special elections like, filling in vacancies in the State Legislature, the House of Representatives or, the Senate.

5. Overvote: A term used to describe an instance when a voter votes for more than the maximum number of candidates permitted to select on a ballot. A situation of an overvote, usually results in the cancellation of the vote or, spoilt vote leading to its non-consideration during the final count.

References:

1. https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/electioneering
   http://www.sos.state.co.us/pubs/elections/Resources/files/ElectionsGlossary.pdf

2. http://www.dummies.com/education/politics-government/what-is-redistricting/
   https://www.indiatoday.in/education-today/grammar-vocabulary/story/electoral-glossary-political-terminology-954640-2017-01-13
   https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/redistricting

3. http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/election-2017-guide-swing-what-is-it-how-calculate-important-electoral-expert-conservatives-labour-a7707321.html
   https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/swing-vote

4. https://www.cga.ct.gov/2009/ACT/PA/2009PA-00170-R00SB-00913-PA.htm
   http://www.bbc.com/news/election-2015-32613441

5. https://ballotpedia.org/Glossary_of_election_policy_terms

This January, the Election Commission of India organized the Semis and the Grand Finale of National Elections Quiz 2018, a pan-India knowledge venture for the youth, which presently holds the distinction of being the World's Largest School Quiz on Elections. A new series under the Quiz section of VoICE International, From the NEQ Vault brings to you a selection of questions that formed the Master Set of NEQ 2018.

From the NEQ Vault

01 With which machine, presently being used for elections in India would you associate the term Mercuri Method named after Rebecca Mercuri?

02 In the cartoon short film, B____ B_ Bunny, Yosemite Sam and Bugs Bunny contest for the office of the town mayor, however, both eventually go on to lose to a dark horse who's inaugurated as the 'New Mare'. Fill in the Blank.

03 Although scheduled to take place on July 9, 2015, continuing conflict, an alleged coup d'état and amendments to the 2011 constitution extended the presidential and parliamentary term to 2018. Which 7 year-old country is supposed to go for elections in early-July, 2018?

04 The Voting Rights Act of 1965 overturned existing Jim Crow laws in the United States to guarantee which group of people the right to vote freely and openly?

05 The last western country to give women the right to vote in federal elections did so through a referendum in 1971. Which country was this?
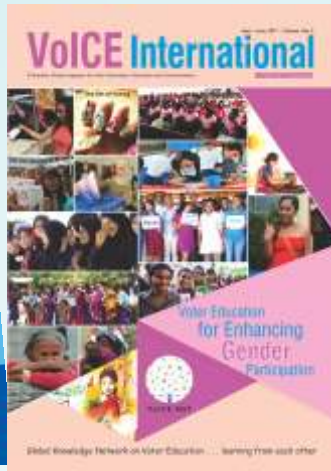
1. VVPAT or, the Voter Verifiable Paper Audit Trail 2. Ballot Box Bunny 3. South Sudan 4. African-Americans 5. Switzerland

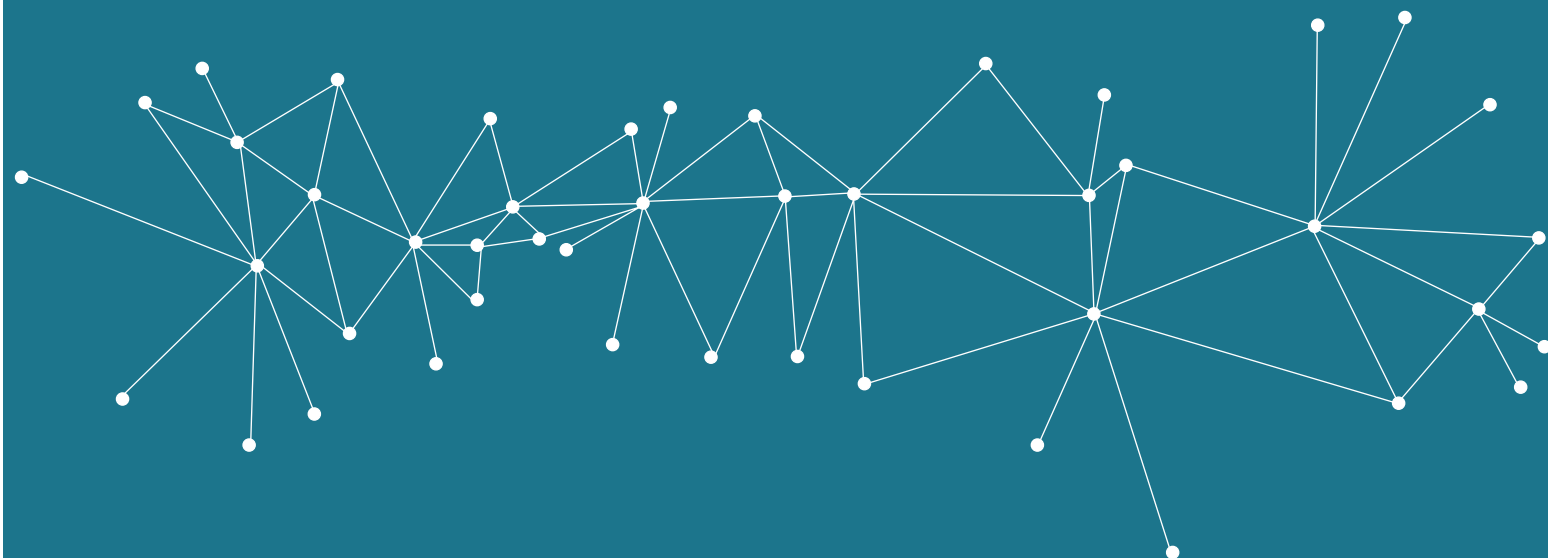# Previous Issues of VoICE International (Volume I)

Jan-Mar 2017

Apr-Jun 2017

Jul-Sep 2017

Oct-Dec 2017

VoICE.NET

AFGHANISTAN	AUSTRALIA	BANGLADESH	BHUTAN	BOSNIA & HERZEGOVINA	BRAZIL	ECUADOR	FIJI
GEORGIA	INDIA	INDONESIA	IRAQ	KENYA	KYRGYZSTAN	LESOTHO	MALAYSIA
MALDIVES	MAURITIUS	MEXICO	MYANMAR	NAMIBIA	NEPAL	PAKISTAN	PHILIPPINES
SAO TOME & PRINCIPE	SOUTH AFRICA	SRI LANKA	TAIWAN	THAILAND	TUNISIA	UGANDA	USA
IIIDEM	IFES	INTERNATIONAL IDEA	CAMBRIDGE (ENGLAND)	UNDP			

Voter Information, Communication & Education Network

Voter **I**nformation, **C**ommunication & **E**ducation Network (VoICE.NET) is a Global Knowledge Network for sharing knowledge, resources and expertise on **Voter Education**.

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