

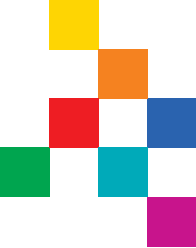


NEW DELHI DECLARATION ON VOTER EDUCATION FOR INCLUSIVE, INFORMED & ETHICAL PARTICIPATION

19th-21st OCTOBER, NEW DELHI, INDIA



Empowered lives.
Resilient nations.



THE CONTEXT

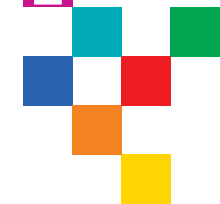
Regular and periodic elections are one of the critical features of a democratic polity and free and fair elections are critical to the legitimacy of the democratic governments. A voter is the central figure in ELECTORAL democracy. For electors, to choose their representatives through the ballot, it is essential that they are fully aware of all the processes and procedures of the electoral process and are confident of making informed and ethical ballot decisions. In this context, voter education is of tremendous significance and important to voters, election management bodies, contestants and other stakeholders. And this is what forms the basis for voter education and its generic macro sphere that is civic education.

The way we vote has changed significantly with the advent of 21st century. Internet and web based voter awareness and educational resources, citizen especially youth engagement through new media, social media have become an integral part of the electoral process.

Participating Election Management Bodies



International electoral standards emanate from the **Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR)** and **International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR)** and other Universal Instruments of Inclusion and Equality. The United Nations Centre for Human Rights in its Handbook on Human Rights and Elections (1994) has spelt out the following guiding principles for voter education:



"Public Information and Voter Education

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

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

Different countries have approached the subject of Voter Education as per their requirements, subject to their constitution and provisions of law and to the guidance under the international standards. There is tremendous scope for sharing experiences and learnings from the international experience.

The Election Commission of India in collaboration with the UNDP organized an International Conference on 'Voter Education for Inclusive, Informed and Ethical participation' on 19-21 October, 2016 at New Delhi. Dignitaries from the EMB's of 18 Countries besides the International Organizations and the Experts (List at Annex) have held comprehensive interaction on their experiences, emerging issues and challenges in the realm of Voter Education.

The Conference adopt the following guiding principles on voter education for inclusive, informed and ethical voting.

THE RESOLVE:

Recognising the fact that voter is the central actor in democratic election and voters' participation in the electoral processes is integral to the successful running of any democracy,

Acknowledging that greater awareness among eligible population does not necessarily convert into enhanced participation and that the answer lies in quality Voters' education,

Emphasising that quality Voters' education is the most appropriate way to improve participation in a democracy compared to any other alternative,

Recalling that several countries in-fact have voters' education explicitly specified as part of their constitutional mandate,

Appreciating that the EMBs and countries have approached the subject of Voter Education as per requirement subject to their constitution and laws and guidance under the international standards,

Taking note of the fundamentals of the connect between Democracy and Voter education, and the rich experience sharing through three day Conference on Voter Education for Inclusive, Informed and Ethical participation' held on 19-21 October, 2016 at New Delhi, this August Body unanimously endorses following guiding principles for EMBs as the Conference Resolution.

- 1.** Address the issues of participation deficit and endeavour to enhance both quantitative and qualitative participation.
- 2.** Endeavour to formulate systematic, strategic, structured and universal voter awareness and education as per the needs of the voters and communities and develop effective outreach to maximize the comfortable, confident informed and ethical participation.

- 3.** Engage with governments in introducing voter education in school and college curricula as electoral literacy in primary education goes a long way towards cultivating youth that are well-prepared, well-informed and responsible voters and citizens; Best practices from various countries can be adapted.
- 4.** Educate the electorate not covered by the formal educational system or cut-off from the mainstream due to various reasons under the ambit of focused informal voter education.
- 5.** Impart inclusive voter education through specific and targeted interventions aimed at removing gaps in gender, youth and marginalized segments of society.
- 6.** Collaborate to produce voter education in accessible formats and develop inclusive materials that feature citizens with all types of disabilities.
- 7.** Enhance transparency in the electoral process to provide relevant information related to the candidate to enable people to make informed choice
- 8.** Ensure that voters are able to vote freely for the representatives and parties of their choice and are not unduly influenced by any kind of inducement
- 9.** Enhance the reach and effectiveness of voter education programs through innovation and use of technologies accessible to people with different levels of literacy background and with disabilities.
- 10.** Promote cooperation and partnerships with civil society organizations, media and other relevant entities in designing, developing and implementing effective voter education programmes.
- 11.** Endeavour sufficient financial and human resource for Voter Education.
- 12.** To share experiences, ideas and knowledge resources under a global Knowledge Network on Voter Education with Election Management Bodies, Institutes engaged with democracy and elections, and individual experts.

PARTICIPATING DIGNITARIES FROM:

- i. Independent Election Commission of Afghanistan
- ii. Australian Electoral Commission
- iii. Superior Electoral Court of Brazil
- iv. Elections Canada
- v. Fijian Elections Office
- vi. Central Election Commission of Georgia
- vii. Election Commission of India
- viii. General Election Commission of the Republic of Indonesia
- ix. Independent High Electoral Commission of Iraq
- x. Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission Kenya
- xii. Independent Electoral Commission Lesotho
- xii. Election Commission Malaysia
- xiii. Election Commission of Maldives
- xiv. Electoral Commissioner of Mauritius
- xv. Instituto Nacional Electoral Mexico
- xvi. Union Election Commission of Myanmar
- xvii. Election Commission of Nepal
- xviii. Electoral Commission of Namibia
- xix. Election commission of Pakistan
- xx. Commission on Elections, Philippines
- xxi. Election Commission of Sri Lanka
- xxii. Office of the Election Commission of Thailand
- xxiii. High Independent Election Commission of Tunisia
- xxiv. Electoral Commission of Uganda
- xxv. U.S. Election Assistance Commission
- xxvi. UNDP
- xxvii. IFES
- xxviii. International IDEA
- xxix. Malaysian Commonwealth Studies Centre
- xxx. University of Haifa



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