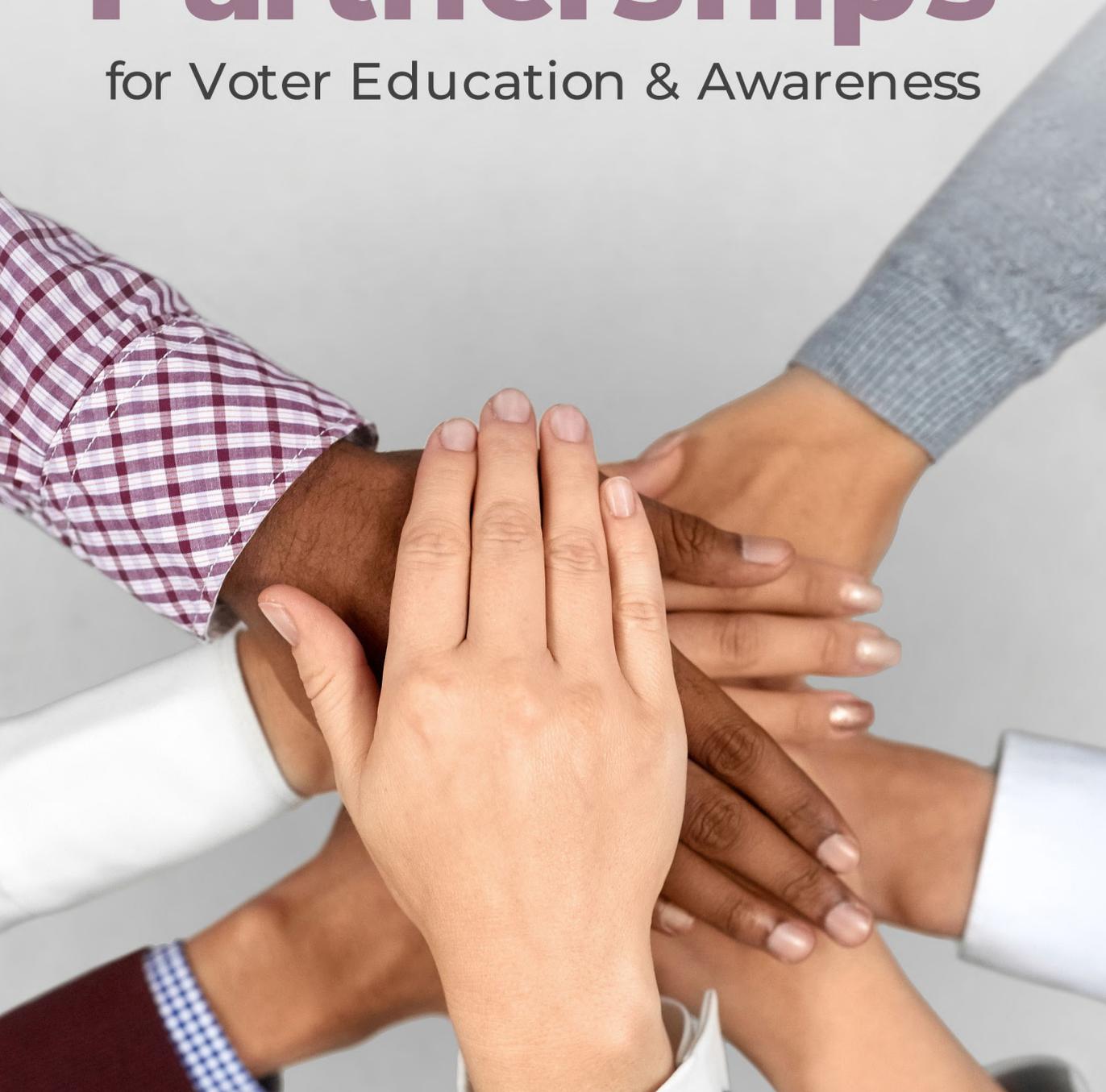


# VOICE International

A Quarterly Global Magazine for Voter Information, Communication & Education Joint Initiative by VoICE.NET & India A-WEB Centre

## Collaborations & Partnerships for Voter Education & Awareness



# Members & Associates: EMBs and International Organisations



Afghanistan



Australia



Bangladesh



Bhutan



Bosnia and Herzegovina



Brazil



Canada



Ecuador



Fiji



Georgia



India



Indonesia



Iraq



Kenya



Kingdom of Tonga



Kyrgyzstan



Lesotho



Malaysia



Malawi



Maldives



Mauritius



Mexico



Myanmar



Namibia



Nepal



Pakistan



Palestine



Philippines



Russian Federation



Sao Tome and Principe



South Africa



Sri Lanka



Taiwan



Thailand



Tunisia



Uganda



U.S.A



IIDEM



IFES



INTERNATIONAL IDEA



CAMBRIDGE (ENGLAND)



UNDP



## MESSAGE

Dear Readers,

Greetings from the Election Commission of India!

I'm pleased to present to you the next edition of VoICE International. The quest for global knowledge sharing in election management is the harbinger of VoICE International. It started its journey five years back on January 24, 2017, with its first issue on 'Strategies for Empowering Young and Future voters'. I am delighted to note that during these five years it has shared best practices and rich experiences from across the world in a thematic progression.

The theme of this edition of VoICE International is 'Collaborations & Partnerships for Voter Education & Awareness'. Conducting an election involves the efforts, conviction, and hard work of a team that includes numerous stakeholders from different sections of society. Besides the election machinery, there is a need to involve other organizations and institutions to ensure maximum participation.

Each Election Management Body is collaborating and partnering with various organizations in different sectors, which includes public, private, corporate, non-profit organisations, civil society organisations and the media. The aim is to spread voter awareness as wide as possible. In this ever-evolving world, it is necessary to learn from each other's experiences. I hope this edition will provide valuable inputs to all our associates for their consideration and future endeavours.

The conduct of free, fair, and inclusive elections at regular intervals is crucial for the success of a democracy. Election management is now a diverse field that calls for subject-matter expertise, creative solutions, and multilevel interventions. Besides the features, insights and novel endeavours, this edition also includes global perspectives with an aim to share knowledge on making electoral processes more efficient and voter-friendly.

I extend my appreciation to Dr. Ranbir Singh, Editor-in-Chief VoICE International, and his entire team, the members of the Editorial Board, and the Advisory Board for their dedicated efforts towards the publication of this issue.

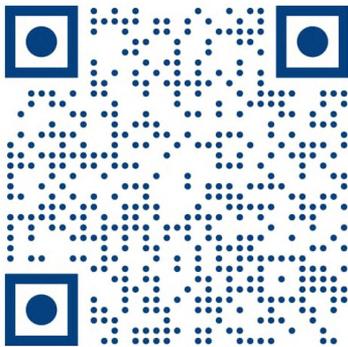
A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Rajiv Kumar' with a date '4/12' below it.

**Rajiv Kumar**

Chief Election Commissioner of India



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Scan to access India A-WEB Centre portal



## EDITORIAL

Dear Readers,

VoICE International has been enriching its readers with insights into new electoral endeavors and initiatives across the world. The magazine is not merely a medium of knowledge sharing, but it has also emerged as an important platform for mutual learning. This issue of VoICE International marks the fifth year of its publication.

This edition is themed on 'Collaborations & Partnerships for Voter Education & Awareness'. Election is a mammoth task. It involves contribution and hard work from officials, ground-level entities, big organizations, and myriad associations. Partnerships and collaborations with various stakeholders are vital to make elections truly inclusive.

This issue includes examples from across the globe of how partnerships and collaborations enrich the electoral process. We have covered successful collaborations for effective conduct of voter education campaigns in Uganda, inclusion of new immigrants by Taiwan, and insights from the outreach partnerships in Russia. The issue also includes inspirational stories from Nepal, Bhutan, ASEAN, Fiji, Ethiopia, Timor Leste, Srilanka, Jamaica, and various other countries besides numerous articles by International IDEA and IFES.

I'd like to sincerely thank the contributors to this issue and solicit even larger contributions for the upcoming issues in the form of news items, activities, announcements, success stories etc. I also invite feedback, suggestions, and experiences from all Election Management Bodies and look forward to your continued support.

I am thankful to Mr. Rajiv Kumar, Hon'ble Chief Election Commissioner of India and Mr. Anup Chandra Pandey, Hon'ble Election Commissioner of India, all the members of the Editorial Board and the Advisory Board of VoICE International for their invaluable contribution, guidance and consistent support.

**Dr. Ranbir Singh**

Special Officer ECI & CEO Delhi

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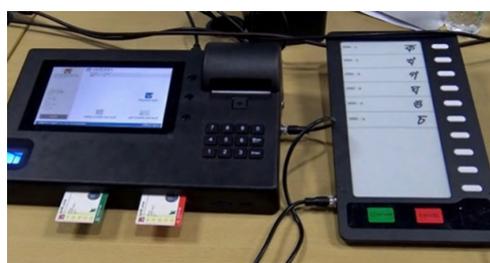
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# Partnerships & VE Practices

## by NEBE

**V**oter Education (VE) is vital in supporting citizens' understanding of their rights and in realizing their voting power in addition to giving information on how to vote. The National Election Board of Ethiopia (NEBE), an independent organization established in accordance with Article 102 of the Constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, has done a lot to promote and implement VE throughout the country.

The Ethiopian Electoral, Political Parties Registration and Election's Code of Conduct Proclamation state that NEBE shall provide Voter Education (VE) by devising a strategy of creating election-related awareness and adopting various engagement approaches. According to the Proclamation, the Board issues accreditation to registered Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and educational institutions to conduct VE. The education and training provided by either the Board or through institutions and organizations accredited by the Board is based on a curriculum developed



*Display of Voter Education*

Many local CSOs were encouraged to provide VE. About 300 CSOs applied for accreditation. 167 CSOs were accredited and about 60% of CSOs participated in providing VE from mid-February 2021.

by the Board. Therefore, while various stakeholders and partners play a significant role in providing VE, NEBE played a primary role in administering the

provision of VE. With an aim of addressing marginalized populations like women, and persons with disabilities and reaching out to people living in inaccessible

areas, NEBE also granted financial support to 18 CSOs.

### Preparation of Supporting Material

Two important documents were prepared by NEBE in consultations with stakeholders and partners before the provision of VE. These were the Voter Education, Licensing and Ethics Directive and the Civic and Voter Education Teaching Manual, along with a Trainers' guide in five local languages.

### Partnerships, Collaborations, and Key Partners

In many of the previous elections, CSOs did not participate in providing VE due a restrictive Charities and Societies Proclamation (#621/2009).



*Voter awareness roadshows*



*Spreading Voter Education*

Following the onset of political reforms in April 2018 and a new Proclamation (#1113/2019), many local CSOs were encouraged to provide VE. About 300 CSOs applied for accreditation. 167 CSOs were accredited and about 60% of CSOs participated in providing VE from mid-February 2021.

The General Election was held in most Constituencies on June 21 and September 30, 2021. Elections were postponed in a few Regions (a number of Constituencies) due to insecurity, and ongoing investigations.

#### **Basic information and education included:**

- Information about the time and place of voter registration and voting;
- Registration and Voting requirements;
- Type of election;
- Identification required to establish eligibility;
- Discourses addressing voters' motivation and preparedness to participate in elections;
- Voting process;
- Importance of each vote and its impact on public accountability;
- Gender equality regarding the right to vote

#### **Strategies used by CSOs included:**

- Face-to-face voter education;
- Roadshow demonstration;
- Education through mass media;
- Posters, billboards, leaflets;
- Internet;

- Writings, visuals/images and dramas
- Short Message Services - SMS

International partners like the European Center for Electoral Support (ECES), the UNDP / UN Women, International Foundation for Electoral Support (IFES), and OTI (an Organization providing Transition Initiatives) were among the key actors which provided support for VE. Some partners such as the International Republican Institute (IRI) and Consortium of Civil Society Relief and Development Associations (CCRDA) supported CSOs with financial assistance.

## **Media**

In the process of providing VE, broadcasting media, namely TV and radio; printed media mainly brochures, posters, banners and billboards, and the internet were the major media used to deliver VE. Public Service Announcements (PSAs) focused on giving information about candidate and voter registration, E-day and post-election issues were prepared and disseminated.

SMS text messages were sent to 35,000,000 active mobile users informing them about the election process, from voter registration to counting and announcement of results.

## **Voter Education Campaigns**

NEBE conducted VE campaigns through its regional offices using different strategies. The VE



*Reaching Out*



*Election Messages on Vans*

campaigns at the regional offices aimed to probe and be responsive to region-specific alternatives and opportunities to reach out to, hard to reach, and special-needs sections of society including women, Persons with Disabilities (PwDs), and Internally Displaced People (IDPs). The regional CVE campaigns were also designed to meet the language diversity and social contexts.

Different programs on inclusive democratic participation and election information were produced and broadcasted in local languages via local FM radio stations, community radios, and regional TVs. District-level PSA for peaceful and inclusive democratic participation was conducted in different regional states and city administrations. Women election literacy training was conducted in six regions by engaging 448 female participants and PWD Associations; and gender-sensitive VE messages were crafted in different languages, produced and distributed through banners, stickers, and brochures by the regional offices.

### Roadshow Campaigns

Roadshows consisting of face-to-face teaching, posters, brochures, promotional materials, including t-shirts, hats, paper bags, and hand bands, and

Women election literacy training was conducted in six regions by engaging 448 female participants and PWD Associations; and gender-sensitive VE messages were crafted in different languages.

custom flags were conducted for ten consecutive days in major cities. The face-to-face teaching and brochures distribution mostly targeted market areas, public transport hubs, recreational centers, and residential condominiums.

To conclude, experiences gained by NEBE concerning VE during the 6<sup>th</sup> National Election of Ethiopia can be characterized as very good, given the fact that the NEBE was undergoing reform, its Board members were all recently appointed and operating under a constantly changing and challenging environment, including COVID-19.

From the high turnout of voters on E-Days, the largely peaceful manner in which the elections were conducted is indicative that the VE provided

to the citizens made an impact on their decisions to go out and exercise their democratic rights. Of course, there were challenges: of institutional nature,

human resource capacity limitations, the capacity of political parties and civil society, media, the operating environment and past legacies. NEBE is,



*Voter Education at doorstep*

at the moment, embarking on a Lesson Learning exercise by assessing the last concluded elections on June 21 and September 30, 2021, following which a Strategic Plan is expected to be developed.

**Bizuwork Ketere**

Board Member, NEBE



# Partnerships and Collaborations

## Strengthening Indian Democracy

**E**lections in India amaze the world with their scale and diversity. The Elections Commission of India (ECI) has been a paragon of conducting free, fair, accessible and inclusive elections. Even as millions of officials, functionaries and security personnel are integral for conducting elections, numerous partners and collaborators play a critical role in fulfilling the mandate of 'No Voter to be Left Behind'.

Over the years, there have been numerous partnerships and collaborations of ECI with various stakeholders. Greater participation of stakeholders implies greater citizen engagement in the election process. ECI has forged partnerships with a variety of partners successfully. It has chalked out fruitful collaborations, both in the government and non-government sectors to tap new voters and promote greater awareness among them regarding electoral processes as also to utilize their existing infrastructure and manpower for electoral education and outreach.

Partnerships with Central Ministries, Departments, Public Sector Undertakings (PSU), Public Sector Enterprises (PSEs), Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs), Corporate and media. Partnerships are developed at the national level by ECI, state level by Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) and district level by District Election Officer (DEO). Intensive collaborative and participative initiatives with existing partners are undertaken during the election period along with continuous awareness activities during the non-election period with these partners.

ECI works in collaboration with the Ministry of Education, Youth Affairs and Sports, Health and Family Welfare, Rural Development, Social Justice and Empowerment, Women and Child Development, Railways, Information and Broadcasting, Agriculture

and Family Welfare, Defence, External Affairs, Home Affairs, Housing and Urban Affairs, Skill Development and Entrepreneurship, etc.

Partnerships with Public Sector Enterprises and Corporate Houses play a significant role in enhancing citizen engagement. ECI has partnered with Chambers of Commerce like CII, ASSOCHAM and FICCI and other associations like NASSCOM at the national level. Further, the regional and state chambers are approached at the state/ district level for ground-level initiatives. Also, numerous collaborations are undertaken at the State level/ district level with market associations, trade associations, manufacturers associations, hotel associations, medical associations, etc., for reaching out to eligible voters for participating in elections.

Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) have played a significant catalytic role in enhancing citizen engagement, especially in the areas of reaching out to the last mile in furtherance of the Election Commission's goal. CSOs including Resident Welfare Association (RWAs) and Self-help Groups (SHGs) are a great source of expanding their reach. They have contributed significantly in terms of creative inputs and outreach and have been a source of inspiration for election functionaries.

Partnering with Media has amplified the impact of voter education programs of ECI. Partnerships have been forged with National Television channel (Doordarshan), private television channels, print media, radio, community radio and social media. Media houses in print, TV, and radio have significantly contributed to the success of Systematic Voters' Education and Electoral Participation (SVEEP) program and have voluntarily participated in numerous voter education activities.

Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) of each state forges partnerships with State Government Departments, Municipal Corporations and Urban Local Bodies

to spread awareness at the ground level. District level collaborations with cinema theatres, petrol pumps, market associations and shopping malls are effective. The transport department plays an extremely important role in reaching out at national, state and district level. Similarly the education department, telecom service providers and social media platforms use their wide reach to target different sections of society.

With an aim to connect to the masses, ECI associates itself with non-partisan national celebrities from various fields and appoints them as ECI’s national icons. Similarly renowned individuals in States are appointed as State icons. Voter awareness is taken up through these icons, leveraging the ability of these inspirational personalities to form an authentic connection with the voter.

Numerous partnerships and collaborations were undertaken during the Lok Sabha 2019 elections. A few examples are as follows:

### Democracy on Wheels

The Election Commission of India and Indian Railways joined together to vinyl wrap trains with the hashtag #GoVote in the 2019 Lok Sabha Election. Consequently, numerous trains, covering the length and breadth of the entire country, were used to spread the message of voter awareness. The focus was to make sure that everyone is aware of the importance of voting. The vinyl wrap featured ECI’s national icons like renowned actor of Hindi Cinema, Aamir Khan and Olympic Medalist Mary Kom and other ECI state icons (as per the state



*Indian Railways carrying messages for voters*

being traversed by the train) motivating over 920 million voters of the country. The campaign logo ‘Desh Ka Mahatyohar’ (Great Festival of Democracy) was also embedded in National and regional languages.

### Delhi Metro Rail Corporation

Similar efforts were undertaken with the Metro-Rail in New Delhi to create awareness of the elections. The aim was to appeal to urban commuters and combat urban apathy. Election-related messages were vinyl wrapped on the outside and displayed on every available surface inside metro coaches. These were linked with well-known TV shows and cartoons with an urban middle-class audience in mind.

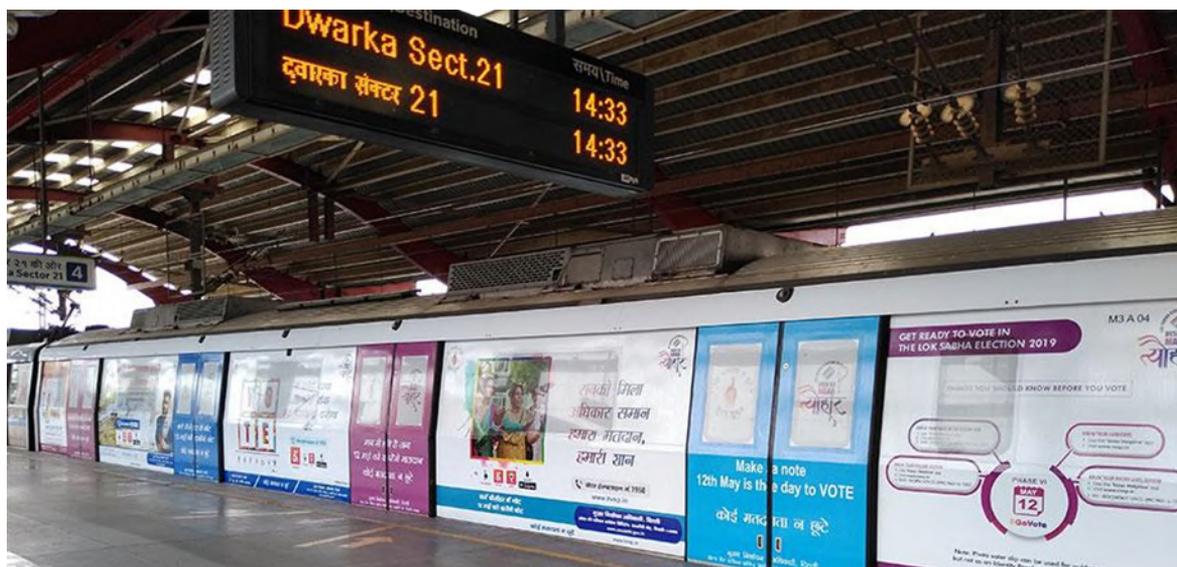
### FM Radio

A nationwide voter awareness and motivation campaign titled ‘Ab Watan Dabayega Button’ (The nation will now press the voting button) was launched in collaboration with 93.5 Red FM. Several Red FM RJs were identified as Youth Ambassadors

in their respective cities by CEO offices. The RJs were trained on electoral processes and they reached out to an audience of approximately 14,21,000 listeners every day during the campaign.

The popular radio stations decided to go all-out to not only boost the number of voters in their coverage region but also to encourage ethical and informed





Vinyl wrapped Delhi Metro, showcasing voter awareness messages



Campaigning in collaboration with Red FM

voting. In addition to organizing regular events with a special focus on first-time voters, they also made outreach efforts to other age groups. Songs based on contemporary folk music were written and played to emphasize the value of voting.

## Civil Society Organisations

Numerous CSOs stepped forward to promote voter awareness and assist in facilitating voting on election day. 'V Citizens Action Network' (VCAN) and many other CSOs set out to address the issue of inclusive accessibility of the built environment, transportation, public utilities, and other objects of

general use for the citizens, as well as the leveraging of the digital interface.

During the 2019 elections, a unique battery-powered wheelchair known as "SEEDIE" that could be transported both up and down stairs was launched. It could also be stopped in the middle. This facility, a first of its sort, was utilized during elections in India.

## Community Radio

Recognising the reach of Community Radio, ECI teamed up with two prominent community radio institutions for encouraging informed voting and voter awareness throughout the election process. 25 community radio stations from 16 Indian states were brought together for a partnership with the UNESCO Chair on Community Media at the University of Hyderabad and SMART, a non-profit organization. The content produced was in 11 major languages, including Hindi, Punjabi, Gujarati, Marathi, Telugu, Tamil, Malayalam, Kannada, Bengali, Odia, and Assamese, as well as some dialects like Bundeli, Marwari and Haryanvi.

## National Campaign on TV & Cinema

Various electoral awareness video commercials were produced by ECI and broadcast in collaboration with cinemas and multiplexes across



*ECI National Icons: (L to R) Amir Khan (Actor), Mahindra Singh Dhoni (Cricketer), Jasbir Jassi (Singer) and Dr. Niru Kumar (Social Activist)*

India by the Films Division for six months, during the election period.

### Engagement through ECI Icons

ECI icons are the public influencers who play a critical role in driving the mandate of no voter to be left behind to the last mile. Their popularity and mass appeal helps in educating and empowering voters. During 2019 Lok Sabha Elections, 4 National icons and around 113 State icons reached out to voters and spread voter awareness through social media, advertisements, and other communication channels.

### Private Corporations

Numerous restaurants, large corporations, and even small-town merchants decided to support India’s democracy in their own distinctive ways. Discounts on food products were offered at the well-known American restaurant company Subway. In addition to offering free coke in the states of Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Gujarat, Kerala, Pune, and Mumbai cities, another well-known fast food company, McDonald’s, offered discounts on its

famous hamburgers. McDonald’s also urged its consumers to cast their votes for a better future, through a campaign “freedom to choose” using social media.

### Social media network

Social Media has also played a vital role in carrying forward the initiatives taken in collaboration and partnership. ECI collaborated with Twitter for the campaign named #PowerOf18 which emphasized the importance of the youth voter by partnering with key influencers. They prepared videos on the importance of elections with Bollywood actors which accrued more than 5 million views on Twitter. A ‘Voluntary Code of Ethics’ was devised after consistent efforts and deliberations of ECI with various stakeholders of Social Media. For the first time during the Lok Sabha Election 2019, all major social media platforms and their industrial body in India, the Internet and Mobile Association of India came together and adopted the ‘Voluntary Code of Ethics’. Internet & Mobile Association of India (IAMAI) on behalf of its members has agreed to observe the ‘Voluntary Code of Ethics’ during all elections and cooperate for ensuring the conduct of free and fair elections.

Partnerships and collaborations, along with numerous other initiatives by the Election Commission of India were successful and led to the highest ever voter turnout at 67.4% during Lok Sabha 2019 General Elections.



*Collaboration with Twitter*

**Dr. Ranbir Singh**

Special Officer ECI & CEO Delhi



# Federal Election Campaign

## Interaction with Partners

### Outreaching voters

Informing voters throughout the election campaign is a systematic effort to provide citizens with objective and accurate information related to the election, albeit not of a campaigning nature.

The main purpose of informing is to ensure that citizens are aware of the elections taking place, the date, place, and time of voting, the legal deadlines, and the procedure for electoral action.

The work of informing voters is an important one and an integral part of the outreach activities of election commissions at all levels, carried out both by election officers and with the involvement of partner organizations.

The main objective of the CEC's partnership program in the run-up to the elections of deputies of the State Duma of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation of the Eighth Convocation was to achieve maximum voter coverage. It entailed information about the timing and procedure of electoral procedures as well as about additional options for citizens (multi-day voting, voting outside the voting premises, digital services etc.)

Once the elections were announced in June 2021, a Decree of the Government of the Russian Federation - among other means of support for the organization of the elections - defined a list of institutions and organizations for cooperation in information activities, which was conducted on a pro bono basis. However, in addition to the organizations listed, the Central Election Commission partnered with a number of other large enterprises.

The primary criterion of involving partners was the spot size of audience coverage: a large number of employees with developed internal communications, wide traction for their external communication, or an extensive network of



*Wide Coverage on Elections*

frequently visited public spaces.

A total of 24 partners were involved in the 2021 outreach campaign. These included ministries and agencies, state corporations, media holdings, and major representatives of the banking, transport and oil and gas sectors.

### Partnership program implemented in four phases

**In the first phase** the CEC of Russia sent information letters to partners about the launch of the federal election campaign and expressed its interest in cooperation. After receiving their response, and outreach package was sent to them for review.

Materials to be shared with information partners included: the brand book and the guidebook, logos, poster and leaflet layouts, as well as ready-to-use

internet banners, screensavers, dynamic splash screens, and video and audio clips.

**The second phase** involved consultations about the technical and organizational needs of the partner had there been an intention to tailor the information to a particular technical capacity. This was followed up by the desired adaptation and integration of the materials to the specific type of the partner’s communications.

**The third phase** involved the publication of the information materials. During the 2021 State Duma elections, the most active phase of the information campaign took place in late August and early September, i.e., during the last month before the voting.

Campaign video and audio clips appeared on television, radio, and social media. Information was broadcasted in

public announcements on trains and metro stations, and at the airports. Campaign modules and banners were placed on information boards, in newspapers, in-flight magazines, corporate publications, on official and corporate websites, in offices and in train carriages, on ATMs, cheque inscriptions etc.

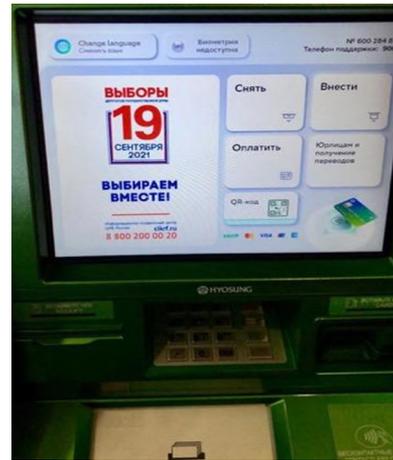
Sberbank PJSC and VTB Bank ensured that the campaign’s splash screens were rotated on ATM screens. Active banners were placed in the banks’ mobile applications, as well as their public and corporate websites, which allowed users to go to the CEC website.

PJSC Gazprom placed an information banner on its official website, subsidiary websites (31 websites), social media, on Gazprombank’s ATMs (8,135 ATMs), and on the monitors of Gazpromneft petrol stations (587 petrol stations). It also informed employees through its corporate newspapers and website.

Lukoil displayed informational videos

A total of 24 partners were involved in the 2021 outreach campaign. These included ministries and agencies, state corporations, media holdings, and major representatives of the banking, transport, and oil and gas sectors.

To follow up on the campaign, during the fourth (optional) phase of the partnership program, the agencies and organizations informed the Central Election Commission of the results of their work.



Information on Screen

on monitors in petrol stations and placed relevant inscriptions on sales receipts. Video walls and TV panels in offices across the Russian Federation

displayed a dynamic splash screen and posts were posted on the company’s social media channels with information about the upcoming elections.

X5 Retail Group rotated dynamic election splash screens in the chain’s stores across Russia. Where



Information play

it was not possible to display information on a monitor, printed posters were placed.

One of the largest partners, the Russian Railways informed passengers in long-distance trains (75 routes) and a ticker was displayed on electronic boards in MCC (Moscow

Central Circle) train carriages. Information about the elections was also posted in the Russian nationwide newspaper “Gudok” (“The Horn”) (16 issues) and on the company’s websites (public and corporate). Information materials were posted at train station complexes (464 stations), on the employee service portal, sent to employees by e-mail (over 200,000 addresses), on social media, on corporate TV (1,055 releases), and videos were broadcasted on Sapsan trains. The digital poster was placed along the railways in Moscow (28 positions) and at Moscow Central Circle train stations (30 stations).



*Bill Boards at train stations*

PJSC Aeroflot placed campaign modules in the in-flight magazine, on the company’s corporate website, in the My Aeroflot electronic newspaper and in the “Good Morning, Aeroflot!” mailout.



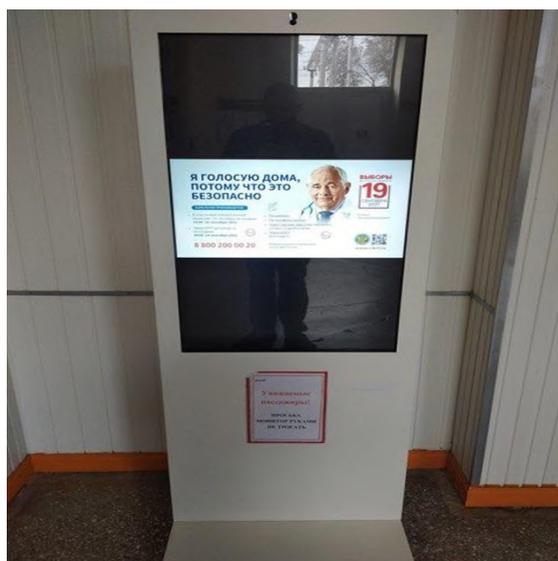
*Bill boards at Metro station*

The Moscow Metro showed subtitled videos on the trains. Vnukovo and Domodedovo airports displayed video on screens in the passenger area, while Gazprom-Media Holding JSC aired audio clips on radio stations.

JSC Moskva Media broadcasted video clips on the Moskva 24 TV channel and audio clips on the Moskva FM radio station.

Information videos with subtitles were broadcasted in all branches of the Pension Fund of the Russian Federation.

Thus, the outreach work of the CEC of Russia in the framework of the partnership program during the 2021 federal election campaign was extensive, differentiated, and targeted. Estimates say many millions of voters have been covered by the campaign resulting in an impressive turnout of 51,72%.



*Election Information omnipresent*

To follow up on the campaign, during the **fourth (optional) phase** of the partnership program, the agencies and organizations informed the Central Election Commission of the results of their work. However, such feedback allowed to assess the results of partners’ communications and to make necessary adjustments to plan effective cooperation in future electoral campaigns.

**P.V. Andreev**

Member, CEC of Russia

# Collaborations and Initiatives for Voter Education

**T**he Electoral Commission is established under Article 60(1) of the Constitution of the Republic of Uganda, 1995 (as amended) and is mandated to organise and conduct regular free and fair elections and referenda.

Article 61(1) (a)-(h) of the Constitution provides for the functions of the Commission and Article 61(g) specifically mandates the Commission to formulate and implement voter education programs related to elections. The Commission is also empowered under Section 12(1)(g) and (i) of The Electoral Commission’s Act Cap 140, to promote and regulate voter education to the citizens of Uganda on the purpose and voting procedures of any elections.

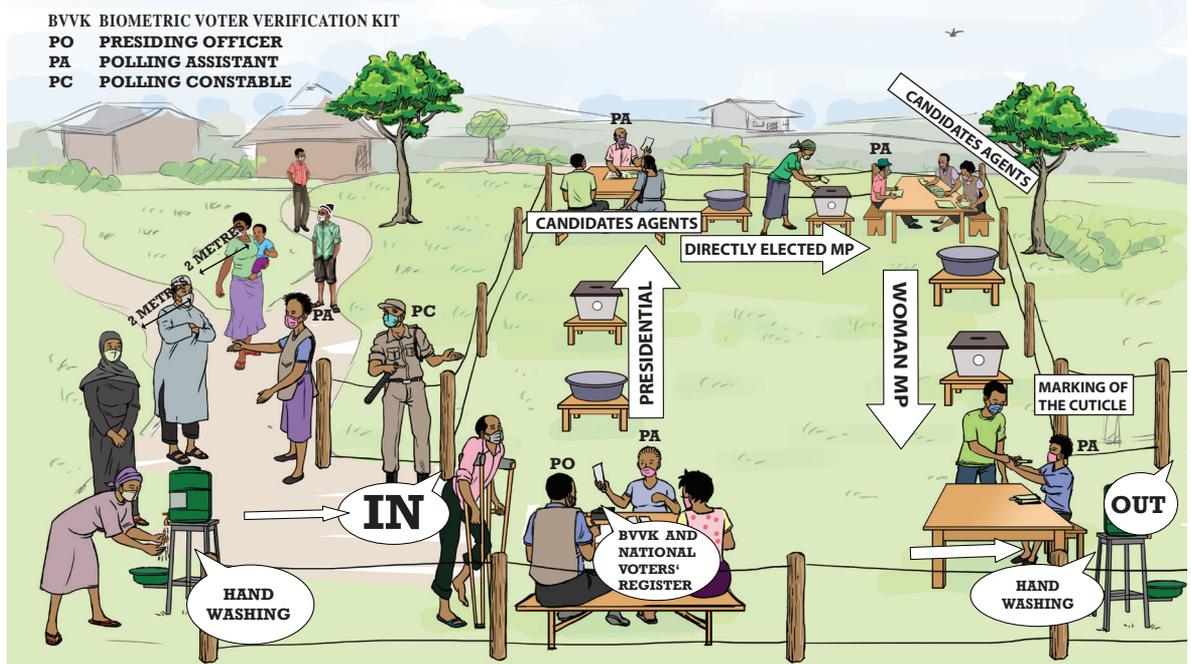
## Purpose of Voter Education and Awareness Creation

The main objective of voter education is to establish and sustain good governance from informed positions, in line with Article 1 of the 1995 Constitution. It is a deliberate effort to impart information to the public/eligible voters, regarding their rights, duties and obligations and the skills on how to manage the democratisation process of an election.

Voter education and awareness creation enables the citizens to meaningfully and effectively participate in the social, economic, political and development decisions of their communities and the nation, through regular democratic elections.



## POLLING STATION LAYOUT FOR 2020/21 GENERAL ELECTIONS



Voter education is implemented to provide citizens/voters with basic information on elections. During electoral processes, the Commission accredits partner organisations and institutions to supplement and strengthen their efforts in disseminating voter information. Voter education should not be biased to benefit a specific stakeholder but to provide relevant information to enable the voters make informed choices in aspects like:

- a. The electoral system of Uganda;
- b. How, why and when to register to participate in elections;
- c. The electoral program;
- d. How to mark the ballot;
- e. To empower communities at grass root level with information on the independence and freedom of choice as a voter, among other information.

## Collaborations and Partnerships for Voter Education and Awareness

Since its establishment, the Commission has been collaborating with stakeholders at the local, regional (East African Community, Great Lakes Region) and at other International levels like African Union (AU), Commonwealth, Association of World Election Bodies (AWEB), International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES), and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), among others, in the promotion of democratic principles.

Strategic partnerships have been made with public and private organisations, the business community, development partners, non-government and civil society organisations, and the media, among others, to ensure an informed electorate and peaceful elections in Uganda.

Partnerships are beneficial in mobilization,

information sharing through conferences and seminars, election observation missions, extension of voter education and awareness initiatives.

Benchmarking fellow EMBs has also been undertaken to draw lessons on best and effective practices in election management and delivery. Prior to elections, sample surveys have been done to gauge whether the public is aware of the ongoing electoral programmes and what is expected of them.

The Electoral Commission operates within the resources from Government and supplementary support from development partners to implement some best practices and strategies in voter education and awareness creation. As seen from the recently concluded 2020/2021 General Elections, the following initiatives were applied to register success:

## Initiatives for Effective Conduct of Voter Education and Public Awareness

### • Voter education outreaches

Before the Covid-19 pandemic, the Commission staff in all the one hundred and forty-six (146) districts used to engage in regular public outreach programmes to

extend voter related information to groups like market vendors, Local Government Councillors, public servants, motorcycle (boda boda) riders, local leaders, local savings and credit (SACCO) groups, special interest

groups, faith-based groups, security agencies, transporters' organisations, local communities, factory workers, Members of Parliament, students, farmers groups, sports fraternities, opinion leaders, media, cultural leaders and the business community. These initiatives will resume with full adherence to the COVID-19 Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) as

Strategic partnerships have been made with public and private organisations, the business community, development partners, non-government and civil society organisations, and the media, among others, to ensure an informed electorate and peaceful elections in Uganda.

issued by Government and the Ministry of Health.

- **Deployment of Voter Educators at Parish Level**

The Commission employs Sub County and Parish Supervisors on a temporary basis among other duties to conduct voter education in their areas of jurisdiction. They use megaphones procured by the Commission for this purpose and submit reports on their activities to the respective Returning Officers.

- **Production of voter education materials/messages**

Posters are produced in the official and various native languages and pinned in public places like markets, business centres and public transport stages. Posters are highly visible and are one of the cost effective forms that allows you to spread public message to wide audiences. Electronic and printed billboards are also availed in strategic points like buildings and road junctions to attract viewership.

- **Local Community Radios**

Community open-air radios, also known as “ebizindaalo” are located in the communities mainly in trading centres, markets, towns, and peri-urban areas and are instrumental in conveying information and mobilizing the communities.

- **Partnerships with Civil Society Organisations**

District election officials take advantage of community activities and programmes organised by civil society organisations to disseminate information on elections. Most of the CSOs are donor funded. To ensure uniformity and to prevent information distortion, all messages and materials produced by CSOs must first be approved by the Commission. Additionally, uniform messages and materials are also provided by

the Commission to all entities that assist in the dissemination of voter information.

- **Social gatherings**

The easing of the restrictions on COVID-19 made social gatherings an avenue for effective voter mobilization. This is in places of worship, weddings, burials, clan/family meetings, women SACCOs, sports teams and parties. Such gatherings become avenues for sensitizing, creating awareness and mobilizing the public to participate in electoral activities.

- **Mainstream media (newspapers, radio and television)**

Traditional media remains an effective channel of communication and reaches wide audiences. Voter education messages are relayed in form of public notices, announcements, spot messages, DJ Mentions, and live interactive talk shows. Drama skits are placed on radio while animated videos are placed on TV to sensitize the public on various aspects of the electoral process, including promoting peaceful coexistence before and after elections. Audio and visual content is also posted on social media platforms, including Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter and Instagram to reach online audiences.

- **EC Website ([www.ec.or.ug](http://www.ec.or.ug))**

The Electoral Commission website is updated on a continuous basis with public information on electoral laws, programmes, policies, rights and responsibilities of voters and business opportunities, among others.

- **Social Media Platforms**

Social Media platforms like WhatsApp, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube are very popular among the youth and urban elites. These are quick and effective channels to relay voter information and generate debate from which various stakeholders can draw lessons for action.



*Mobile vans spreading information on elections*

- **Short Messaging Services (SMS)**

Data on telephone contacts for stakeholders in the Districts was compiled to facilitate dissemination of voter education messages through telephones. The targeted stakeholders include elected leaders at various levels, civil servants, leaders of political parties and organizations, heads of educational institutions, leaders of religious groups, civil society organisations, business communities, and leaders of Special Interest Groups (Women, Youth, Older Persons, Workers, Persons with Disabilities) and the media. Through this medium, the Commission reaches out to telephone subscribers across the various mobile telecommunication networks in the country. These messages trickle down to families, workmates and other groups in society hence the multiplier effect. According to Uganda Bureau of Standards over 74% of Ugandans are subscribers on telephone networks.

- **Use of Mobile Vans**

Branded vehicles are hired from specialised service providers and are deployed countrywide to support and complement voter

education campaigns and enhance visibility and awareness of the respective electoral activities.

- **Monitoring and Supervision**

Commission staff actively participates in monitoring and supervision of various electoral activities. They ensure that the Commission's stakeholder engagement and voter education strategy is effectively implemented.

## Conclusion and Way Forward

Through collaborated efforts and partnerships in promoting continuous sensitization and awareness creation on democratic principles, there is hope for increased participation, transparency and accountability to the people. Candidates will learn to concede defeat thereby minimizing post-electoral violence and suffering. There will be tolerance and peaceful co-existence and thus progress in the social, economic and political sectors. Continuous sensitisation will minimise commercialization of politics and corruption, which will translate into accelerated democratic development and prosperity of the country at large.

**Justice Byabakama Mugenyi Simon**

Chairperson, Electoral Commission, Uganda



# Booth Level Officers: The Foot-soldiers of Indian Democracy

Conducting Elections in the world's largest democracy is the mammoth task! It is probably the biggest human exercise after World War whereby mass movement of people and material takes place in the shortest span of time. The Parliamentary Elections in India, gives the Government of peoples' choice, to nearly one seventh of the world's population. Behind this humungous exercise is the team work!

“

Coming together is a beginning, staying together is progress, and working together is success!

”

The ECI team consisting of officers at different levels, work tirelessly towards the successful conduct of elections. What we see as the culmination of the election process with announcement of results, behind, is the long drawn but meticulous preparatory planning and its execution. May it be a preparation of the authentic and robust Electoral Roll for all eligible voters or process of voting, maintaining the highest level of secrecy on the polling day, huge efforts take place, behind, in its successful conduct.

The team of ECI includes the Commission at the topmost level, reported by different sets of officers and assisted by the field machinery. At the grass root level, is the Booth Level Officer. BLO, is the field functionary of Election Commission of India and a very important layer in the entire election hierarchy. It is the primary source of information for every voter across the length and breadth of the country. Often it is said, BLO is the face of ECI at the ground level, as it interacts directly with voters, per se!

Started in 2006, the concept of Booth Level officer, has been functional and strengthened over the period, helping ECI in preparation of the robust electoral rolls. May it be marking of PwDs on the roll or registering new voters or changing the address of existing voters or deletion of entries of duplicate or dead voters, BLOs do their work diligently. They inform and educate voters and also facilitate doorstep

## KNOW YOUR Booth Level Officer

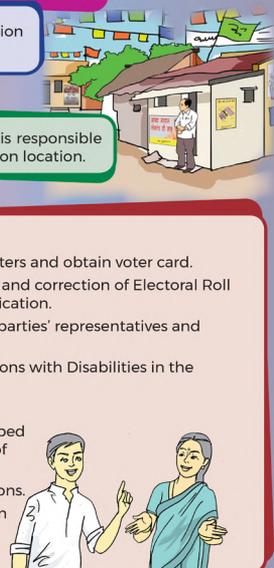
**1** BLO is a representative of Election Commission of India (ECI) at the grass-root level.

**2** Generally, one BLO is responsible for one Polling Station location.

**3**

**Roles and Responsibilities of BLO:**

- i. BLO assists eligible citizens to become voters and obtain voter card.
- ii. BLO provides forms for addition, deletion and correction of Electoral Roll entries as well as carries out physical verification.
- iii. BLO interacts with local people/ political parties' representatives and identifies dead/ shifted electors.
- iv. BLOs are responsible for mapping of Persons with Disabilities in the electoral roll.
- v. BLOs ensure EPIC distribution.
- vi. BLO facilitates display of draft roll/prescribed notices at designated locations, reading of rolls in gram/ ward sabhas.
- vii. BLO distributes Voter Slip ahead of elections.
- viii. On the poll day, BLO sits at the Facilitation Desk outside the Polling Station to facilitate voters.



**WAYS TO FIND BOOTH LEVEL OFFICER**

Website of CEO and DEO

NVSP portal  
[www.nvsp.in](http://www.nvsp.in)

SMS  
<ECIContact> space  
<EPIC NO> to 1950

Voter Helpline App

Voter Helpline 1950

**Election Commission of India**

Helpline ☎ 1950 | <https://eci.gov.in/> | [www.nvsp.in](http://www.nvsp.in)

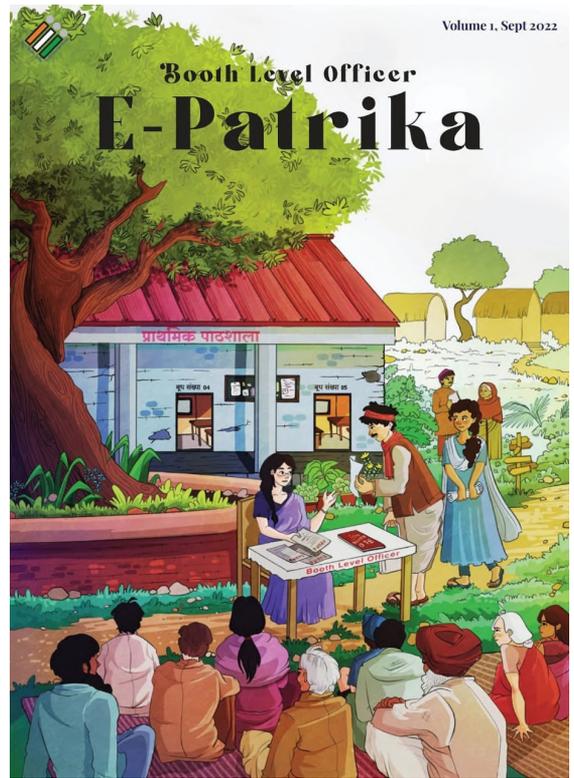
Download Helpline App


delivery for electoral services. They ensure a direct connect with all the households, in their assigned area.

It is the celebration of BLOs noteworthy contribution and a gratitude for their hard work, that ECI has recently brought out a bi-monthly newsletter ‘BLO e-Patrika’. This newsletter, gives out all necessary instructions and directions in simple, lucid, communicative and pictorial format. It also encapsulates emulating success stories and exceptional professional achievements of the BLOs from the field. Further, it gives vent to BLOs’ creative talent, by presenting a platform for its showcase, at the National level.

BLO e-Patrika was launched by the Election Commission on September 14, 2022. To make it interesting read, it doesn’t only have beautiful colours, relevant pictures and a lucid language, but also audio-visual content interspersed with text, making it one of the most high-tech e-publications being produced in all regional languages and distributed through ‘Garuda App’, WhatsApp, emails and different social media platforms to nearly 1 million plus BLOs.

The launch of this BLO e-Patrika was an event of its kind! It was probably the first time, that the Commission has directly interacted with BLOs at such a large scale, at a public forum. 10 BLOs each were connected over Video Conferencing from the



Chief Electoral Offices at 33 different locations/ state capitals, across the Country, to share their experiences with the Election Commission of India. Nearly 50 BLOs from adjoining states of Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and Delhi joined physically for the event. The entire event was made live on Youtube and shared with with the BLOs across the Country.

It was a thrilling experience for all participating BLOs to share their success stories and list out their challenges while performing their duties on the field!

The Commission strives to discuss with grass root machinery, listen to them and inspire all. Acknowledging the importance of this field level institution, Rajiv Kumar, Chief Election Commissioner, on the occasion said “BLO is the Form, Behaviour, Vision and Voice of the Commission. Gratitude!”

**Santosh Ajmera**

Director SVEEP, ECI



# Increasing Women's Political Participation and Securing Voting Rights of Persons with Disabilities

In the context of increasing political participation of women in society, electoral legislation provides for reservation of mandates for women at all levels of the electoral process - parliamentary and local elections.

Special state legislative measures are a good opportunity to give women more confidence to participate in elections as candidates. In this regard, the Central Commission on Elections and Referenda of the Kyrgyz Republic (hereinafter, the CEC of the Kyrgyz Republic) makes efforts to comply with the requirements of electoral legislation.

## Election of Deputies

The election of deputies to Jogorku Kenesh of the Kyrgyz Republic (Parliament) is carried out by a mixed system: 54 deputies are elected under the proportional system in a single district and 36 under the majoritarian system in single-mandate districts.

Within the framework of the organization and conduct of elections of deputies to Jogorku Kenesh of the Kyrgyz Republic by proportional system in a single district, the legislation on elections defines the obligation of a political party to take into account the representation. It mandates not more than 70% of candidates of the same gender, and the difference in the order of the lists of women and men nominated by political parties should not exceed three positions, which ensures the participation of women in the future Parliament.

According to the definition of election results, the distribution of mandates received by a political party is initially subject to at least 30% of the

total number of mandates received by the political party among female candidates who received the highest number of votes. If female candidates from a political party's candidate list do not receive votes, the remaining mandates in the women's quota are distributed according to the order of placement of female candidates on the political party list, which was established when the list was registered with the CEC of the Kyrgyz Republic.

According to results of the elections held on November 28, 2021, 33% of the deputies of Jogorku Kenesh of the Kyrgyz Republic, were women from political parties in a single constituency.

For the election of deputies of Aiyyl Kenesh (Local Parliament), for each Aiyyl Kenesh at least 30% of the mandates of deputies were to be reserved for women. When compiling lists of candidates for

city councils, political parties must ensure that no more than 70 percent of the candidates of the same gender are represented and the difference in the order of the lists of women

In order to increase women's political participation in society, the CEC, together with its partners, is conducting training and awareness-raising activities.

and men nominated by a political party must not exceed two positions. The procedure for transferring the mandate of a deputy of the city council in case of early termination of powers of a deputy of a local council was also established according to the following principle: in case of withdrawal of a woman, the mandate was transferred to the next woman on the list. And in case of withdrawal of a man - to a man.

In the election of deputies on April 01, 2021 to 448 local councils, 27, 70 % of women won city councils and 38, 84 % of women won Aiyyl councils, which suggests that the political participation of

women in representative bodies is substantially higher than in previous years.

In order to increase women's political participation in society, the CEC, together with its partners, is conducting training and awareness-raising activities.

## Electoral Rights of PwDs

In matters of ensuring the electoral rights of persons with disabilities, the CEC of the Kyrgyz Republic administers on a regular basis, measures to implement electoral rights and increase participation of persons with disabilities in politics.

In order to implement Article 29 of the "Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities" and the "Strategy for ensuring the electoral rights of persons with disabilities of August 8, 2019", amendments were made to the election laws. Procedures were established for registering voters with disabilities. The concept of voter with disabilities was introduced, mechanisms for the formation and implementation of their needs, map of persons with disabilities were implemented and standards for accessibility of polling stations were established. Besides requirements for information and campaigning in special formats and provision for voting assistance and registration were defined.

The CEC of the Kyrgyz Republic to improve the inclusiveness of electoral processes adopted the Regulation "On ensuring the electoral rights of citizens of certain categories during elections and referenda in the Kyrgyz Republic", approved by CEC Decision No. 216 of November 17, 2016, the Regulation "On ensuring the implementation of electoral rights of citizens with disabilities during elections and referenda in the Kyrgyz Republic", approved by CEC Decision No. 506 of October 7, 2017.

Decision No. 2 of June 20, 2019 of the CEC of the Kyrgyz Republic established a working group

to improve the implementation of electoral rights of citizens with disabilities (hereinafter referred to as the Working Group). The Working Group included representatives of state bodies, civil society representing the interests of voters with disabilities, civic activists from among voters with disabilities and international organizations.

In 2019-2020, the aforementioned 'Working Group' audited all polling stations. In February 2020, the number of polling places equipped with ramps reached 43%, in August – 65.7%, in September - 79% and in December – 83.4%. In September 2021, the number of polling stations increased to - 85%. At the same time, at 185 polling stations there was no need for a ramp. The work on the provision of access to voting premises continues, including bringing them in line with the standards of accessibility. The CEC of the Kyrgyz Republic equipped each polling station with signs for call buttons in Braille. Help call buttons are placed to signal help to members of the precinct of election commission. At the moment the work from

quantity to quality is underway and there will be an audit of compliance with the standards of ramp devices.

Twice a year the authorized state

bodies send accounting information to the CEC of the Kyrgyz Republic about the actual number of voters at in-patient medical and preventive treatment institutions, in places of detention as suspects and defendants and persons with disabilities.

## Ensuring Accessibility

In order to ensure accessibility in voting, the corresponding election commission together with the territorial subdivisions of the authorized state body in the sphere of social development compiles a map of the needs of voters with disabilities (hereinafter referred to as the map of needs). The map of needs is used to collect quantitative and qualitative data on voters with disabilities who need

The Working Group included representatives of state bodies, civil society representing the interests of voters with disabilities, civic activists from among voters with disabilities and international organizations.

special conditions in the voting room, indicating all data according to the form approved by the CEC of the Kyrgyz Republic. When compiling the map of needs, social campaigns are launched – “take a neighbor”, “volunteer’s help”, “social cab” and so on.

During the elections, the tables, voting booths and ballot boxes, as well as information stands at polling stations are located in such a way as to ensure their accessibility for voters who use wheelchairs or have difficulties in moving independently

(in height, width, depth and location). All precinct election commissions have a stencil-ballot paper with Braille (in Kyrgyz and Russian) and a magnifying glass.

In terms of informing the voters with disabilities during the preparation and conduct of elections and referenda, CEC of the Kyrgyz Republic has prepared and equipped each polling station and public organizations with information materials using special formats. For instance, Posters are displayed “On measures to ensure the electoral rights of citizens with disabilities”, brochures “On measures to implement the electoral rights of voters with disabilities in the Kyrgyz Republic” and flyers on the voting procedure for voters with disabilities. Audio and video materials with sign language interpretation had been placed on the official website of CEC of the Kyrgyz Republic. Now as a practice, informing and updating persons with disabilities in special formats is a set norm.

According to the Election Law, candidates and political parties are obliged to publish and distribute

campaign materials with the use of sign language interpretation or sub-titling, printed in large font that is easy to read, as well as use Braille or other special means for voters with disabilities, in not less than 1% of the total circulation of campaign materials.

Add to that the Election Law provides for a quota of at least two candidates - persons with disabilities and one of them must be included in the list of the first 25 candidates. In the October

4, 2020 parliamentary elections of the Kyrgyz Republic, 43 persons with disabilities were included in the lists of candidates for deputies. At the elections to Jogorku Kenesh of the Kyrgyz Republic, held

on November 28, 2021, 46 persons with disabilities were included in the lists of candidates from political parties.

As a part of the preparation and conduct of elections and referenda, the CEC of the Kyrgyz Republic engages persons with disabilities in the call-centre, as well as engaged specialists in the working groups of the CEC of the Kyrgyz Republic.

To ensure the electoral rights of persons with disabilities and to increase the participation of women, the CEC of the Kyrgyz Republic together with partners and representatives of civil society carries out a set of informational and educational activities. These informational, educational measures on inclusion of electoral rights of persons with disabilities and increasing the political participation of women will be implemented based on the programs of the Civic Education and Electoral Technologies Center of CEC of the Kyrgyz Republic.

To ensure the electoral rights of persons with disabilities and to increase the participation of women, the CEC of the Kyrgyz Republic together with partners and representatives of civil society carries out a set of informational and educational activities.

**Nazgul Usupbekova,**

Grant Assistance Coordinator, Kyrgyz Republic



# Voting Awareness Promotion Campaigns for New Immigrants

Immigration is an important issue. The importance of immigration in elections has been rising around the world. It may be a major component of election platforms and influences voting in many countries. For example, Brexit was heavily shaped by migration and border control issues in the United Kingdom. Immigration policies could dominate politics in the United States, Germany, etc.

## Immigration Issues

However, immigration issues are relatively new to Taiwanese voters and were never core parts of party platforms in Taiwanese elections, until now. While traced back to anthropology, Taiwan is a multicultural society comprising diverse Han subgroups, as well as indigenous Malayo-Polynesian peoples and immigrants from all over the world. The influx of new arrivals has been a familiar one for this island country.

In recent years, trans-national marriages have become more and more common and have been on the rise in Taiwan. Currently, the number of new immigrants in Taiwan is more than 550,000. Of these predominantly married new immigrants, around 270,000 are eligible voters, half of whom originate from China; the others are mainly from Vietnam and Indonesia. On one hand, these new



Multi-lingual voting guide (in English, Vietnamese, Indonesian, Tagalog, Khmer, Thai versions) help new immigrants to better understand the voting process.

The static parts included posting promotional posters and distributing promotional advocacy etc. Through dynamic interactions, the promotional activities were active and varied.

immigrants are giving a brand new and diversified style to Taiwan society. On the other hand, Taiwan's democratic society has to ensure their voices are heard and involve them in the political process.

It is clear that civil and political rights of new immigrants have been gradually immersed in Taiwan society. The 2020 presidential election could be seen as the first time that immigration was front and center at an election in Taiwan.

As more and more new immigrants are becoming eligible voters, political parties are realizing the importance of addressing new immigrants and their needs. Both the presidential candidates of two major parties,

the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) and the Kuomintang (KMT), stood on immigration and expanded their policies to include issues surrounding immigrants.

## Electoral Promotion Campaigns

In order to protect basic rights and requirements of new immigrants, Taiwan government designed



*Voting simulation activities for new immigrants to experience the voting process.*

many comprehensive and considerate policies to positively help new immigrants with adapting to local life. Meantime, the municipality, county and city election commissions have organized a series of electoral promotion campaigns, such as voting simulation activities and prizes quizzes for the purpose of encouraging new immigrants to vote.

For example, several election commissions cooperated with local district recreation community development associations of the city to organize a New Residents Year-end Gala to explain and promote the election system, referendum methods, and anti-epidemic measures. The commissions held activities in static and dynamic ways to attract public attention and enhance new immigrants' participation. The static parts included posting promotional posters and distributing promotional advocacy etc. Through dynamic interactions, the promotional activities were active and varied.

To begin with, new immigrants were segregated into several teams according to their native language and the facilitators explained the anti-epidemic measures for voting, Taiwan's election referendum system, supervision regulations, etc.



*The question texts in prized quizzes marked with Mandarin phonetic symbols to help new immigrants understand the contents of questions.*

Further clarifications were elucidated by narrating and giving examples to make the contents easier to understand. Finally a rewarded prize quiz was conducted to strengthen the effect of publicity.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the election



*COVID-19 prevention awareness - Reminding people to wear masks in voting activities.*



*COVID-19 prevention measures*

commissions also worked hard on the enhancement of promotion of COVID-19 prevention awareness campaigns. Altogether the activities motivated new immigrants to participate more in public affairs in a safe way. Most important of all, through vote, election and campaign, it accentuated not only citizen awareness but citizen participation for the developing of an active citizenry for new immigrants.

**Tina Sun**

Program Officer, A-WEB



# Election Sheroes: The Rise of the Female Voter

India has recently witnessed a remarkable growth in turnout at elections, from only 58% in the 2004 Lok Sabha elections to 67% in the 2019 polls, setting a record for voter participation rates. In the context of the world's largest democracy, even a one-percentage-point increase in turnout means that lakhs of additional voters cast a ballot.

Behind this recent surge in voter participation in India is the rise of one group in particular: women. Female voter turnout lagged behind male turnout by a whopping 16.7 percentage points in 1962 – the first year for which data is available – and still stood 8.4 percentage points lower than male turnout in 2004.

## Gender Gap

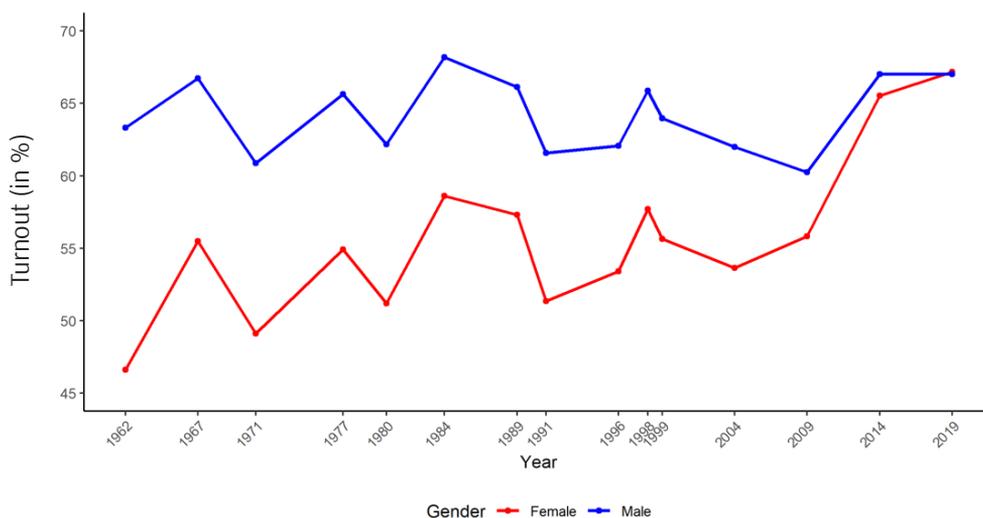
However, since then, women's participation rates have caught up with men's (see Figure 1). The blue line represents the male turnout, i.e., men who actually cast a ballot as a percentage of registered male voters. The red line, by contrast, shows the female turnout, i.e., the percentage of eligible women voters who voted on election day. The gap between the blue and the red line is known as the

'gender gap' in voter turnout: it represents how high male turnout is compared to female turnout. As Figure 1 shows, male and female turnout in India used to move in unison, with female turnout going through the same ups and downs as male turnout, just several percentage points lower. But since the 2004 elections, women's voter participation in India has seen a steep and unprecedented rise, culminating in the closing of the gender turnout gap – the gap between the blue and red lines – in 2019.

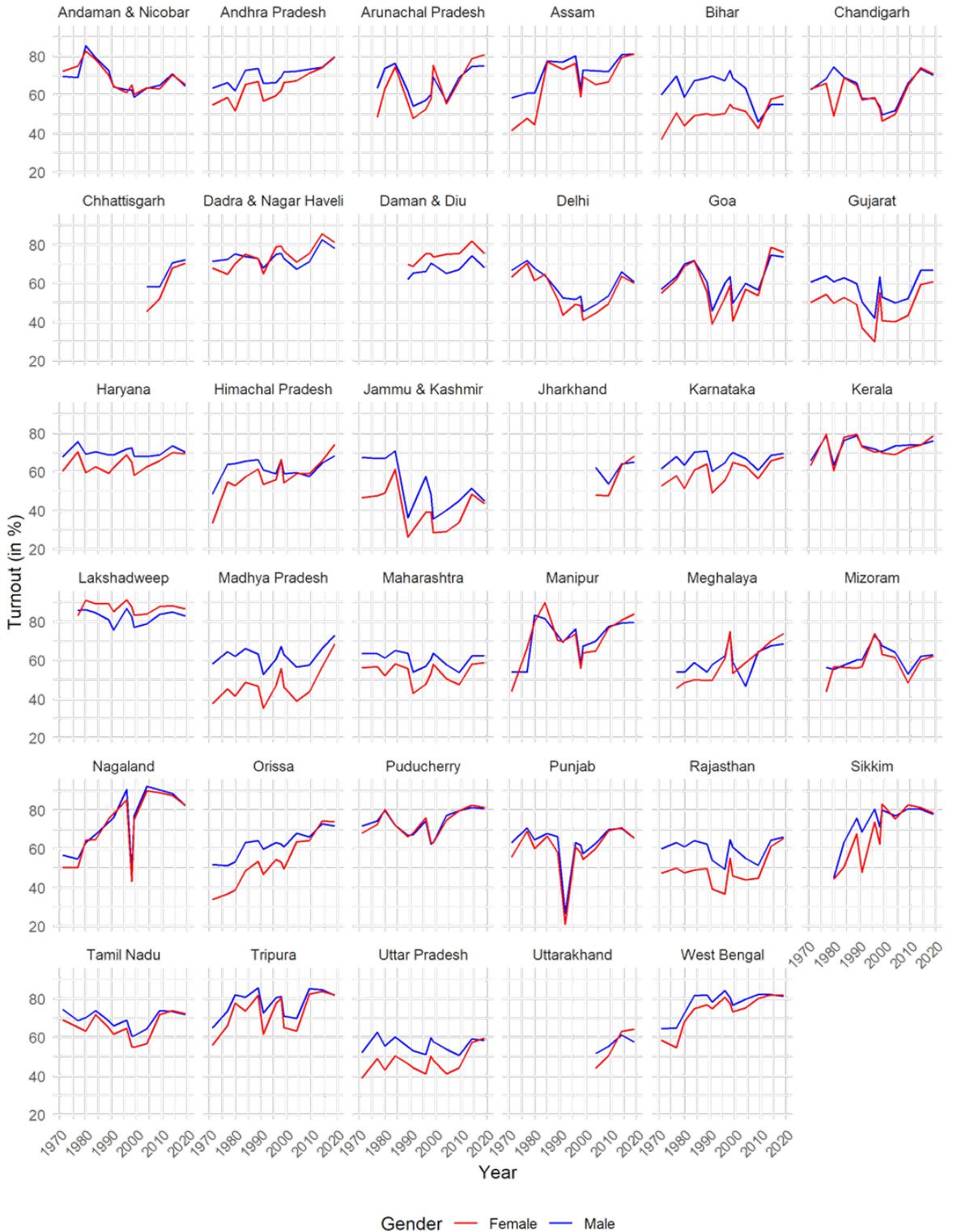
## Female Voter Turnout

Yet the rise of female voter turnout is not uniform across the country. Figure 2 shows male turnout (blue line) and female turnout (red line) for most states. Based on how the blue and red lines behave, we can categorize states into three groups: those that never had much of a gender turnout gap; those that used to have a sizeable gender gap in turnout but have recently closed it; and finally those states that still witness considerable difference between male and female turnout rates. The first group includes Kerala and most of the North-east. These regions have always recorded high female

Figure 1: Turnout for Indian National Elections



**Figure 2: Turnout for Indian National Elections by State**



participation rates that were more or less at par with men's.

In the second group are states that have historically seen high gender gaps in turnout – where male turnout rates used to far outpace female turnout – but have recently witnessed a closing of that gap. This category includes Bihar, Odisha, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh (UP), for example. Many of these states at first glance seem unlikely candidates for gender equality in democratic participation.

Scholars have long thought that economic development and education levels are important predictors of women's voter participation. But states in this second group record lower levels of economic development and education than the states that always recorded high female turnout. In addition, traditional gender norms are strong in many of these places, effectively preventing many women from participating in parts of public life, from attending village meetings to taking up a job. Yet, remarkably, women still turn out to vote on election day.

Take, for example, Uttar Pradesh, India's most populous state. The Multi-Dimensional Poverty Index recently published by NITI Aayog identified Uttar Pradesh as one of the poorest states in India, with almost 40% of its population considered multi-dimensionally poor. That means that more than one-third of its residents live with not only very little money, but also a low quality of education and poor health outcomes. Nevertheless, Uttar Pradesh has witnessed a remarkable rise in women's electoral participation over the past 20 years: In the 2004 elections, the state recorded a gender turnout gap of almost 13 percentage points, the highest since 1980 in UP and one of the largest in the country. Since then, male turnout has grown by about 5 percentage points from close to 54% to nearly 59% in the most recent Lok Sabha polls. But, stunningly, female turnout has skyrocketed by

18 percentage points, from only a little over 41% in 2004 to almost 60% in the 2019 elections, effectively overtaking male turnout rates. This rise in female voter participation is even more impressive considering that women still lag behind men in terms of education, employment or political knowledge in Uttar Pradesh.

Uttar Pradesh is not the only state that has recently seen a long-standing gender gap in turnout not just vanish, but flip. In Bihar, Jharkhand and Odisha, too, female turnout has overtaken male turnout despite developmental challenges of these states (they rank 1st, 2nd and 9th, respectively, in the NITI Aayog's multidimensional poverty report). And while in Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan, men still voted at higher rates than women in the 2019 elections, the gender turnout gap has shrunk

Bihar, Jharkhand, Odisha and UP have witnessed female turnout overtake male turnout despite developmental challenges in these states.

considerably in both states: In Rajasthan, the gap is down from more than 11 percentage points in 2004 to a mere 0.65 percentage points in 2019; while

in Madhya Pradesh it has fallen from almost 18 percentage points to only 4.5 percentage points over the same period– the lowest it has ever been in the region's history.

By contrast, two of the last holdouts when it comes to the gender turnout gap are Gujarat and Maharashtra, where the turnout gap only narrowed by a few percentage points over the past three election cycles. That seems surprising given these two states' generally favourable development outcomes.

India has recorded rising female participation rates not just in national elections, but also in state elections. ECI is committed to further increase the women voter turnout not just in National Elections but also in various State Legislative Assembly Elections. Adequate participation of women in elections can ensure women empowerment in the true sense.

**Franziska Roscher**

Researcher, New York University

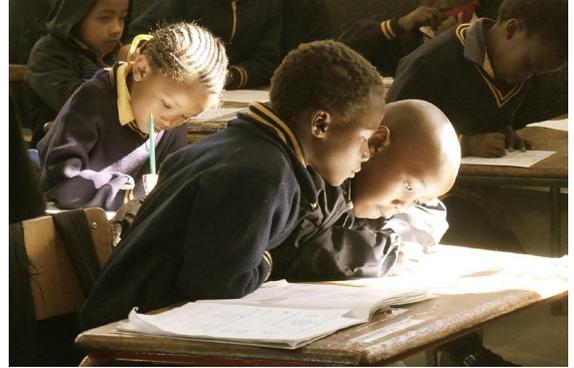
# Effective School Education for Future Voters

**D**emocracy can be simply adopted in a society as a system. Enabling the system to take root and grow, however, requires citizens' interest and participation. As mature civic awareness is indispensable to settlement and development of democracy is cultivated by continual education, many democratic countries are conducting democratic civic education by various means. In particular, school plays a critical role as one of the most important agencies responsible for providing future voters with civic education. Studies have shown that political education and activities related to democratic participation provided for school students are an integral part of the settlement and development of democracy in a society.

Moreover, studies point out that in general, school curriculum of election and political participation tends to touch mostly upon theoretical and conceptual issues which are distant from students' daily lives. It is also pointed out that in general, school students are not encouraged enough to develop their creative thinking about how to put into practice their knowledge learned from the school curriculum. This article will discuss a few general ideas as to how school education can be more effective in delivering skills and knowledge necessary for students to develop their critical thinking and become responsible voters.

## Curriculum and school activities conducive to students' active participation in voter education

School is a place where students spend most of their time acquiring knowledge and learning to



socialise themselves to be able to function as a member of the society. In this regard, the curriculum and school activities one experiences during his or her school life have a profound impact on one's ability to understand and engage in the society. In the same vein, civic education through school curriculum and activities is crucial for one to develop his or her knowledge and understanding

of a democratic society and citizens' roles in maintaining the values of democracy. Therefore, an initiative to provide more effective school curriculum and activities for students is the first

step to cultivating mature and responsible future voters.

## Knowledge-oriented curriculum to curriculum conducive to students' critical thinking

Studies point out that school curriculum and textbooks for social and political science, and law are heavily knowledge or theory oriented. They hardly deal with political phenomena or dynamics of political and electoral processes, which often fails to cultivate students' creative and critical thinking abilities as well as to motivate them to apply their knowledge to political and electoral participation.

In order to induce students' active participation in civic and voter education, the curriculum needs to touch more on the issues faced by students in their daily lives.

It is necessary to provide students with theories and knowledge of a democratic system. However, a democratic system or a theory can be applied in various forms, depending on the political environment and culture of a society. Therefore, the curriculum needs to focus more on the dynamic nature of political and social phenomena, and to develop student's critical thinking and sense of responsibilities as a responsible citizen.

In order to induce students' active participation in civic and voter education, the curriculum needs to touch more on the issues faced by students in their daily lives. Discussing topics affecting their actual lives, they will realise that participating in politics and election should eventually lead to an increase in the quality of their lives. Textbooks are limited to dealing with all the actual issues that are currently taking place. Therefore, using supplementary materials such as statistics from civil society organisations and Election Commissions as well as contemporary cases from other countries will be of great help in keeping students motivated to learn and put what they have learned into practice in their actual lives.

## Elections at school

In order for students to be able to use their critical thinking and knowledge about election acquired from school, they should also be able to experience electoral processes within school. The school may support students to organise elections for themselves to deal with issues affecting their lives at school. The students may organise an election committee to implement electoral processes to elect the student representatives of the school or classroom leaders. The committee may also put to a vote important matters associated with student welfare.

The school may support students to organise elections for themselves to deal with issues affecting their lives at school.

Throughout the entire electoral process, they become the managers of the election as well as candidates and voters. They learn about the roles of each stakeholder and importance of fair and transparent elections.

More importantly, through their electoral participation and experience accumulated, students may begin to realise that election is not a nuisance but an enjoyable event by which they express their choices and preferences. They may begin to regard election as an effective tool to solve 'my' and 'our' problems. In other words, they begin to think of the interests of the community as well as 'my' interests. They will also learn about the consequences of their choices as well as responsibilities they may have to take when deciding not to vote, which will further reinforce students' active and voluntary participation.

## Conclusion

School is the cradle of civic education for future voters. Students learn knowledge of the political and electoral systems of the society, and socialise with the school system before going into the real world. In this regard, what they learn and experience from their school lives in terms of civic and voter education has an enormous impact on their attitude towards the society and their degree of participation in election and politics after they graduate.

This article suggests that the curriculum for political and social science touch more on actual issues that may attract students' attention using a variety of supplementary materials from various sources. Another suggestion is that school provide students with as many opportunities as possible to deal with elections for themselves so that they themselves learn valuable lessons about electoral participation.

**Seung Ryeol Kim**

Advisor to Secretary General, A-WEB



# Fostering Collaboration for Disability Inclusion

People with disabilities face many barriers to exercising one of their most fundamental rights as individuals – the right to engage meaningfully in civic and political life. The COVID-19 pandemic has brought forth unprecedented challenges for millions globally and disproportionately affected marginalized groups, including persons with disabilities. As the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and its Member States develop policies and strategies for COVID-19 response and recovery, it is important to uphold regional and national level commitments to the breakthrough regional policy framework, the ASEAN Enabling Masterplan 2025: Mainstreaming the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (ASEAN Enabling Masterplan) to ensure persons with disabilities are included in this process.

On March 30-31, 2022 the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) and the General Election Network for Disability Access (AGENDA) organized the two-day virtual Fifth Regional Disability Rights Dialogue to strengthen joint advocacy and cross-regional collaboration for disability inclusion, engaging 229 participants from national governments, ASEAN Sectoral Bodies, private sector companies, academics, students, digital influencers and youth across Indonesia, Philippines, Thailand, Malaysia and Cambodia as



well as Fiji, Guatemala, New Zealand, Australia, Barbados, Nepal, Sri Lanka, India, Kenya and Mali, expanding the AGENDA network's global reach.

The Minister of Manpower of the Republic of Indonesia Ida Fauziyah delivered keynote remarks that reiterated Indonesia's commitment to fulfilling the one percent employment quota to hire persons with disabilities in the private and public sectors. Minister Ida Fauziyah encouraged fellow ASEAN Member States to work together to adopt inclusive employment policies and accessible workplaces for persons with disabilities, highlighting the significance of using incentives build inclusive workforces for COVID-19 recovery. Within the week, Minister Ida Fauziyah's commitments received country-wide recognition from five national Indonesian news outlets.<sup>1</sup>

Opening remarks presented by the Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) and the U.S. Department of State highlighted international commitments calling for the actualization of the political and civic rights of persons with disabilities by supporting ongoing collaboration between organizations of persons with disabilities (OPDs), civil society partners and ASEAN institutions. The panel that followed included the Representative of Thailand to the ASEAN Intergovernmental



Commission on Human Rights (AICHR) Dr. Amara Pongsapich and the Director of ASEAN Cooperation’s Sub-Division within the Office of the Permanent Secretary in Thailand’s Ministry of Social Development and Human Security Siripong Sriarkha. Both panelists discussed how the ASEAN communities can further collaborate and engage with disability advocates and OPDs across a range of key issues facing the region, including COVID-19 recovery policies.

## Private Sector Best Practices for Disability Inclusion

Colin Blackwell, Founder of EnableCode, explained how the Vietnamese technology company builds cross-sector partnerships for disability inclusive employment opportunities by leveraging Amazon’s global program training program for persons with disabilities to learn cloud computing in Vietnam. Enable Code coordinates with the United Nations International Children’s Emergency Fund and Vietnamese charities to identify participants, while Amazon provides the training and job placement, and Intel provides mentors



*The U.S. is fostering accountability and capacity building for the promotion, protection and advancement of the rights of persons with disabilities and advancing disability inclusive democracy launched at the Summit for Democracy.*

**- Francisco Bencosme**  
(Senior Advisor to the Assistant Secretary at the East Asian and Pacific Affairs Bureau, U.S. Department of State)



for the trainees. AGENDA’s regional dialogue highlighted key insights from Kerjabilitas, a career social network platform connecting persons with disabilities to accessible job providers in Indonesia; (these) Abilities, a design and technology company based in Singapore that builds accessible products and assistive technologies, and L’Oreal Indonesia’s inclusive hiring practices.

## Amplifying the Voices of Persons with Disabilities and Youth Communities

Through interactive breakout rooms, participants drafted a series of recommendations and presented them to government officials and private sector

companies focusing on electoral access, civic participation, employment accessible information and engaging young people.

In partnership with winner of Indonesia’s 2014 Got Talent Putri Ariani, a

musician who is blind, and Indonesian influencer Husein Ja’far Al Hadar, IFES developed a series of promotional videos encouraging young people to participate in the regional dialogue and support the Enabling Masterplan’s implementation under the hashtag #EnablingMasterplan, which reached

1.1 million impressions on TikTok. AGENDA also collaborated with ASEAN Youth Organization and ASEAN Youth Forum to ensure that youth perspectives were a central focus of the dialogue, from drafting the breakout room recommendations to the panel discussions.



[1] JPNN, Kompas, Tempo, Liputan 6 and Merdeka

Link to original article: <https://www.ifes.org/news/fostering-collaboration-between-civil-society-governments-and-private-sector-disability>



# Nurturing Indian Democracy through frequent reforms

**S**amuel P. Huntington in his book, 'The Third Wave' has pointed out India's exception when the other post-colonialist countries failed to sustain democratic rule, during the second reverse wave of Democracy. The credit is to be given to the adamant foundation of powerful constitutional authorities like the Election Commission of India to nurture the sapling of democracy into a healthy tree.

The Election Commission of India (ECI) has not only been conducting flawless elections in the country but is also evolving the electoral process with constant reforms. Time and again ECI has taken numerous decisions which have resulted in more inclusion and participation in Indian elections.

To establish the identity of a genuine elector at the time of the poll, a provision was made in the election laws of Electors Photo Identity Cards (EPIC) under Rule 28 of registration of Electors Rules, 1960. For the wider implementation of the EPIC, ECI, in 1986 and again in 1992 suggested the Union Government that the EPIC issued to electors may be made multipurpose. So that it can be used as an identification document for other purposes too.

While the proposal was under consideration, ECI issued a notification under Rule 28 in 1993. It stated that no polling at the elections for the Lok Sabha or State Legislative Assemblies shall take place after January 1, 1995, unless all eligible electors had been supplied with EPIC. However, the step wasn't welcomed resulting in some State governments



moving to the courts. The Hon'ble Supreme Court directed ECI to not withhold elections on the grounds that the State Governments had failed to issue EPIC to electors by the deadline.

However, gradually the State Governments began to implement the ECI's notification. Today, all the States of the country have issued EPIC to their electors. The majority of states have achieved the 100% target of EPIC coverage.

Similarly, the introduction of the Electronic Voting Machine (EVMs) was no ordinary decision. It revolutionized the voting process in a country with the world's largest electoral base. There were huge criticism and disagreements with the system of EVMs. As Hon'ble Supreme Court has rightly observed 'Dissent is the safety valve of a democracy'. However, with grit and determination, ECI has left no stone unturned to make EVMs a symbol of trust not just in India but across the globe. Gratifying the vow of constant improvement the introduction of the Voter Verifiable Paper Audit Trail (VVPAT) system has provided greater transparency to the poll process.

## Recent Electoral Reforms

Recently, the Law Ministry, after consultation with the ECI has amended the Registration of Electors Rules and Conduct of Election Rules, 1961, to give the electoral reforms which include the linkage of EPIC and Aadhaar. Under 'Targeted Delivery of Financial and Other Subsidies, Benefits and Services Act, 2016', aka. Aadhaar Act, a statutory institution was established called The Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI). UIDAI was created to issue Unique Identification numbers (UID), named "Aadhaar", to all residents of India.

Now the electoral rolls can be validated using the Aadhaar data. It would aid the de-duplication and purification of the electoral rolls. Supreme Court's Aadhaar judgment paras 375 and 376 refer to the de-duplication of PAN numbers after Aadhaar linking. It is expected that electoral rolls may have similar benefits.

The comprehensive program launched by ECI in 2015 was the National Electoral Roll Purification and Authentication Programme (NERPAP).

The prime objective was to achieve a total error-free and authenticated electoral roll. One of the objectives of the NERPAP was to link and authenticate the EPIC (Electoral Photo Identity Card) data with the UIDAI's Aadhaar data.

Electoral Rolls are prepared through diligent efforts of the ECI with regular data updation. Booth Level Officers (BLOs) under Electoral registration officers (EROs) in the tahsils/talukas/blocks move mountains to ensure error-free up-gradation of the electoral data. This is largely done manually through a door-to-door survey because of the limited popularity of e-services in most parts of the country. Unfortunately, the process involves a lot of practical



issues like migration, death, duplication, inaccuracy and errors.

Linking the Aadhaar with the EPIC can essentially help during the addition of the new voters after they attain the age of 18 years. It will ease the process of verification and hence more and more eligible voters can practice their democratic

rights. It will also ease the process of registration for the poor migrants to shift their voting constituency. This will further attract better political attention which would aid their

The single (January 1) qualifying date every year for fulfilling the minimum age requirement of 18 years to be enrolled for elections has now been replaced with four qualifying dates (January 1, April 1, July 1 and October 1).

socio-cultural upliftment.

However, the linking of Aadhaar is not mandatory for the electors. No person shall be denied the right to vote in the absence of a Unique Identification Number. Also, the constitutional right to privacy can also be not taken away by the citizens. Further, the Hon'ble Supreme Court has ruled that Aadhaar is not necessary to avail essential services from the government. Considering the large benefits of interlinking it is expected that more and more voters would support EPIC-Aadhaar linkage.

**Kshitiz Verma**

Consultant, SVEEP ECI



## Meaningful inclusion demands constant investment, but female local officials have barely got it

**T**he 22 years old

Saraswati

Nepali is the mother of two kids and lives approximately five hours' drive (and five hours walk) away from the headquarter of Karnali Province, Surkhet—a place that paid the heaviest of prices in the 10 year-long

armed conflict from 1996-2006. Her first son is eight years old, and her second son is four and half years old, almost as old as her term of office as a ward member in Shivalaya Rural Municipality (RM) of Karnali Province.

Saraswati did not go for campaigning before the elections. She didn't even ask for an election ticket. All the work was done by her family members, especially her husband, who is a teacher. Saraswati assumes, it is because of his influence she got the ticket to fight the election. After four and half years she now understands fully that it was rather because of the reservation for Dalit women in the Ward Committee of local governments (LGs) that she got the ticket.

Similar was the case with six other female LG representatives of Shivalaya RM who gathered



in Surkhet for a one and half day training on LG system and processes. It is not an overstatement to assert the same for the majority female LG representatives around the country, mostly those who were fielded for the posts of ward members, positions with relatively lesser leadership roles.

For Lalsara B.K., and her two friends, it was the first time they visited Surkhet. This, in many ways, is symbolic of the access female representatives of rural LGs have to state resources, to decisions on distribution of those resources, to information, and to opportunities and exposure. It is as if the geographical distance translates almost quite literally in their cases adding up multiple barriers in exercising their agency to participate meaningfully in the governance process.

In the training organized by International Idea under its Coherence Programme, female elected officials poured their hearts out, exclaimed and nodded at their fellow women representatives when they were short of words or languages to describe how they felt at not being heard, and being treated as liability rather than of value. They felt empowered at being able to share their intimate experiences and learn with a group of women just like them, without fearing humiliation or hesitation.

“If the chair or deputy chair were here, they’d speak on all the issues, we wouldn’t get a chance. We would always sit on the back.” Balkumari Basnet, an executive member said, “In all other programmes, our job was to only listen to the trainers. Here, they listened to us, asked about our experiences and views. We were able to engage in a two-way conversation. I felt like being with a family.”

2.5 months away from the second cohort of local elections held in May 13, 2022), this training was the first of its kind for most of the participants. Most of the capacity strengthening initiatives in support to LG representatives are centered around the key leadership position holders of LGs, the majority of whom are male. Intensive support it also being provided to the rest of the representatives left behind from mainstream capacity strengthening support, that is women mostly from historically marginalized and excluded communities. The young mentors of Coherence Programme visit women representatives houses and provide customized support as per their needs and in the simplest way possible. However, empowerment is a dynamic process and the key to feeling empowered has a lot to do with feeling valued, heard, and respected as much as it has with having access to information and opportunities.

“You opened my eyes! Before, we used to go towards offices, we even sat at the meetings. But what’s inside of those decisions, I wouldn’t know. I am going to make sure now that my voice is

also reflected in those decisions.”, said another participant, Saraswati Nepali.

A programme specifically developed for them, gives female representatives a safer space to express themselves better and thus, provides a conducive environment for a more effective learning process. This is particularly important for those representatives who do not hold any formal educational qualification and are first timers in political positions. In societies where working women bear the brunt of both household chores as well as official responsibilities, outdoor programmes sometimes provide women a dedicated time to focus fully on themselves without having to worry about daily family obligations.

Meaningful inclusion demands a consistent, empathetic, and mindful investment from the state (and non-state actors). As much as reservation is essential to kick-start inclusive governance, without investment in the agents of political deliberation, change in the demographics of decision-making table often only tells a partial story. Blaming these elected representatives for tokenism and criticizing them for ‘lack of capacity’ is denying the blatant structural inequality that builds and perpetuates on centuries of systemic discrimination, exclusion and marginalization.

As they say, people enjoy and express themselves the best when they do what they are best at. This was reinforced when these representatives came forward voluntarily and sang their folklore when training required an energizer. Coming directly from households to governance at once and facing a constellation of obstacles, all these seven women aim to contest the next LG elections, one can just imagine how Nepali (local) politics will look like in a couple of decades and how this will change the narrative of mainstream development.

**Durga Karki**

Associate Program Officer, International IDEA

Credit: International IDEA

Link to original article: <https://www.idea.int/news-media/news/meaningful-inclusion-demands-constant-investment-female-local-officials-have-barely>

# Supporting Women’s Political Participation across the Electoral Cycle

**N**ational and local elections can support women’s political participation in multiple ways, but specific measures may be required to overcome the barriers of gender discrimination. Women candidates may face gaps in capacities or resources that prevent them from competing effectively, for instance. If polling stations are located in remote or unsafe areas, women voters may be reluctant to use them. Sometimes electoral management bodies are unaware of hindrances to women’s participation because they do not have the knowledge, skills or data to analyze and correct these.

## Solutions

UN Women works on measures supporting women’s political participation across the electoral cycle, including through coordinated efforts with partners. One major focus is the adoption and implementation of temporary special measures or quotas, a proven mechanism for increasing the number of women in politics.

It is important to advocate for and provide evidence to inform national electoral regulations. These should ensure that women have fair opportunities to campaign and register to vote, and are protected from election-related violence.

Other pertinent activities comprise training women as effective political candidates and leaders. Engagement with political parties encourages greater gender sensitivity, such as through internal regulations and practices to promote women’s leadership.

At a critical point in Egypt’s political transition, first Egyptian Feminist Union, comprising 500 women’s groups who advocate with a unified voice, and the Egyptian Coalition for Civic Education and

Women’s Participation, which serves as an election watchdog were established. Moreover, about 500,000 people from 27 governorates have signed a National Charter highlighting women’s aspirations for the future of their country. The Government is implementing the “Women’s Citizenship” initiative to issue ID cards to 2 million women who need them to vote and access public services.

After Kenya’s 2010 Constitution guaranteed gender equality and the use of affirmative action, a gender audit of a draft Political Parties Bill was conducted to see if principles were translating into practice. The Interim Independent Electoral Commission subsequently adopted recommendations to make the bill more gender-responsive. When it passed into law, it stipulated that the registration of political parties depends on having no more than two-thirds of any gender in their governing bodies. Another provision requires filling vacant seats in the legislature with people of the same gender.

Women civil society and government leaders in Colombia, advocated for the adoption of a 30-per cent quota for women candidates in national elections. To engage the broader public, an ad campaign drove home the message that “Democracy without women is incomplete.”

The expert panel included: Boris Navasardian, President, Yerevan Press Club, Yerevan, Armenia, Prof. Kwesi Prempeh, Director, the Centre for Democratic Development, Accra, Ghana, Prof. Miroslaw Wroblewski, Director, Constitutional, International and European Law Department Office of the Commissioner for Human Rights and Prof. Hajer Gueldich, Faculty of legal, Political and Social Sciences, Tunis-University of Carthage; Member, African Union Commission on International Law Tunisia.

Source: UN Women. Link to original: <https://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/leadership-and-political-participation/elections>

# The Science of Human Behavior can help Legislatures Advance Gender Equality

**T**he promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women must be at the heart of any effort to meaningfully strengthen democracy. Behaviorally informed interventions can help making small changes in the way legislatures oversee the use of public funds, in turn significantly contributing to gender equality in the long run.

In 2020, to deepen its understanding about the psychological challenge of integrating gender considerations into legislative financial oversight, International IDEA partnered with BEworks, a leading global behavior change company. Having piloted a behavioral approach in the context of the National Parliament in Myanmar, International IDEA's experience highlighted the approach's potential to influence also in other jurisdictions the behavior of members of parliament in support of integrating a gender perspective into parliamentary oversight of the national budget.

## The behavioural Approach to Gender Integration

The notion of 'behavioural approach' is grounded in the growing field of behavioral economics which seeks to make sense of how and why, in the real world, people make judgements and decisions the way they do. The approach underscores the notion that people often make choices on the basis of only limited information and without the capacity, time, or resources to thoroughly analyse and consider alternative choices. Also, it stresses the power of social influences on our internal thought processes and our own behaviour. One of the essential realisation of the behavioural approach is that while our behaviour is often shaped by our intentions, attitudes, or beliefs, there are cognitive barriers



that prevent us from following through with our intentions to perform a particular behaviour.

A wealth of research points out at gender responsive budgeting - a practice of integrating gender considerations into the key stages of the national budget cycle, including formulation, approval, execution, and control and audit - as an approach that can help enhance gender equality in a country. Because a government budget not only allocates public resources among competing priorities but also serves as a policy instrument for achieving economic development in the country, the executive branch's leadership is a critically important actor in promoting gender responsive budgeting. Equally important is that the legislative branch provides gender sensitive financial oversight, reviewing the impact of government budget on gender equality and women's empowerment and holding the executive accountable for its actions.

However, one of the recurring challenges facing many countries is how to ensure that legislatures can actually play an active role in overseeing national budgets in a gender sensitive manner. From a behavioural perspective, the challenge is twofold: one is to cultivate the interest and intention of legislatures to integrate a gender

Gender equality and the empowerment of women is pertinent to strengthen democracy

perspective into their oversight work in the budget cycle; and the other is to address cognitive barriers and behavioural constraints and make sure that legislatures' interest and intention get actually translated into specific actions for gender integration into their oversight work. Ultimately, the integration of a gender perspective into financial oversight requires behavioural change among the elected representatives in legislatures.

## Psychological Barriers to Gender Integration

Field research and experience in Myanmar (including an analysis of the behavioral challenge, a diagnosis on the parliamentary budget process, a survey with members of parliament and support staff, and a review of the scientific literature) allowed deep insights

into the attitudes, perceptions, and behaviors of the members of parliament regarding gender integration into their financial oversight responsibilities. Then, a team of behavioural scientists used data and findings gathered from field research to develop a list of psychological barriers they found to be at play for Myanmar's parliament when faced with the idea of gender integration into their oversight work. The identification of these psychological barriers subsequently informed the design and development of strategic interventions in support of gender-sensitive parliamentary financial oversight in Myanmar.

The identified psychological barriers were grouped into the three behavioral contexts in which they would likely arise, namely—when someone is explaining or justifying the current state of affairs, considering changes to the current state, and making decisions as a group:

- The first of the barriers is associated with the “inherence heuristic”—our tendency to explain phenomena using inherent features of the phenomena itself. This means that members of parliament may justify the fact that they

don't consistently consider gender issues and implications in their financial oversight with the belief that gender discrimination is non-existent in their country.

- The second barrier is that gender integration can be a change from how parliamentary financial oversight has been provided until then. Thus, people's “status quo bias”—the tendency to prefer the maintenance of the current state of affairs—would cause friction to adopt gender integration. Furthermore, the “confirmation bias”—the human tendency to look for evidence in line with an existing view or belief—would keep members of parliament from critically assessing information that is contradictory to their beliefs that gender discrimination and gender inequality are not an issue in the country.
- Finally, the third barrier relates to legislators' decisions to integrate a gender perspective and consider the impacts of the government budget on gender equality made as a group. This means that the variety of biases and problems that surface during group decision making (e. g. “groupthink”—the tendency to fail to make an optimal decision due to the desire for harmony or conformity within a group) are likely to keep members of parliament from suggesting a change that goes against the status quo which they believe others support.

The integration of a gender perspective into financial oversight requires behavioural change among the elected representatives in legislatures.

## Behavioral Informed Interventions

To overcome these psychological barriers and help gender integration into parliamentary financial oversight, several strategic ideas were developed based on innovation, scientific backing, feasibility, and size of expected impact. A general theme throughout the developed strategic ideas was to leverage the “foot-in-the-door effect” which occurs when someone has agreed to any action, no matter how small, which then makes them get more substantially involved than they did before. This

helps to reduce friction and avoid resistance when subsequent actions are proposed.

The first three strategic ideas below are aimed at driving acceptance and buy-in among members of parliament. The fourth and last idea is instead aimed at driving action and maintenance of the new behaviours.

1. Align legislatures' tendency to see family as the most important value to Myanmar people with the idea of considering gender effects of government budget. This strategy can increase acceptance and buy-in for gender consideration among members of parliament by leveraging a sense of consistency in the face of changing the status quo;
2. "Frame" gender consideration as a means of showing constituents that members of parliament work hard for the well-being of all their constituents, including both men and women. This strategy can increase acceptance and buy-in for gender consideration among members of parliament by leveraging pride and the desire to behave consistently with how they see themselves;
3. Embed workshops, seminars, and training on gender issues within broader topics of "good practices". This strategy can increase acceptance and buy-in for gender consideration among members of parliament by reducing friction and aligning with their goals, interests, and preferences; and
4. Provide members of parliament with feedback on their performance in considering gender issues in their oversight work and their contribution to improving constituents' well-being. This strategy will drive continuous

Promoting gender responsive budgeting and pursuing gender equality are long-term processes that must be thought of as an integral part of building a healthy, stable democracy.

Embed workshops, seminars, and training on gender issues within broader topics of "good practices".

evaluation of gender effects by reinforcing the new behaviour and making the value more tangible.

International IDEA's tested these strategic ideas in 2021 as part of its support to parliamentary financial oversight in Myanmar. However, the political developments in the country since

February 2021 have not allowed to see how the implementation of these ideas actually affects the behavior of members of parliament in integrating a gender

perspective into their oversight work and reviewing the impacts of government budget on gender equality. Thus, important learning has not taken place.

## The Potential of the Behavioral Approach

Promoting gender responsive budgeting and pursuing gender equality are long-term processes that must be thought of as an integral part of building a healthy, stable democracy. The prospects for the institutionalization of gender-responsive budgeting are improved if legislatures and other decision-makers embrace the ideas, values, and practices of integrating gender considerations into the national budget cycle. Making gender integration work requires changing the way legislatures behave.

While any solution from elsewhere needs to be carefully tailored to the local context, International IDEA's experience in Myanmar suggests that the behavioural approach has the potential to help legislatures beyond this country, make global support for gender sensitive parliamentary oversight more effective, and move the needle towards achieving gender equality.

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Link to original Article: <https://www.idea.int/news-media/news/how-science-human-behaviour-can-help-legislatures-advance-gender-equality>



# Covering Local Democracy: The Mourasiloun Program

**A** free press fueled by expert journalism is the backbone of any democracy. Journalists hold people in power to account, expose wrongdoing and provide citizens with the knowledge they need to make informed decisions. Similarly, local reporting covers local public affairs, holds local elites accountable, provides a forum for discussion and ties communities together by giving them a sense of purpose and civic engagement within their localities. However, when local media professionals lack the necessary resources, knowledge and tools, they struggle to play this role. This is especially true outside of the capital, Tunis and in remote regional areas, where journalists have little financial and professional capacity.

With funding from the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) and the United Kingdom Foreign Commonwealth Department Office (FCDO), the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) implemented a program entitled Local Democracy Reporters (LDRs), or Mourasiloun (“Reporters” in Arabic). Through a competitive selection process that garnered more than 200 applications, 24 motivated Mourasiloun (17 women and seven men from 16 different governorates) from both citizen and professional media outlets were identified. Through a series of workshops, the Mourasiloun were waived on issues related to the legal framework for decentralization



and local governance; journalistic genres; journalism ethics; inclusive journalism; Mobile Journalism (MoJo) and photojournalism; how to effectively produce stories for the web and social media; tools for fact-checking, data journalism and visualization; and safety and security for journalists.

Applying their new skills and knowledge, the Mourasiloun collectively produced 128 media pieces. As a final project, each journalist produced a professional-quality, long-form news report covering a local story from their municipality.



I gained a lot of knowledge in the fields of decentralization and investigative journalism by participating in Mourasiloun. I used these skills in my reporting when I conducted a survey through an e-questionnaire, in which they evaluated the municipal work and their vision of local journalism while presenting them with practical suggestions to improve municipal work.

- Slah Eddine Krimi, Journalist



Among others, the pieces covered topics such as campaign promises made by municipal councilors about providing basic services to their constituencies once elected; the criminalization and social exclusion of the LGBTQIA+ community from local government

positions; evaluation of the Utique municipality’s (Bizerte) participatory approach to governance; political participation of minority communities, such as Tunisian Jews and Amazigh, in municipal work in Djerba; the role of municipalities in eliminating



*Geographic Representation of Local Democracy Reporters*

industrial pollution in Gabes; and the evaluation of municipal work and the implementation of electoral promises in the municipality of Zanoush (Gafsa Governorate).

Under this project, a guide for the Mourasiloun that complements the training and serves as a resource when conducting fieldwork were also developed. The printed guide, designed to fit easily in a bag or briefcase, includes 10 detailed chapters on journalism and local governance topics as well as practical information on local reporting. Moreover, the necessary tools to improve the quality of “on-the-go reporting” and mobile journalism, which included a microphone, a smartphone stabilizer, and LED light were provided.

“

The training was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to learn more about the [LGBTQIA+] community. Their struggles are not highlighted in our society, which is rooted in prejudices and inherited beliefs. I grew as a journalist as a result of this training, and saw these issues as being inherently linked to all individuals deprived of their human rights.

- Fadia, Journalist

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on the use of digital media provided new ways for journalists to access, find and share media content that challenges the inherited business models and journalistic routines of conventional news media. This makes the Mourasiloun civic educators, able to hold accountable those with power in their communities. In addition, the Mourasiloun program provides local Tunisian journalists with the tools and information to continue to report on local democracy issues long after the end of the project.

The results of the training were evident in the final media pieces produced by the Mourasiloun, which were commended by media coaches for their professional-level quality.

As local and global journalism evolves in tandem with broader structural transformations of the media ecosystem, driven in large part by the rise of digital media, the Mourasiloun program’s mission is to ensure that Tunisians have access to, and are represented by, democracy and governance issues that impact their communities. Training

**Samer Elchahabi**

Deputy Country Director, Tunisia

Credit: IFES

Link to original article: <https://www.ifes.org/news/covering-local-democracy-tunisia-mourasiloun-program>

## Bangladesh to ensure free & fair elections using EVMs in upcoming elections

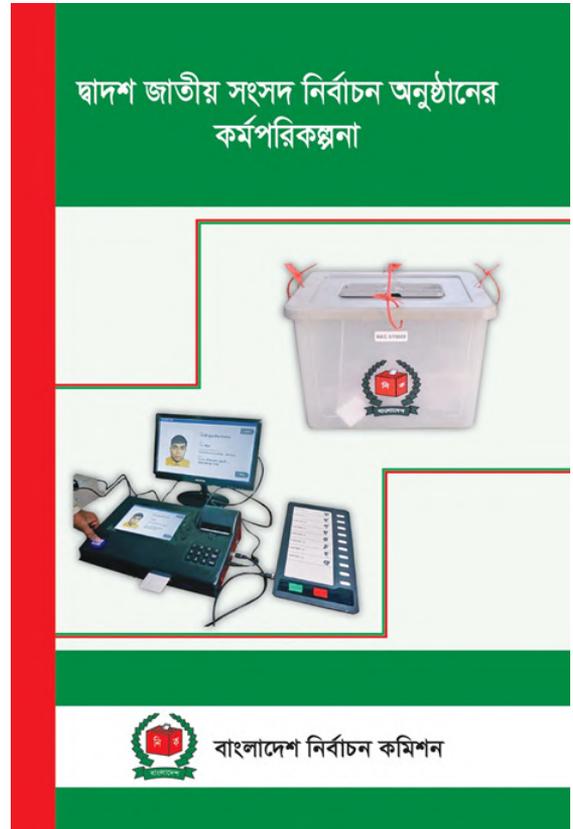
**E**lectronic voting (also known as e-voting) is voting that uses electronic means to either aid or take care of casting and counting ballots. Depending on the particular implementation, e-voting may use standalone electronic voting machines (also called EVM) or computers connected to the Internet.

Electronic Voting Machine (EVM) is currently an important topic of discussion in the political arena of Bangladesh. Some reputed experts of Bangladesh are opining that it is almost impossible to manipulate EVMs. Therefore, it is not appropriate to have any objection to the taking of votes through this.

The electronic voting machines (EVMs), which will be used in 150 constituencies in the upcoming 2023 national polls as per the Election Commission's (EC) roadmap, are safe and cannot be tampered with for vote rigging, say some experts allaying fears of manipulating the device.

On February 1 (2020), a positive change in the conduct of elections in Bangladesh has been initiated through the use of EVMs in the two city corporation elections of Dhaka. The current Election Commission (EC) has announced the decision to use the 'Electronic Voting Machine' (EVM) in at least one hundred seats in the 11th National Assembly elections held in the last week of December 2018. The ruling Awami League leaders and representatives of civil society expressed their opinion in favor of the matter. On the other hand, Bangladesh's opposition parties' leaders called the use of EVMs far-reaching. Various debates on the matter have accumulated in the media.

Electronic voting (also known as e-voting) is voting that uses electronic means to either aid or take care of casting and counting ballots. Depending on the particular implementation, e-voting may use standalone electronic voting machines (also called EVM) or computers connected to the Internet.



To dispel myths about the use of electronic voting machines (EVMs) in elections, the Election

Commission (EC) will launch a significant campaign. The campaign will be promoted by the commission through radio, television, mosques, and religious institutions.

A Tk 87.11 billion project plan has been

finalized by the EC to purchase around 200000 EVMs and maintain older ones in advance of the 2018 12th National Parliamentary Election. In the forthcoming parliamentary election, they have

chosen to utilize electronic voting machines in no more than 150 seats.

With the 150,000 EVMs it now owns, the commission can organize elections for 70 to 80 constituencies. To conduct elections in more seats, the EC must buy new EVMs. Between November 2023 and January 2024, 300 constituencies will vote in the 12<sup>th</sup> general election. He continued, “They will work on the matter so that the public gain a thorough understanding of EVM and the voting process, and then they will set up promotion of the subject.”

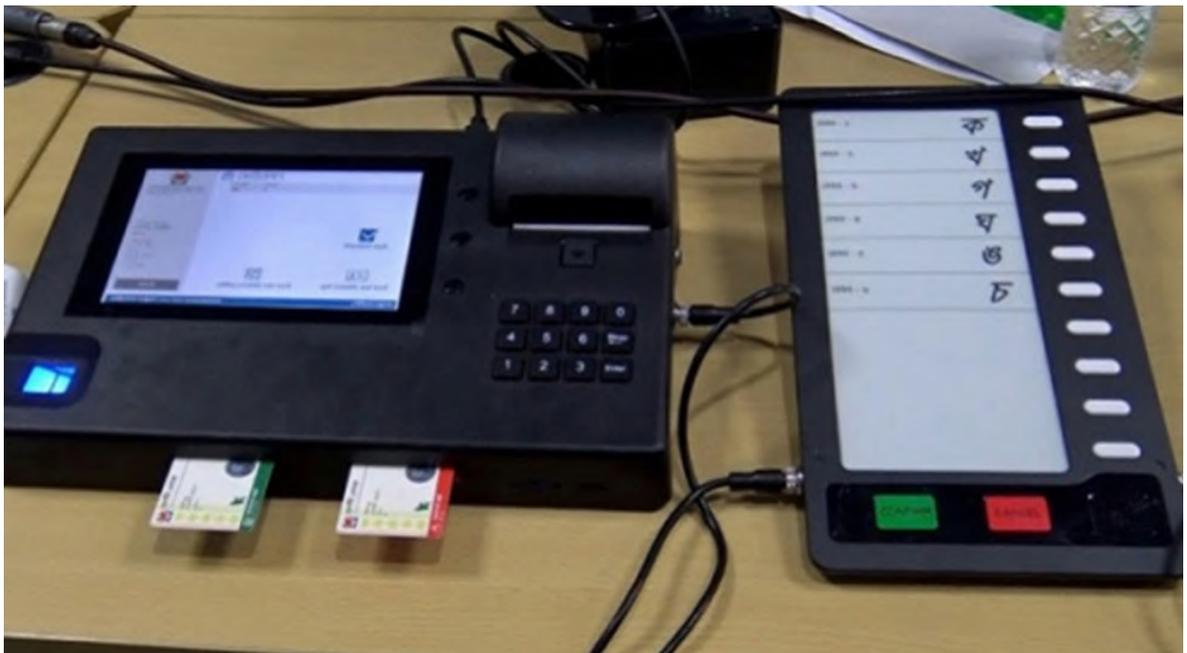
Especially before the announcement of the schedule in October 2018, whether there is a need to mess with EVMs, or it was said that the EC is not ready or capable of using EVMs on a large scale. The use of EVMs will require an amendment in the Representation of the People Order (RPO) etc. However, the Election Commission has already made all its preparations for the city elections and has succeeded in using EVMs. In 2018 itself, an initiative was taken to buy one and 50000 EVMs at a cost of Tk 3,829 crore Bangladeshi Taka.

Although at that time 2,64000 EVMs were needed in 300 seats where 2 lakh 20 thousand polling booths were estimated. However, 132000 thousand EVMs were required for 150 seats. And

there were 14 thousand 600 or more polling booths in about 2 thousand 600 centers in Dhaka North and South City. About 35,000 EVMs were used in the two city elections. Two members of the armed forces were deployed at each center to provide technical support and the final mock voting was held on January 28.

Since 2010 various experiments were started with this EVM by using it in certain centers in various elections. The Election Commission has also used EVMs in the recent Gazipur, Barisal, Rajshahi, and Sylhet City Corporation elections. For example, in the Barisal City Corporation elections, voters voted through electronic voting machines in 78 booths in 11 centers of 4 wards.

Before that, the voting process was completed through electronic voting machines in 14 centers of the City Corporation of Chittagong and 58 centers of the City Corporation of Narayanganj. On January 5, 2012, several polling stations of the City Corporation of Comilla were held for the first time through the EVM system. However, on March 30, 2017, the second full election of Comilla City Corporation was held through the use of electronic voting machines or EVMs made with indigenous technology. This was the history of the use of technology in polling.



Notably, the long queues of voters at the EVM centers in the aforementioned elections indicated their lack of interest in voting with modern technology. Young and middle-aged voters voted more comfortably in EVMs. Voters voted with their own enthusiasm in the EVM. The opinion of the voters is that they have been able to vote safely and easily in a short time by using EVMs. Because the benefits of digital Bangladesh are now visible to everyone like daylight. Thus, the interest of many voters in using EVM in city corporation elections has been known and trained manpower has also been developed for its use. In fact, teaching the concerned officials and voters how to use EVMs and making people mentally ready will increase its popularity.

Electronic voting systems are one of the ways to strengthen the democratic process in the 21st century by allowing voters to reflect their own opinions. Machines or electronic equipment are used to cast votes so the overall process is known as Electronic Voting Machine or 'EVM'. Its other name is 'e-voting'. In the electronic process, it is capable of both accurate application of votes and speedy counting of votes. It has also gradually gained acceptance across the world as a transparent and fair area of voting. The EVM system was first observed in 1964 in the elections of 7 states of the United States; Gradually the issue of taking votes through punch cards became popular.

Votes have already been taken in different countries of the world using EVMs. These include India, Australia, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, Estonia, European Union, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Netherlands, Norway, Peru, Romania, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, Venezuela, the Philippines, etc. In these countries, EVMs are mainly used in polling stations as polling places. It is also possible to implement e-voting using the internet, personal computer networks, and telephones.

Newer optical scan voting systems use punch cards and optical scanners. In this method, a voter marks the ballot paper and votes. On the other hand, in DR EVM (Direct Recording Electronic Voting Machine) voting system, the vote collection and

counting process is conducted with the help of a single machine. All voters in Brazil and India use it in all types of elections. DRE voting systems are also widely practiced in Venezuela and the United States.

## The Way Forward

Despite some opposition's allegations, there was no scope for rigging in the use of the EVM system. Because it requires the biometrics of the presiding or assistant presiding officer to operate, no one could operate without them. For some reason, the machine was broken but the votes received were not lost. The card of the machine only contains the information of the voters of that center so no one else could vote. And no one could delete someone's vote. Even if someone presses the button multiple times, the first vote remains the same. Again, the smart card for use in the machine is with the officer in charge, so it was of no use even if someone else occupied the booth room.

On the other hand, if the responsible officer presses the close switch from the control unit at the end of the specified time, there is no more opportunity to vote. EVMs are not connected to the internet in any way, hence cannot be hacked, voting can be done at the center where the EVM is used. When the voter comes to vote, he is given the opportunity to vote by verifying with a smart card or identity card number, or fingerprinter. After verification with one of these, the voter's picture is shown on a projector which is also seen by all the candidate's agents and then he gets access to the secret voting room.

After being identified as a valid voter, the voter appears in a secret room known as a ballot unit. On entering there, he found the ballot paper in the machine and voted by pressing the button next to the symbol. After voting, the symbol of the candidate you voted for appears on the screen. This is the confirmation for the voter as to which mark, he has voted for. When the voter presses the confirm button, a sound is heard to indicate that his vote has been cast. The entire process of EVM is transparent and convenient.

As we can see from the City Corporation Elections-Voters got used to EVMs as Election Officers worked for some time to create demonstrations, voting education and public awareness. Each center had at least three technical officers apart from the polling officer. Voting should not be affected by technical errors; Let the voters

feel comfortable. In fact, it is the capacity of the EC that has given acceptance to EVMs. There is no substitute for the EVM system for fair and orderly elections and quick declaration of results. The decision to use EVMs in any upcoming local or national elections must be considered positive and commendable.

**Harunur Rasid**

Global Village Space

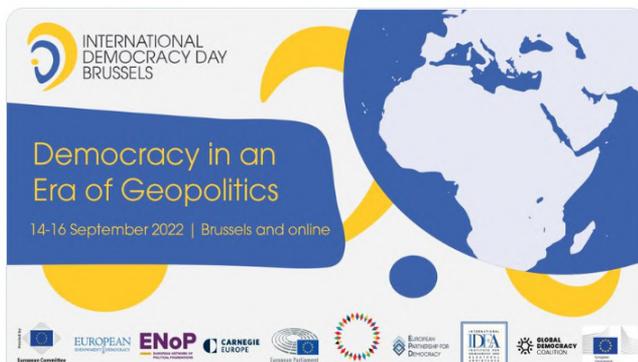
## Snapshot

International IDEA Retweeted



**International Democracy Day Brussels**  
@IDDBrussels

The 2022 International Day of Democracy from 14-16 September is the 8th celebration of the UN International Day of Democracy in Brussels. Speakers this year include @SudanPMHamdok and @RanaAyyub . #IDDBrussels

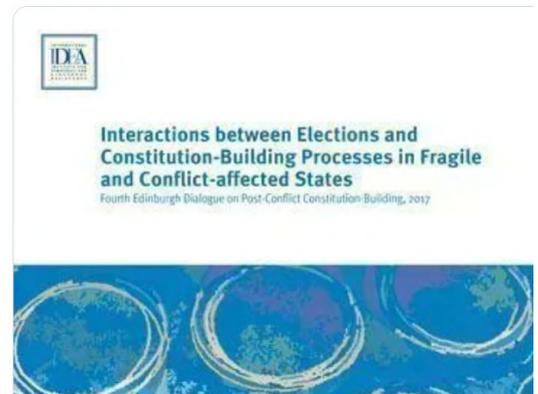


**ConstitutionNet**  
@ConstitutionNet

#Elections and #ConstitutionBuilding processes interact in a variety of ways. Our report explores the relationship between these two processes in-depth:

[buff.ly/3eHswnr](https://buff.ly/3eHswnr)

@Int\_IDEA



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## Reaching to the Roots

The Election Commission of India

(ECI) released a new digital publication 'BLO e-Patrika' (BLO e-magazine) on September 14, 2022.

It was followed by an interactive session held with BLOs (Booth Level Officers) spread across different States in India. The BLO is a representative of the ECI at the grassroots level. He or she plays a pivotal role in the collection of actual field information, collection of registration forms from citizens, and processing of roll revision corresponding to the polling area assigned to him. There are about 1 million BLOs, working on the ground for the ECI.

Under Section 13B (2) of the Representation of The People Act, 1950, the BLOs are appointed from among government, semi-government and local body officials. BLO is a friend, philosopher, and guide of the local people in matters relating to the electoral roll.

“

The BLO E-Patrika emphasizes on this teamwork and presents a detailed account of BLO stories in an attempt to connect with the Booth Level Officer who is like a bridge between ECI and the electors.

- Anup Chandra Pandey, Election Commissioner, India

”



The release was joined by over 350 BLOs, joined via video-conferencing from the office of Chief Electoral Officers (CEOs) in States/UTs and 50 BLOs

from the nearby states of Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, and Delhi joined the launch event physically at India Habitat Centre, New Delhi. The event was also live-streamed on the ECI YouTube channel and was shared with the giant network of BLOs for

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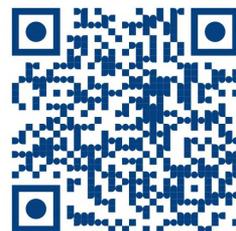
BLOs have a critical responsibility to facilitate voter registration, door-to-door survey for updating the electoral roll & assistance on the polling day. This E-Patrika will reinforce the BLOs with the nuances of voter awareness programs and to sensitize them to modern-day technologies & minimum SVEEP activities across the country.

- Rajiv Kumar, Chief Election Commissioner, India

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facilitating their participation.

The idea behind introducing the bi-monthly e-magazine is a novel initiative by the Indian Election Commission. The Patrika provides a platform for three-way communication- A platform for ECI to share instructions till ground level, for sharing feedback and success stories and facilitating learning of interstate best practices. The themes of the bimonthly e-Patrika will include various subjects related to voter awareness.



Scan for the video of the event



# Digital Advocacy Toolkit Launched

As the COVID-19 pandemic has disproportionately impacted marginalized communities such as young people, persons with disabilities, LGBTQI+ persons, women, rural communities, ethnic and religious minorities, Indigenous People and others, digital advocacy has been a key tool in bridging the gap between advocates and decision-makers.

On November 15, 2021, the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) launched the “Inclusive Digital Advocacy Toolkit,” a new resource to support Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), Organizations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs) and diverse advocates to use social media and technology in advocacy activities. The “Inclusive Digital Advocacy Toolkit” includes tips, detailed steps and specific examples of how advocates can add digital advocacy to their existing and future advocacy initiatives.

The toolkit provides step-by-step instructions for designing and carrying out digital advocacy

activities using an intersectional approach, with particular attention to the unique experiences of people who identify with multiple marginalized groups, such as young people with disabilities and ethnic minority women. The toolkit can be used by CSOs, OPDs and self-advocates with stakeholders such as election management bodies (EMBs), political parties, candidates, elected officials and government ministries.

The Inclusive Digital Advocacy Toolkit contains several sections that guide users through the process of creating an inclusive digital advocacy campaign and offers practical guidance for using

digital advocacy, with a special emphasis on accessibility and online safety. The toolkit provides practical tips for ensuring that digital advocacy content is accessible and inclusive, such as good practices for writing alt-text for photos and graphics and how to

include alt-text on social media platforms.

The toolkit also emphasizes the importance of online safety for individuals and for organizations.



If you want to connect with your government, let us connect by showing them that we are here, we can help you, we can offer something to you and we can be of help to our nation.

**Jennifer V. Garcia**, CALL Foundation, the Philippines



Engaging in digital advocacy activities can increase the risk of bullying, harassment and cyberattacks, and hate speech and negative comments can impact the mental health of team members who engage in digital advocacy. Tips for combatting misinformation and resources for digital safety empower advocates to protect themselves and others online.

The launch of the toolkit featured a panel discussion moderated by IFES Sri Lanka Deputy Country Director, Lasanthi Daskon with Deepshikha Shrestha, a representative from AYON, a youth-focused advocacy organization from Nepal, and Jennifer V. Garcia, of the CALL Foundation for the Blind in

the Philippines. Jennifer shared CALL Foundation's experience in transitioning to online advocacy methods during the COVID-19 pandemic and using online advocacy to reach decision-makers.

Deepshikha, the Kathmandu district youth champion for AYON, previously organized several awareness events on youth civic and political participation and actively engages in mental health awareness campaigns using social media. During the panel discussion, Deepshikha



When we share infographics, the messages are shared. However, when we use memes, there is humor as well. The responses are quite good when we use memes to share our messages because of the humor and happiness.

- Deepshikha Shrestha



spoke about the importance of using engaging content on social media such as memes, which can make information more entertaining and easier to understand.

## Snapshot



International IDEA  
@Int\_IDEA



 **#Africa** has made significant progress in enhancing inclusive **#PoliticalParticipation** & representation, mostly for **#women**, **#youth** & people living with **#disabilities**. Our latest report unpacks the trends & challenges of inclusive participation in Africa 



idea.int

Enhancing Inclusive Political Participation and Representation in Africa has made significant progress in enhancing inclusive political participation and representation, mostly for women, youth and people living with disabilities....

2:26 PM · Aug 23, 2022 · Twitter Web App

Credit: IFES

Link to the original article: <https://www.ifes.org/news/ifes-launches-inclusive-digital-advocacy-toolkit>



# FIVE MESSAGES FOR THE SUMMIT FOR DEMOCRACY

## Summit for Democracy

As the world's leading democracies gathered to affirm the centrality of democracy and democratic freedoms to a more peaceful and prosperous world, International IDEA the International Republican Institute (IRI) and the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) with other pro-democracy organizations and institutions, joined forces to issue Five Messages ahead of the 'Summit for Democracy.'

This collective effort underscored the work needed to support inclusive and credible elections, confront corruption, hold elected leaders accountable and defend fundamental human rights, civil society and independent media. With these Five Messages, the various organisations called upon the Summit's participants to demonstrate global leadership and solidarity in protecting and advancing democracy at home and worldwide.

### The Five Messages were:

1. Show solidarity with the world's democrats. Democracies must deploy resources more effectively

to assist the citizens of autocracies and weak democracies.

2. Renew international settings. Democracies must reform international institutions so that they reflect and promote democratic values.
3. Scale-up support to independent, ethical media and the overall information ecosystem to ensure access to accurate information while addressing mis-/disinformation. Democracies must promote independent, verified, and fact-checked information.
4. Strengthen and support existing structures and encourage the creation of new structures and systems to enable greater transparency, accountability, and coordination among governments, technology companies, and civil society. Democracies must address the business models of internet platforms and algorithms that actively push harmful, violent content.
5. Put our own house in order. Democracies must restore their credibility, including by ensuring that elections uphold key international standards and obligations and have credible and transparent results that foster public trust.

Credit: International Idea

Link to original article published: <https://www.idea.int/news-media/news/five-messages-summit-democracy-0>

# Fijian Elections Office

## Virtual Quiz Competitions

A single online platform, thousand plus teams, 60 minutes marathon, and the winner takes all - that's the Fijian Elections Office, FEO 'Know Your Election Quiz competition'. The FEO took this new innovative approach to engage with young voters in the election process in between elections, and there was the prize money to it.

The FEO is responsible for the conduct of general and other elections in Fiji. The FEO was established as a permanent EMB to be operational throughout the electoral cycle following the approval of the Electoral Act, 2014. This was the first time for Fiji to have a full-time EMB which would be mandated with conducting voter registration, education, and awareness in between elections.



After the 2018 Fijian General Election, the FEO for the first time conducted a voter turnout analysis and followed it up with a nationwide post-election voter survey. The results from the analysis and survey revealed that the youth as in voters aged between 18-30 years had the lowest turnout. The low turnout of young people in elections is not an issue that is unique to Fiji, many democracies around the world are grappling with it as well and global trends reflect the same. Nonetheless, it became more apparent that EMBs must continue to find ways to make voter education more interesting and tap into opportunities to engage with young voters.

Voter education is no longer posters and pamphlets galore, it needs to be something that is more engaging, something exciting, something that appeals to young people. The idea is to make the electoral process more youth-friendly. Our concept was simple; to get young people to learn more about elections and in doing so encourage them to participate meaningfully in the electoral process. However, this feat needed to start somewhere but more than that it had to be incentivized. Thus began the 'Know Your Election Quiz' competitions.

In September 2020, the FEO launched the very first virtual quiz competition in commemoration of the International Day of Democracy. It was a competition no less with cash prizes to be won and the FEO had to ensure that above all else, the competition was conducted in a fair and transparent manner. A set of terms and conditions were drawn up which prohibited FEO staff and their immediate family members from participating.

As the competition was initially designed for young people, it relied exclusively on social media for its promotion and marketing. The Supervisor of Elections announced the quiz competition during a Facebook live feed and immediately after his announcement registrations for the Quiz opened. To maximize reach and participation, interested individuals were required to form teams of two in order to participate in the Quiz competition. Over time, we had mother-son duos, father-daughter teams as well as spouses and friends who won the competition.

The teams registered themselves online and registration was typically open for five days during which the FEO promoted the Quiz competition vigorously on its social media platforms through videos, live appearances from the Supervisor of Elections, infographics, and so forth. After the close of registrations, the FEO teams conducted

data validation to ensure only legitimate teams were included in the final list. The FEO created an online test platform called 'Classmarker' to host the Quiz. There were approximately 30 multiple choice questions to be undertaken in 60 minutes. The questions are randomly picked from a Question Bank so no two teams could get the same questions. These questions pertained to elections ranging from Fiji's voting history, electoral process, political parties, electoral legislation, voter turnout, voter statistics, EMBs, etc.

Teams were given 60 minutes to attempt all the questions and score the most points. It was a marathon quiz competition and in the event that two or more teams had the same scores, the team to have completed the Quiz in the least amount of time was declared the winner. As the main objective was to maximize reach and engagement, the FEO usually kept prizes for the top five teams as well as some consolation prizes to keep people interested.

Since the launch of the first Quiz in 2021, the

FEO has hosted six quiz competitions, all held in the same format and on the same platform. From 200 teams in the first Quiz, the FEO had over 1,500 teams register for its last Quiz. The Know Your Election quiz competitions became the FEO's primary voter engagement and education tool during the non-election period and were used to build up to the 'Know Your Election' campaign which was the major voter awareness campaign that the FEO conducts prior to a general election in Fiji. To wrap up voter awareness in 2021, the FEO hosted a Grand Finale Quiz with 1,561 teams. In all the FEO has had 4,954 teams participate so far in the 'Know Your Election' Quiz competitions.

In February 2022, the first quiz held on February 13, 2022, attracted over 1500 teams. The Fijian Elections Office is currently preparing to deliver the 2022 General Election and more such 'Know Your Election' quiz competitions are in the pipeline to complement the ongoing voter awareness for the general election.

**Neelam Prasad**

Fijian Election Office

## Snapshot



IFES  
@IFES1987

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**International Foundation for Electoral Systems**

**“Corruption in the electoral cycle directly impacts corruption in governance.”**

**Katherine Ellena**  
**Director, IFES Center for Anti-Corruption and Democratic Trust**

## ECI hosts 'International Electors Visitor Programme' Virtually

As a part of its outreach through the robust International Cooperation program, Election Commission of India (ECI), has been organizing the International Election Visitors Programme (IEVP) where international election officials and democracies from across the globe get a first-hand experience of witnessing the process of elections live from various corners in India. India has been hosting international delegations since 2012 elections. Delegates are invited to visit the Polling stations and watch the electoral processes in practice for themselves in person.

ECI launched IEVP for the first time during the Lok Sabha Election 2014, and the practice has continued. IEVP 2022 showcased the elections in India being Inclusive, Accessible and Participative. IEVP this year was held on March 07, 2022, during the last phase of General Election to the Legislative Assembly of Uttar Pradesh with the aim to present an overview of the on-going elections to the Legislative Assemblies of Goa, Manipur, Punjab, Uttarakhand and Uttar Pradesh.

Over 150 delegates from nearly 32 countries across the world including Australia, Bahamas, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, Croatia, Ethiopia, Fiji, Georgia, Guinea, Guyana, Kenya, Liberia, Maldives, Mauritius, Moldova, Mongolia, Myanmar, Philippines, Romania, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Solomon Islands, South Korea, Suriname, Tanzania and Uzbekistan and 4 international organizations including International IDEA, International Foundation of Electoral Systems (IFES), Association of World Election Bodies (A-WEB) and Community of Democracies participated in IEVP 2022. Moreover,



Jonghyun Choe, Secretary-General, Association of World Election Bodies, High Commissioners, and Diplomats from Australia, Bhutan, Bangladesh, Brazil, Fiji, Nepal, South Africa, Sri Lanka and Switzerland joined in virtually in the event.

The one-day session started with a recorded broadcast from polling stations in the ongoing five State Assembly Elections of Goa, Manipur, Punjab, Uttarakhand, and Uttar Pradesh. The broadcast, in brief, showed the election process - including elements of mock poll the opening of the poll, Covid mitigation measures taken at polling stations interaction with election officials/Observers and closing of the polls at select polling stations in these states. This was followed by a live stream of the election from polling stations from the Varanasi District of Uttar Pradesh. Then Umesh Sinha, Former Secretary General, ECI, and Advisor A-WEB presented a brief on the highlights of the electoral process in India including the legal framework and administrative structure of ECI. He also talked about electoral roll process, facilitation for general as well as service voters, PwD, women and senior citizens including assured minimum facilities, special arrangements, ETPBS etc.

The then Election Commissioner of India and Chairperson A Web, Sushil Chandra talked about the efforts taken by ECI to conduct elections in



five states with 183.4 million electors across 690 Assembly Constituencies. He highlighted the security measures adhered to stringently in the field, during the poll process in the wake of the Omicron variant of the Covid-19 pandemic. The maximum number of voters was decreased from 1500 to 1250 at each polling station and polling hours were increased by one hour. Special safety protocols were desired for those quarantined. Revised broad guidelines were issued in the wake of the omicron variant and the Commission focussed on graded responses. He also addressed the need to share experiences on managing elections during the pandemic and learn from each other.

Sushil Chandra pointed out that ECI believed that every vote is important and no voter is to be left behind and hence all efforts organized by ECI were geared towards ensuring high voter turnout. He informed that over 11 million new voters were added for the ongoing elections in the five states. Postal ballot facility to senior citizens and PwD voters has taken ECI literally at the doorstep of voters and consistent efforts have led to the enthusiastic participation of women voters in these elections as compared to their male counterparts. For instance, in Uttarakhand, female voter turnout was 67.2% as compared to 62.6% male voter turnout; Goa recorded 80.96% female turnout while male turnout was 78.19%.

While addressing the participants Rajiv Kumar, Chief Election Commissioner of India, mentioned that IEVP 2022 was the third version of the online format of IEVP. He spoke about the physical version of IEVP and wished that all participants could have

been present physically to experience the efforts taken by ECI to ensure transparent, free, fair, participative, inducement free, and safe elections. He talked about the scale of elections in India and the transparency efforts like randomization of polling officials as well as voting machines. He also informed the role of general, police, special, and expenditure observers. He highlighted the role of technology and various mobile applications developed by ECI to provide facilitation as also enhance the voting experience.

Anup Chandra Pandey, Election Commissioner of India enlightened the participants on the number of general, service, PwD, women, and senior electors in these elections. He informed about the safety precautions by ECI including vaccination of the election officials deployed for election duty declaring them as 'frontline workers'. Precautionary booster doses against the Covid-19 virus were also administered to the eligible election officials before election duty. He highlighted the landmark decision to extend the postal ballot facility to all voters who are more than 80 years of age, persons with disabilities, and those who are Covid-19 positive/suspect and under home/ institutional quarantine.

"Detailed protocols were devised and implemented to distribute forms to senior citizens at their homes and get them collected within five days which helped in not only ensure safe elections for PwD and senior citizens but also increased their participation as they could now vote from the comfort of their homes", he said.

Central to this entire edifice was the Voter- she/ he is the ultimate touchstone for all our endeavors and initiatives. Inspired by the voter of India, the theme for National Voters ' Day 2022 celebrated on January 25 was 'Making Our Elections Inclusive, Accessible and Participative'. The Commission leaves no stone unturned to reflect the theme in the conduct of each election and share it globally for co-learning and strengthening democracy worldwide.

**Dr. Aarti Aggarwal**

Sr. Consultant, ECI

## South Africa and Mauritius Visit of Indian Delegation

**E**CI delegation led by Sushil Chandra, Former Chief Election Commissioner of India visited South Africa and Mauritius from April 9 to April 19, 2022. During the visit, interactions with the large NRI community in the two countries were organised. He urged the Indian community to register as the Overseas Voters and assured them that the extension of the ETPBS facility to overseas voters is under consideration. Moreover, a series of meetings with the Election Commission of South Africa and Mauritius were held. Both Election Management Bodies (EMBs) are also MOU partners with ECI.

The three countries share a relationship that is fundamental, unique, and rooted in the collective experiences and cumulative strength of their people. The major highlight of the visit was the rare occasion of a tripartite meeting between Sushil Chandra, Former CEC India; Glen Mashinini, Chairperson, Electoral Commission of South Africa and Jonghyun Choe, Secretary-General, Association of World Election Bodies (AWEB) held at Pretoria on April 12.

During the meeting, it was acknowledged that the A-WEB had EMBs with a lot of experience and expertise which could assist and advise those EMBs who were looking for further development and up-gradation of their systems. It was felt that the focus must now be on increasing membership



and enhancing the sense of belonging of the members. More avenues must be explored so that the members can interact and meet more often. Chandra recapitulated the numerous activities and initiatives taken by ECI for strengthening cooperation among A-WEB members by way of organizing webinars, International Election Visitor Programme events, and also coming out with several international publications. Thereafter, he shared India's experience of conducting 11 State Assembly Elections and various by-elections during the unprecedented time of the COVID-19 pandemic and the new protocols devised by ECI for conducting safe elections from the perspective of voters, polling personnel, and polling stations. While highlighting the need for A-WEB to reinvent itself, Chandra stressed three areas for further strengthening of this institution.

First, A-WEB must endeavour to come out with standard protocols for various aspects of election management which will be known as A-WEB global standards and will help EMBs to work towards achieving these goals. Two, increasing the interaction between members through regional thematic summits, celebrating significant dates in the AWEB calendar like its foundation day on the pattern of India's National Voters' Day, and developing an annual activities calendar for A-WEB. Three, intensifying sharing of best practices, training, and capacity building. He offered that ECI would





be happy to organise more training programmes including customised programmes for

A-WEB members at the India International Institute of Democracy and Election Management (IIIDEM).

Chandra also met with Mohd. Irfan Abdool Rahman, Electoral Commissioner of Mauritius at Port Louis on April 18. During this meeting, he stated that the two countries shared a filial bond of brotherhood, ancestry, kinship, and affection, connected through a close relationship of understanding of each others' systems, support, and drawing strength from each other. Chandra gave a snapshot of recent elections held in India and stated that the two Commissions would continue sharing best practices, skills, and experiences for mutual benefit. During the visit to the two countries, a briefing cum interaction was organised with the NRI community at Cape Town on April 10;

Johannesburg on April 12 and Port Louis on April 18. Chandra shared the Indian experience of conducting elections with the members of the diaspora. He said that India, being the largest democracy, conducts elections for more than 950 million voters across more than a million polling stations.

Chandra highlighted the steady progress made by ECI towards making elections inclusive and accessible which has led to greater participation of women, Persons with Disabilities (PwDs) and senior citizens in Indian elections. He added that this remarkable achievement of conducting free, fair, and participative elections in a country as diverse as India - linguistically, geographically comes as a result of robust election management practices which include the use of technology for enhancing the participation of voters through applications like cVIGIL, voter education through SVEEP, use of EVM-VVPAT, all-women managed polling booths, single unified electoral roll on a single digital platform, deployment of central observers and very robust expenditure monitoring mechanisms.

## Snapshot



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...

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Links to the SURVEY in English, French and Spanish in comments.  
**More than 200 electoral officials answered so far.**



Source: <http://eci.in/>

# International Webinar of Association of World Election Bodies

To mark the completion of two years of Chairmanship of the A-WEB (Association of World Election Bodies), Election Commission of India organized an International Webinar on November 26, 2021 on the theme ‘Enhancing electoral participation of Women, Persons with Disabilities (PwDs) & Senior citizen Voters: Sharing Best Practices and New Initiatives’.

The webinar was proposed to fulfill the A-WEB mandate of identifying the latest developments in democratic electoral management and to facilitate the exchange of best practices among members. The various aspects through which the participation of Women, PwD voters along with senior and centenary citizens can be increased were discussed along with the possible barriers in their participation and accessible elections. The webinar was successfully organized with the presentation by the countries, EMBs and International Electoral Assistance Organizations like International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) and the Malaysian Commonwealth Studies Centre (MCSC).

Nearly a hundred delegates from 24 countries across the world namely Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, Ethiopia, Fiji, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Republic of Korea, Liberia, Malawi, Mauritius, Mongolia, Philippines, Romania, Russia, Sao Tome and Principe, Solomon Islands, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Suriname, Taiwan, Uzbekistan, Yemen and Zambia and 4 international organizations,



International IDEA, International Foundation of Electoral Systems (IFES), Association of World Election Bodies (A-WEB) and European Centre for Elections participated in the Webinar.

This was the second virtual A-WEB webinar conducted by the India A-WEB center under the aegis of ECI and A-WEB. Most speakers highlighted the barriers to enhancing the electoral participation of each of these groups and efforts are taken by EMBs to reduce these barriers. Some of these barriers included physical infrastructures like no separate queues for women or a low number of women candidates to choose from in elections or a lack of funds to support ramps and wheelchairs for PwD or senior voters. Some other barriers were social which included deep-seated prejudices like patriarchal structures that prohibit women from voting or contesting elections or the fear of public participation for PwD voters. Various EMBs have taken exceptional measures to improve accessibility for all sections of society to cast their vote during elections including changes in their legal framework, especially in the light of the Covid-19 pandemic which has doubly marginalized some of these groups from participating in the democratic process.

Sources: <https://indiaawebsite.org/gallery/album/6-international-webinar-on-enhancing-electoral-participation/>  
<https://eci.gov.in/>

# ECES Training for Albanian Central Electoral Commission



**E**uropean Centre for Electoral Support (ECES) launched the first of its trainings with the Central Electoral Commission of Albania on October 20, 2021. The three-day training on Preventing-Mitigating-Managing Electoral Conflicts and Conflict Mapping was led by Daria Paprocka and Hamza Fassi-Fihri, two ECES Senior Electoral Experts and delivered to 20 members of the Albanian Central Electoral Commission. This training has been done in a series of coaching sessions that ECES will deliver at the electoral commission staff and directors in the upcoming months.

The event kicked off with the initial remarks of ECES Founder and Executive Director, Fabio Bargiacchi: “Thanks to the help and facilitation of ECES Electoral expert Alma Lama, we start our collaboration between ECES and Central Electoral

Commission of Albania stem from the experience that we have matured in the 11 years since our foundation in the field of electoral and democratic strengthening through the provision of advisory services. We are extremely happy to start today this series of trainings for the Central Electoral Commission of Albania.”

The training session covered different aspects of the of leadership in the electoral cycle with the goals of:

- 1) Strengthen the leadership capacities of electoral stakeholders;
- 2) Provide the necessary tools to detect, analyze, prevent or resolve electoral fragilities throughout the electoral cycle;
- 3) Increase the level of confidence and self-awareness.

Credit: ECES

Link for the original article: <https://www.eces.eu/en/posts/eces-training-for-albanian-central-electoral-commission>

# Engaging Young Leaders with Disabilities

As part of its Youth Advocacy, Linkages and Leadership in Elections and Society (Youth Allies) project in Guyana, and with support from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) brought 26 young people with disabilities from seven of the 10 regions in Guyana together for the participation in its Engaging the Next Generation for Accessible Governance and Elections (ENGAGE) young people with disabilities leadership program, in June, 2022.

The ENGAGE training focused on building participants' leadership skills and increasing their understanding of political and civic processes, over three days. Participants practiced their public speaking and networking skills, learned more about Guyanese government and disability rights frameworks and were exposed to a range of advocacy and civic engagement tools. Guest speakers included Guyana Council of Organizations for Persons with Disabilities (GCOPD) Director Ganesh Singh, GCOPD member Rosemarie Ramitt and an advisor to the police force, Mandell Moore. The speakers provided insight into being leaders with disabilities in Guyana and gave participants the opportunity to ask questions about how they have overcome barriers to participation and leadership.



The ENGAGE participants were 18 to 29 years old and had a range of disabilities, including participants who are blind or have low vision, participants from the Deaf community, people with physical disabilities and persons with intellectual disabilities. For the majority of the young people in attendance, this was their first time participating in an interactive training on governance and leadership. A number of participants shared that building a network with their peers will help them

accomplish change in their communities and support each other as they pursue political and civic engagement. Participants also committed to staying in touch via a WhatsApp group and to identifying and contacting their local government

representatives to discuss issues important to their community. As a follow-up to the initial training, ENGAGE participants will reconvene virtually to share their experiences and discuss their next steps as leaders.



Being an active wheelchair-user, my takeaway from this training is that this will change my decision making and the actions I will be taking. With what I have learned from this workshop, I have more knowledge and have an action plan to change the lives of people with disabilities in my region. This is going to impact the lives of the people I know.

– Young Indigenous Participant



**Meredith Applegate**

Country Director, Guyana

Credit: IFES. Link to original article: <https://www.ifes.org/news/engaging-young-leaders-disabilities-guyana>

# Capacity Development Programme for officials of FEMBoSA



**O**ne-week Capacity Development Program on Voter Registration has been conducted for the officials of the Forum of Election Management Bodies of South Asia (FEMBoSA). The program was organized by the India International Institute of Democracy and Election Management (IIIDEM), the training and capacity development arm of the Election Commission of India. The program was held from March 21 to March 25, 2022, at IIIDEM Campus at Dwarka, New Delhi.

The program aimed to enhance the capacities of election officials under the 'Thimpu Resolution' of the 11th meeting of the FEMBoSA. Officials from the Bangladesh Election Commission and Election Commission of Sri Lanka participated in this program. A one-week Capacity Development Program on Voter Education was also organized in February 2022.

The Capacity Development Program on 'Voter Registration' is one of the flagship programs of IIIDEM for international participants. The program is developed based on the learning needs of the officials on various themes including Voter Registration and International standards, Voter Education for Voter Registration – Targeted campaigns and engagement with stakeholders, Qualifications, and restrictions for voter registration, and Collection of VR Data. The training resource persons include senior officials of the Election Commission of India, IIIDEM, and Chief Electoral Officers.

During the program, participants also shared their country's practices on Voter Registration. A one-day study tour for the participants had also been made to familiarize them with the practices and experiences from the field.\*

\*Similarly numerous other trainings are conducted by IIIDEM throughout the year.

Source: <https://eci.gov.in/> | <https://www.facebook.com/iiidem.eci/>

## FEO launches training of trainers' workshop



Participants of the training of trainers' workshop by the Fijian Elections Office (FEO) for the 2022 General Election were reminded that honesty, integrity and being apolitical form the cornerstone of any independent election management body.

Supervisor of Elections, Mohammed Saneem said there are strict requirements when it comes to working in the Fijian Elections Office.

"A general election is conducted by people who work on the day of the election, people who work in counting, who work in the results centers, who work in the pre-poll areas, who work in the logistics' and so forth," said Saneem.

"You will start a training in which you are going to train all these people who will work in the next general election as election officials. We command the trust of thousands and thousands of Fijians and

it is upon you to ensure that this trust is maintained at the highest level," he said.

It is very important to take ownership. Take strong ownership of this process and ensure that the people you train are well trained to deliver as we expect.

"We expect nothing less from you because you have been recruited through a merit process. We anticipate you are the best of the lot that applied" he emphasised.

The training attracted 100 plus applications and 83 participants were trained during different sessions held in Suva as well as in the western and northern divisions to deliver a good, credible, fair and free General Election in 2022.

Saneem also said that for the first time, they would be using the FEO's online learning platform E-Vuli to supplement the trainings.

**Talebula Kate**

The Fiji Times

Credit: The Fiji Times

Link to the original article: <https://www.fijitimes.com/feo-launches-training-of-trainers-workshop/>

# Building the capacities of future leaders with disabilities in Sri Lanka

Despite Sri Lanka's ratification of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2016 in order to improve the rights of its citizens with disabilities, Sri Lankans with disabilities confronts significant impediments to equitable political and civic involvement. These obstacles include the lack of accessible technology in classrooms, inaccessible infrastructure in public buildings, and social and cultural norms that promote stigmatization and unfavorable preconceptions. The Center for Disability Research, Education and Practice (CEDREP) and IFES at the University of Colombo and IFES implemented Engaging a New

Generation for Accessible Governance and Elections (ENGAGE) political leadership course in the first week of July, 2022 for 18 young Sri Lankans with disabilities from the university to address these barriers and empower them as leaders in their communities.

Participants in the ENGAGE course improved their public speaking, teamwork, and problem-solving abilities while learning about human rights,



“

This training was very useful for me. This is the first interactive and engaging training program. I learned so much on how to be a leader, how to build self-confidence, public speaking and also the session on the electoral cycle was very interesting. The training also was very accommodating for all the students who had various disabilities. We thank the organizers for giving us this incredible opportunity.

- Ashane Dilranga, Young Leader, IFES

”

disability rights, and the legal frameworks governing elections. Young Sri Lankans were also inspired to take up leadership roles and include community stakeholders and decision-makers by ENGAGE's interactive education technique.

Participants built relationships with civil society groups (CSOs) during the programme, visited the Election Commission of Sri Lanka (ECSL), and participated in a simulated election

to learn more about Sri Lanka's electoral system. Some participants even continued their education after the training was over by taking on internships at the ECSL, with CSOs they had made connections with during the programme, and IFES. In order to advance the equal political and civic involvement of young people with disabilities in Sri Lanka, IFES will also enlist fresh ENGAGE cohorts for upcoming semesters.

Credit: IFES

Link to original article: <https://www.ifes.org/news/developing-skills-young-leaders-disabilities-sri-lanka>

## Capacity Building for Persons with Disabilities

Disability rights advocates from the Combined Disabilities Association (CDA) in Jamaica were trained on polling station assessments from October 7-8, 2021. The participants learned about the features of an accessible polling station, how to use a checklist to determine accessibility and how to use the data collected. IFES senior inclusion specialist Rebecca Aaberg led the training, which was adapted to ensure compliance with COVID-19 protocols by limiting the number of participants and practicing social distancing.

The training included activities on the disability-inclusive electoral cycle to inform participants about the electoral process and provide context for why

a polling station assessment should be conducted in advance of elections. As part of the training, participants conducted a practice assessment at the Jamaica Society of the Blind, where they learned about the elements that make a polling station accessible to persons with different types of disabilities. Participants documented hallway and doorway widths, restroom accessibility and ramp grades, among other building features.

Under a current subaward with IFES in Jamaica, the CDA will conduct pilot accessibility assessments in Kingston, Portmore and St. Elizabeth. Results of the assessment will be shared with the Electoral Commission of Jamaica (ECJ) and other electoral stakeholders.

**Kailee Smart**

IFES

Credit: IFES

Link to the original article: <https://www.ifes.org/news/jamaican-advocates-learn-how-assess-polling-stations-accessibility>

### Snapshot



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Developing an understanding between demographics strengthens democracy. Explore how intergenerational relationship building is creating change in the [#Mekong](#) region.





## Encouraging Bhutan's Parliament to adopt public hearings, engage with citizens

Under the theme of 'Taking Parliament to the People', International IDEA and Bhutan's Parliamentary Secretariats jointly hosted a three-day workshop for members and staff of the country's parliament. Held from May 20-22, 2022, the workshop was designed to strengthen the use of public hearings in Bhutan's parliamentary process.

The participants were enthusiastic with their learning outcomes. Speaking during the workshop, a parliamentary member said that it became clear that public hearings are more than just an information-gathering mechanism used by the parliamentary committees, but also a means of gaining better understanding of policies and legislations, educating the public, and conducting effective oversight and scrutiny of parliamentary and governance processes.

The workshop was led by two international experts. Halfdan Lynge, a Senior Lecturer at the



University of the Witwatersrand (South Africa) and Hannah Johnson, a senior gender adviser to the EU-funded INTER PARES and a researcher at Welsh Parliament, attended virtually. Sangay Khandu, a former Bhutanese parliamentarian facilitated in the training. Over the course of the workshop, emphasis was given on the fact that public hearings are an entry point for citizens to engage in parliamentary affairs, thereby increasing transparency of governmental operations and building public trust in governance institutions and processes.

Resource persons provided programmatic advice on how to invite interested parties to hearings or give evidence. They also demonstrated practical methods of listening to the opinions of those who are either positively or negatively affected by a legislative or policy outcome, suggesting that in public hearings parliamentarians have to put themselves in 'listening mode' rather than "broadcasting mode".

Leena Rikkilä Tamang, the Regional Director of International IDEA's Asia and Pacific programme, shared the Institute's experiences stressing that "an effective public hearing process brings the parliament closer to the people." She also highlighted that Bhutan, unlike most democratic states, the written constitution and rules of procedures of both houses, the National Assembly and National Council, explicitly mention the conduct of public hearings.





increased their knowledge of the importance of public hearings and their understanding of how to organise them. Furthermore, they acknowledged to have gained important confidence to run public hearings and identify suitable topics to be discussed at these events and expressed their hope to immediately put their newfound skills, awareness, and confidence to engage more

effectively with the public into use.

The workshop was attended by with 66 participants including the Honourable Speaker, Honourable Chairperson, Opposition Leader and

The workshop was based on a needs assessment. Since the establishment of Bhutan's first parliamentary system in 2008, the National Assembly had only conducted one public hearing. The needs assessment revealed that 75 percent of the participants had not participated in any public hearings or public hearings training. Several barriers were identified in holding public hearings: institutional barriers, financial constraints, human resources constraints relating to lack of knowledge, awareness and confidence. Practice, through conducting public hearings, will help to build the confidence of MPs and parliamentary staff, institutionalize procedures and gradually, over time, change the norms and cultures surrounding public hearings. Many agreed that the pandemic accelerated the digital transformation of parliaments and the uptake of digital tools to effectively engage with the broader community. This is expected to address some of the resource constraints.

The interactive workshop consisted of group exercises, role plays, case studies and sharing of best practices by a representative from the Danish Parliament. Participants found the training to be highly engaging, stimulating, and



other Parliamentary Members. It also saw the participation of the parliamentary committee secretaries and staff from both houses of parliament. Daniel Hachez, Head of Cooperation of European Union (EU) Delegation and other distinguished representatives from the EU attended the opening session. The workshop was funded by the EU under "Project 'Nyamdrel | Support to Parliament of Bhutan and CSOs", jointly implemented by International IDEA and Helvetas Bhutan.

**Karma Dena**

International IDEA

Credit: International IDEA

Link of original article published: <https://www.idea.int/news-media/news/workshop-encourages-bhutan%E2%80%99s-parliament-adopt-public-hearings-engage-citizens>



# Rajiv Kumar takes over as the 25<sup>th</sup> CEC of India

**R**ajiv Kumar assumes charge as the 25<sup>th</sup> Chief Election Commissioner of the Republic of India. He assumed charge on May 15, 2022 at The Election Commission of India, Nirvachan Sadan, New Delhi in pursuance of the Ministry of Law & Justice, Government of India's Gazette Notification dated May 12, 2022.

Rajiv Kumar has been serving in ECI as Election Commissioner since September 1, 2020. During his tenure as Election Commissioner, elections have been held for State Assemblies of Bihar in 2020, Assam, Kerala, Puducherry, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal amidst Covid concerns in March-April 2021 and also elections to Goa, Manipur, Punjab, Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh recently in early 2022.

Rajiv Kumar succeeded Sushil Chandra, the former CEC of India. ECI family bid a warm farewell to outgoing Chief Election Commissioner, Sushil Chandra.

After assuming charge as CEC, Rajiv Kumar said that he is honoured to have been given the responsibility to lead one of the finest institutions gifted by the Indian Constitution - the institution that reinforces our democracy. He added that a



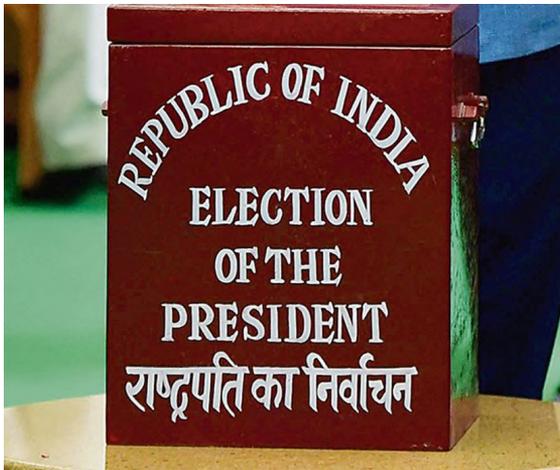
lot has been done during the last seventy years by ECI to give Indian citizens free and fair elections, to ensure purity of the electoral rolls, prevent malpractices and enhance the quality of our elections. "The Commission will follow the time-tested and democratic methods of consultations and consensus building in bringing about any major reforms for dynamically evolving to changing contexts. And in matters for which it is responsible under the Constitution, ECI will not shy away from tough decisions", he added.

He said that Technology will further be made the major instrument for simplification of processes and practices for bringing about transparency and ease of voter services for better election management and operations.



# Elections for the highest office in the largest democracy

**E**lection to the office of President of India, which is the highest elective office in the Republic of India, concluded successfully in free, fair and transparent manner at the Parliament House and in each of the 30 places of poll in State Legislative Assemblies including Legislative Assembly of NCT of Delhi and UT of Puducherry on July 18, 2022.



The President of India is elected indirectly by the single-transferable voting system, by an electoral college consisting of elected members of both the houses of the parliament and the legislative assemblies of the states and the UTs.

The Election to the office of President of Indian Republic is one of the most important elections, which the Election Commission of India conducts vide the mandate of Article 324 of the Constitution of India. There were two contesting candidates namely, Droupadi Murmu and Yashwant Sinha for the 16th Presidential election. Polling was held between 10am to 5 pm at 31 locations on July 18, 2022.

Election to the President of India is fool proof. The Ballot Boxes fly on a separate air ticket in the name of Mr. Ballot, escorted by high security of armed personnel.

Under Rule 40 of the Presidential and Vice-Presidential Elections Rules, 1974, the Election Commission of India is required to maintain a list of members of the Electoral College. The list contains the names of elected members of the Rajya Sabha, Lok Sabha and the elected members of the Legislative Assemblies of States, NCT of Delhi and UT of Puducherry, in that order. Two members were not eligible to vote in the election, owing to disqualification under Section 8 of R.P. Act, 1951 subsequent to judgement of a competent Court. Further, there are 05 vacancies in Rajya Sabha and 06 vacancies in State Legislative Assemblies. Therefore, there were a total of 4796 electors in the list of Electoral College for this Presidential Election to participate in the election.

The Constitution (Eighty-fourth) Amendment Act, 2001 provides that until the relevant population figures for the first census to be taken after the year 2026 have been published, the population of the States for the purposes of calculation of value of votes for the Presidential Election shall mean the population as ascertained at the 1971-census.

Room No. 63 in the Parliament House in New Delhi and another 30 polling stations in all State Legislative Assembly Secretariats (including National

Capital Territory of Delhi and the Union Territory of Puducherry) were fixed as places of the poll. The Members of Parliament voted in New Delhi and the members of the State

Legislative Assemblies, including the members of the Legislative Assemblies of NCT of Delhi and Union Territory of Puducherry, voted at the place fixed in each Legislative Assembly.

Facilities were also provided by the Commission



for any Member of Parliament (MP) / Member of Legislative Assembly (MLA) to vote at a place of poll setup other than their own. Accordingly, 44 MPs were permitted to vote at State Headquarters, 09 MLAs at Parliament House and 02 MLAs in other State Headquarters.

The Election Commission of India issued specific guidelines with which polls were to be conducted in the state legislative Assemblies. This includes proper sitting arrangements, entry of authorized people at the polling place, Proper placement of the posters for the use of specified pen and poster for the voters, Proper videography, issuing of the ballot paper randomly to the elector, different reports to be sent to the Commission by the RO and the AROs, and proper maintenance of the account of the ballot.

Droupadi Murmu emerged victorious and got elected as the 15<sup>th</sup> President of India.

The process of the election of the President is foolproof with the explicit procedure to be followed across the country. The process involves fascinating methods which make the election of the President more interesting to see. For example, during the transportation of the ballot boxes and other election material to the state, the Ballot Boxes fly on a separate air ticket booked in the name of

Mr. Ballot, escorted by high security of armed personnel. Transportation arrangements for the return of the State teams have been made to bring back the 30 polled ballot boxes. All the ballot

boxes and other election materials reached the Parliament House i.e. place of Counting, by July, 19. Election results were announced on July 21<sup>st</sup>. Droupadi Murmu emerged victorious and got elected as the 15<sup>th</sup> President of India.

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

# Timor-Leste votes confidently amidst the pandemic

Voters in Timor-Leste went to the polls on March 19, 2022 to choose a President for a five-year term commencing on May 20. This was the fifth presidential election since Indonesian rule had come to an end following a historic vote for independence on August 30, 1999.

Contested by 16 candidates, four of whom were women, it marked a further consolidation of the country's reputation as one of the strongest electoral democracies in South East Asia.

In the decades since the independence vote, the scale of electoral operations in Timor-Leste has increased considerably. The number of registered voters has grown by over 90 percent. At the independence vote, there were only 213 polling centers; for the 2022 election, 1200 were established. The electorate is notably young: almost 50 percent of the registered voters are under 35 years of age.

The timing of presidential elections is dictated by a history going back to 2001, one effect of which is that polling is held during the rainy season. This poses significant challenges for the Technical Secretariat for Electoral Administration (STAE) and the constitutionally-mandated National Elections Commission (CNE), as roads can become



At the independence vote, there were only 213 polling centers; for the 2022 election, 1200 were established.

impassable. On the day before the election, when sensitive materials including ballot papers were being distributed to polling centers across the country, community efforts were sometimes needed to get vehicles across rivers, extract them from mud, or deploy porters to carry ballot boxes on their backs. This exemplified one of the great strengths

of Timorese elections: they are widely seen as an undertaking of the entire society, the success of which depends on all stakeholders—not just the electoral

authorities—playing a constructive role.

This spirit was also on display on election day, reflecting a pattern that is now well-established. Conflict at polling centers is very rare in Timor-Leste; even when voters have to queue in the hot sun, complaints are seldom heard. Voters show every sign of valuing and respecting the democratic process, and appreciating the way in which they are empowered to make choices that will affect their futures.



*A polling center in Comoro, Dili, was still busy about two hours before the polls closed. (Photo credit: Michael Maley)*

As anticipated, the polls took place during the Covid-19 pandemic. Fortunately, the case numbers in Timor-Leste had dwindled thus allowing for greater confidence among voters and officials alike that the elections are being conducted safely. However, health safety measures, such as mask-wearing and hand-sanitizing, have been put in place by the authorities and have been taken seriously by many voters.

The polling process is straightforward. Registered voters are issued with a photographic card at the point of registration, which they produce at the polling centre to establish their right to vote. Their names are highlighted on the voter list, and they are issued with a ballot paper which they mark in secret, typically by using a nail to punch a hole adjacent to the candidate of their choice. After the ballot has been placed in a sealed ballot box, one of the voter's fingers is marked with indelible ink to prevent multiple voting. The whole process takes only a few minutes.

Votes are counted at each Polling Centre immediately after the close of the poll at 15:00. The process is comparatively slow, since it involves every ballot paper being displayed to all present—similar

to its regional neighbours, Indonesia and Thailand—so that they can see the vote that has been marked on it. This, however, also makes the counting exceptionally transparent; and indeed, transparency is one of the defining features of all polling day operations.

When the counting is concluded, the results from each Polling Centre are tabulated, first at the municipal and then at the national levels. This takes several days, as the documents and materials from Polling Centres are physically transferred to the municipal tabulation centers.

The polling and counting processes were implemented by some 16,000 staff nationwide, 50 percent of whom were required to be women, and many of whom were notably young, but displaying an inspiring commitment to their country's democratic future.

STAE, CNE the UN Development Programme and International IDEA with the financial support of Japan worked on the development and implementation of training for polling staff, and the provision of advice on measures for mitigating the risk of Covid-19 infection at election time.

Jose Ramos-Horta has been sworn in as president of Timor-Leste. He defeated Francisco “Lu Olo” Guterres, his fellow independence fighter, in the election

**Michael Maley**

Dili, Timor Leste

Credit: International IDEA

Link for the original article: <https://www.idea.int/news-media/news/timor-leste-votes-confidently-amidst-pandemic>

# First Constitution Academy in Sudan now open for applications

**W**ith the aim to encourage a stable, acceptable and democratic constitutional settlement in Sudan, International IDEA has launched the Constitution Academy, an academic constitutional initiative to engage Sudanese political actors, civil society and opinion-formers in constitution-building.

The Constitution Academy consists in an intensive, interactive, residential academy, with a mixture of lectures, seminars, Q&A, exercises and simulations. The training is delivered for over eight days. It aims to help improve the knowledge and understanding of constitutional matters of these actors and establish a community of trained and engaged leaders on constitutional issues. It also aims to empower these leaders to keep up pressure for democratic constitutional change, promote wider public engagement on



It aims to help improve the knowledge and understanding of constitutional matters of these actors and establish a community of trained and engaged leaders on constitutional issues.

constitutional issues, identify opportunities for consensus, be able to compromise, and ensure that 'technical' aspects of constitution-making do not

become detached from overriding political and societal goals.

It is planned to engage 20 participants in the first edition of its Constitution Academy.

They will be selected

by an open call, which will be advertised through of different platforms.

**Sami Ahmed**

Communication Officer, International Idea

Credit: International IDEA

Link to the original news article: <https://www.idea.int/news-media/news/first-constitution-academy-sudan-now-open-applications>



# INEC issue guidelines to the Political Parties

**T**he Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) Nigeria, says it will bar any Political Party that violates the provisions of the Electoral Act in choosing its candidate in the 2023 Elections.

The Commission disclosed this in a statement signed by its National Commissioner and Chairman, Information and Voter Education of the Commission, Festus Okoye tagged “Adherence to the 2023 General Election Timetable.”

The Election Management Body warned that Primaries must be held for each elective position a party is nominating candidates for.

The Timetable provides detailed activities, including the conduct of primaries, the nomination of candidates by political parties, and other activities leading to the Presidential and National Assembly elections on February 25, 2023, followed by the Governorship and State Assembly elections on March 11, 2023.

All the activities are in line with the provisions of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 (as amended) and the Electoral Act, 2022.

So far, two out of the 14 activities in the Timetable and Schedule of Activities have been successfully accomplished.

The Notice of Election was published on February 28, 2022, while nomination forms have been made available on the Commission’s website since March 1, 2022 for political parties to download and issue to their candidates.

This is followed by the conduct of primaries by political parties in line with the dictates of Section 84 of the Electoral Act for which the Timetable and Schedule of Activities provides a period of 61 days (April 4, to June 3, 2022).

The Commission reiterates that parties must adhere strictly to the principles of internal democracy, drawing from their constitutions, guidelines, the Electoral Act, and other Regulations and Guidelines issued by the Commission.

Party candidates for the 1,491 constituencies for which elections will be conducted in 2023 must emerge from democratic, transparent, and valid primaries, in line with the provisions of Sections 29 and 84 of the Electoral Act, 2022. Where a political party fails to comply with the provisions of the Act in the conduct of its primaries, its candidate shall not be included in the election for the particular position in the issue.

As required by law, the Commission shall monitor the primaries of each political party that provides the required legal notice in line with Sections 82 (1) and (5) of the Electoral Act.

It adds that the failure of a political party to notify the Commission of any convention or congress convened for the purpose of nominating candidates for any of the elective offices specified in the Act shall render the convention or congress invalid.

Primaries must be conducted in the various constituencies as provided in Section 84 of the Electoral Act as it is a violation of the law to conduct primaries outside the constituencies for which parties are nominating candidates. The Commission will not monitor such primaries and their outcome will not be accepted.

Political parties are enjoined to avoid acrimonious primaries that could result in unnecessary litigations that may lead to failure to nominate and field candidates for elections in some constituencies.

**Abbas Jimoh**

Daily Trust

Credit: TNC News

[Link to original article: https://dailytrust.com/breaking-parties-that-violate-electoral-law-will-be-barred-from-2023-elections-inec](https://dailytrust.com/breaking-parties-that-violate-electoral-law-will-be-barred-from-2023-elections-inec)

# Elections in 2022-2023

GLOBAL ELECTIONS CALENDAR 2022-2023 (April 2022-April 2023)			
DATE OF ELECTIONS	FLAG	COUNTRY	ELECTORAL EVENT
APRIL 02, 2022		COSTA RICA	SECOND ROUND ELECTIONS
APRIL 03, 2022		SERBIA	GENERAL ELECTIONS
APRIL 10, 2022		FRANCE	PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS
APRIL 22, 2022		HUNGARY	PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS
APRIL 22, 2022		THE GAMBIA	LEGISLATIVE ELECTIONS
MAY 03, 2022		VANUATU	MUNICIPAL ELECTION
MAY 09, 2022		PHILIPPINES	GENERAL ELECTIONS
MAY 15, 2022		LEBANON	GENERAL ELECTIONS
MAY 21, 2022		AUSTRALIA	PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS
MAY 29, 2022		COLOMBIA	PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS
JUNE 01, 2022		REPUBLIC OF KOREA	SIMULTANEOUS LOCAL ELECTIONS

GLOBAL ELECTIONS CALENDAR 2022-2023 (April 2022-April 2023)			
DATE OF ELECTIONS	FLAG	COUNTRY	ELECTORAL EVENT
JUNE 05, 2022		MEXICO	SUBNATIONAL ELECTIONS
JUNE 05, 2022		CAMBODIA	LOCAL ELECTIONS
JUNE, 2022		PAPUA NEW GUINEA	GENERAL ELECTIONS
JULY 18, 2022		INDIA	PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION
JULY 22, 2022		TUNISIA	CONSTITUTIONAL REFERENDUM
AUGUST 9, 2022		KENYA	GENERAL ELECTIONS
AUGUST 2022		ANGOLA	GENERAL ELECTIONS
OCTOBER 2, 2022		BRAZIL	GENERAL ELECTIONS
OCTOBER 02, 2022		PERU	REGIONAL AND MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS
OCTOBER 02, 2022		BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA	PRESIDENT AND PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS
OCTOBER 30, 2022		BRAZIL	PRESIDENTIAL 2ND ROUND
DECEMBER 17, 2022		TUNISIA	PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS

GLOBAL ELECTIONS CALENDAR 2022-2023 (April 2022-April 2023)			
DATE OF ELECTIONS	FLAG	COUNTRY	ELECTORAL EVENT
JANUARY 13, 2023		TUNISIA	LEGISLATIVE ELECTIONS
FEBRUARY 25, 2023		CZECH REPUBLIC	PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS
FEBRUARY 23, 2023		NIGERIA	GENERAL ELECTIONS
MARCH 23, 2023		JAMAICA	LOCAL ELECTIONS
MARCH, 2023		CUBA	PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS
APRIL 30, 2023		MALI	REFERENDUM
APRIL, 2023		PARAGUAY	GENERAL ELECTIONS
APRIL, 2023		MONTENEGRO	PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS

“

Democracy is never a final achievement.  
It is a call to an untiring effort.

—John F. Kennedy

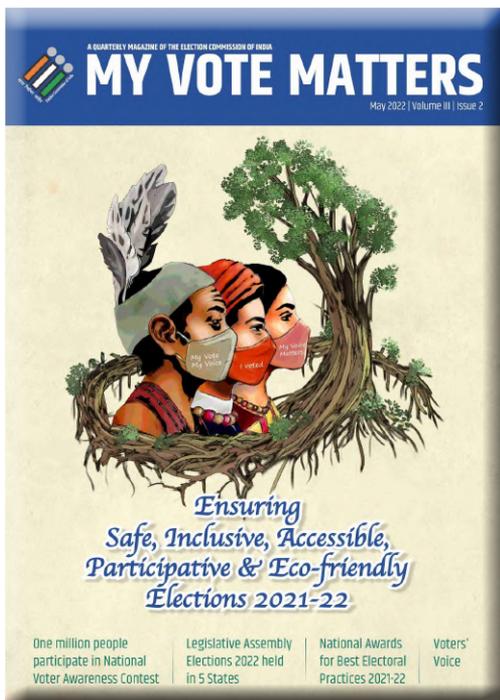
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Sources: <https://indiaaawebcentre.org/files/file/70-a-web-india-journal-of-elections-volume-ii-issue-no-1%C2%A0april-september-2022/>  
<https://ndi.org/>

# Publications

## VoICE International (Volume IV Issue 4)

This issue of VoICE International focuses on New Technology Initiatives for Voter Friendliness & Ease of Elections. It outlines innovation, integration of technology and strategic interventions adopted by Electoral Management Bodies aimed at delivering free, fair and accessible elections in democracies across the world.

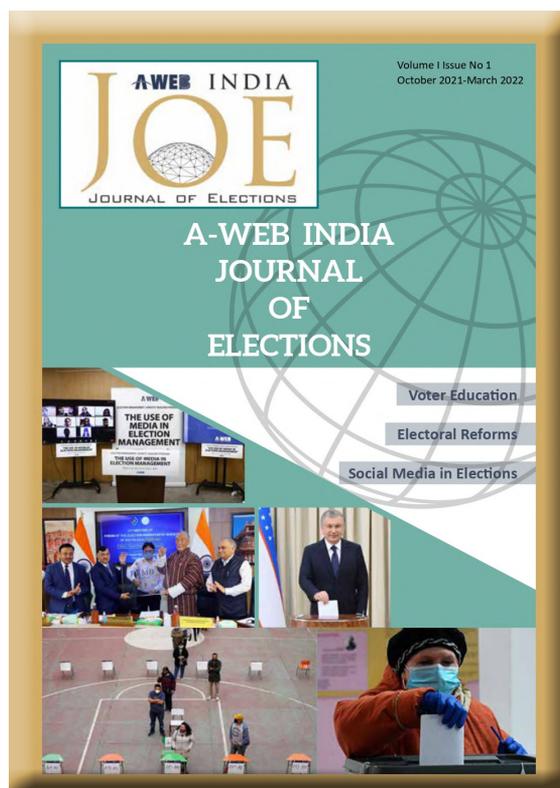


## My Vote Matters (Vol 3 Issue 2)

My Vote Matters - The quarterly magazine of Election Commission of India for Free, Fair, Inclusive and Ethical Elections. This issue highlights the recently-held State Legislative Assembly Elections in 5 states namely Punjab, Goa, Manipur, Uttarakhand and Uttar Pradesh in India. In addition to informative articles on core subjects, this issue includes new initiatives and topics of concurrent interest in elections, electoral processes and practices with the objective of developing a larger connect and interface with all stakeholders. The magazine was themed on 'Ensuring, Safe, Inclusive, Accessible, Participative & Eco-friendly elections.

## A-WEB Journal of Elections

The second issue of Journal of Elections (AWI-JOE) was released at the International Webinar 2021 for 'Enhancing electoral participation of Women, Persons with Disabilities (PwDs) & Senior citizen Voters: Sharing Best Practices and New Initiatives'. This Journal is a one-stop source of knowledge sharing on peer reviewed Research Papers, Articles, and Opinions from renowned writers, scholars, practitioners and experts of the A-WEB Community. The Journal also carries news and views, information on latest initiatives and trends, challenges and developments in electoral practices and processes.



Inter-Parliamentary Union  
For democracy, for women, for services.



## Global Parliamentary Report 2022

Public engagement in the work of parliament



## Global Parliamentary Report 2022

### Public Engagement in the Work of Parliament

The third Global Parliamentary Report examines public engagement in the work of parliament. This report takes a detailed look at why engagement matters and how parliaments globally are engaging with the people they represent. It outlines trends and priorities for public engagement and considers key principles for ensuring better and deeper engagement in the future, in support of the 2030 Agenda.

## Case Studies of Best Practice in Asia & the Pacific

Evaluations remain a critical tool for the assessment of UN interventions, generating objective evidence, demonstrating relevant change, documenting lessons learned and making recommendations for the future.

This report highlights case studies to identify key lessons learned and best practices that can be of use to citizens and development practitioners everywhere to help them identify what works and what doesn't in the post-pandemic world.

This report provides inspiration for the implementation of strong, locally adapted evaluations that can in turn be used by decision-makers for the creation of stronger programs for people, prosperity, the planet, and partnerships.



## Democracy & Governance Post-Conflict

In countries riven by conflict, weak institutions, social divisions and grievances, political strife, and security threats can hinder efforts to build or rebuild democracy and good governance. Donors and implementers need evidence of what works to better support partners in these contexts, optimize resources and adapt and improve programs.

Using data from more than 25 years of democracy and governance programs implemented by the Consortium for Elections and Political Process Strengthening (CEPPS) in 18 countries, the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) published two reports under the project

Identifying Successful Democracy and Governance Approaches in Post Conflict Countries. The report examined challenges for programming in post-conflict contexts. The second paper of this series, "Increasing the Success and Sustainability of Democracy and Governance Interventions in Post-conflict Countries," Analyses Literature Findings and Partner Perspectives, focuses on the perspectives of partners on the receiving end of CEPPS assistance, examines specific approaches that CEPPS took to support democratization and stabilization in post-conflict environments and analyses the success and sustainability of these interventions.

Its recommendations can be used by donors and implementers to design and implement more effective programs.

Authored by Fernanda Buril, Ph.D., Research Specialist, Center for Applied Research and Learning; Bailey Dinman, Research Coordinator, Center for Applied Research and Learning. Project lead by Chad Vickery, Vice President Global Strategy and Technical Leadership, IFES.



# Glossary

**Bipartisan:** If something is bipartisan, it has the support of two political parties that normally don't agree on much. The word bipartisan is easy to figure out when you break it apart: bi-, meaning "two," plus partisan, meaning "supporter of a party." So something that's bipartisan involves two parties finding enough common ground to support the same thing. A key aspect of something that's bipartisan is that the two parties involved typically hold opposing views about the best way to do things, so a bipartisan agreement is one that likely involved a lot of effort, compromise, and cooperation.

**Abstain:** Roots of the word abstain are from the 14th-century French, "to withhold oneself," and the word often refers to people who hold themselves back from indulging in habits that are bad for them, physically or morally. Abstain can also mean withholding a vote, and sometimes a difficult decision is stalled when government representatives abstain from voting one way or another.

**Nonpartisan Democracy:** Nonpartisan democracy is a system of representative government or organization such that universal and periodic elections take place without reference to political parties.

**Precinct:** The word precinct comes from the Latin precinctum meaning "enclosure, boundary line." A precinct is an area that has a clear boundary line around it, making it easier for the citizens to know where they should go to vote.

**Absentee Ballot:** An absentee ballot is a vote cast by someone who is unable or unwilling to attend the official polling station to which the voter is normally allocated. Methods include voting at a different location, postal voting, proxy voting and online voting. Increasing the ease of access to absentee ballots is seen by many as one way to improve voter turnout through convenience voting, though some countries require that a valid reason, such as infirmity or travel, be given before a voter can participate in an absentee ballot.

# QUIZ TIME

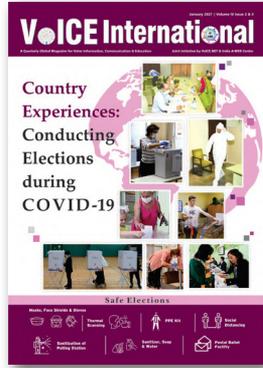
- 1. Brunei, Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam are the members of which of the following groups?**
  - a. ASEAN
  - b. SAARC
  - c. BRICS
  - d. G-20
- 2. Which of the following country recently conducted its 16th Presidential elections?**
  - a. China
  - b. Sri Lanka
  - c. Nepal
  - d. India
- 3. In which of the following country does the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), and the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) bring 26 young people with disabilities together to participate in their 'ENGAGE' program?**
  - a. Guyana
  - b. Timor-Leste
  - c. Brunei
  - d. Maldives
- 4. In order to protect basic rights and requirements of new immigrants, the government of which country has designed comprehensive and considerate policies to positively help new immigrants with adapting to local life?**
  - a. Taiwan
  - b. Laos
  - c. Cambodia
  - d. Kyrgyzstan
- 5. Cambridge Global Challenges (CGC) is the Strategic Research Initiative of which of the following University that aims to fulfil its mission to contribute to society with a particular focus on the poorest half of the world's population.**
  - a. University of Oxford
  - b. University of Liverpool
  - c. University of Hamburg
  - d. University of Cambridge
- 6. The United Nations has designated July 18 in honour of a country's first Black president who was also the joint-winner of the Nobel Peace Prize in 1993. What country is it?**
  - a. South Africa
  - b. United States of America
  - c. Namibia
  - d. Tunisia
- 7. ASEAN was founded on 8 August 1967 with five members: Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand. It is headquartered in which of the following cities?**
  - a. Jakarta.
  - b. Kuala Lumpur
  - c. Manila
  - d. Vientiane



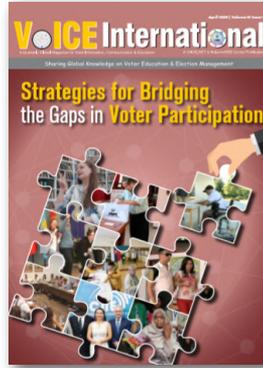
# PREVIOUS ISSUES OF VoICE INTERNATIONAL



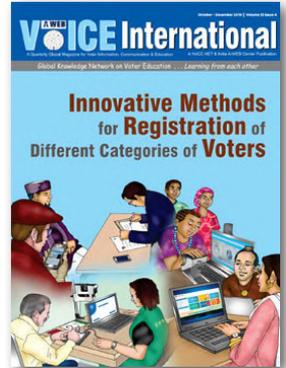
OCT 2021



JAN 2021



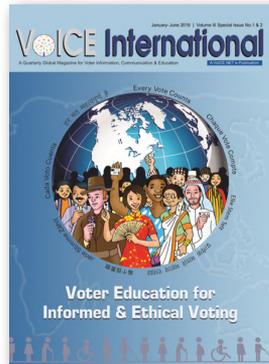
JAN - APR 2020



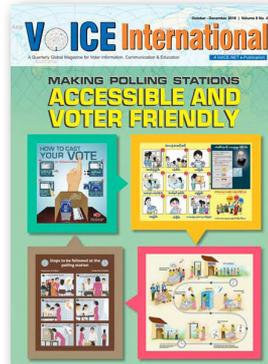
OCT-DEC 2019



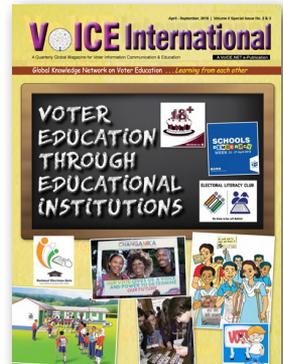
JULY-SEPT 2019



JAN-JUNE 2019



OCT-DEC 2018



APR-SEPT 2018



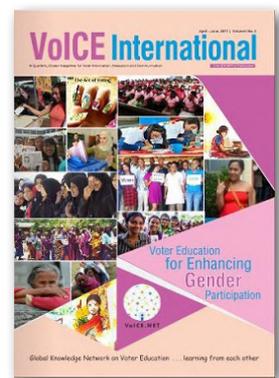
JAN-MAR 2018



OCT-DEC 2017



JUL-SEP 2017



APR-JUN 2017

# VoICE.NET

## Member & Associate Countries



### Voter Information, Communication & Education Network

VoICE.NET (Voter Information, Communication, Education Network) is an online knowledge network <http://voicenet.in/> for sharing knowledge, resources & 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, India.

At present, VoICE.NET has 32 active members and numerous associates which include Election Management Bodies (EMBs) and reputed international organizations across the world. VoICE.NET content is provided by the member EMBs/ Organizations and the portal is maintained by the Election Commission of India. VoICE International is a quarterly publication of VoICE.NET and India A-WEB Centre.