VoICE International
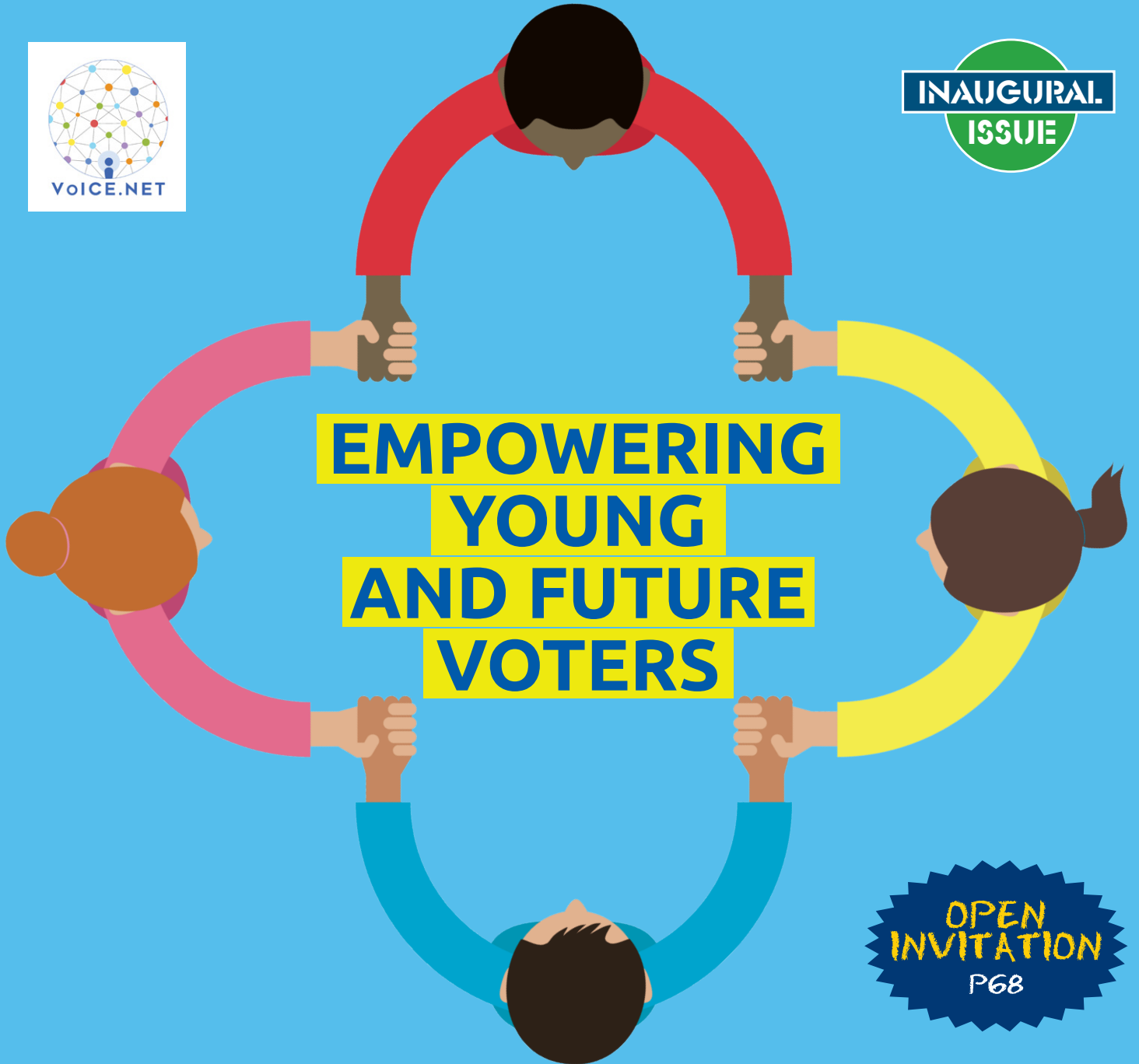
A Quarterly Global magazine for Voter Information, Education and Communication

A VoICE.NET e-Publication

VoICE.NET

INAUGURAL ISSUE

EMPOWERING YOUNG AND FUTURE VOTERS

OPEN INVITATION P68

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

INDIA	AFGHANISTAN	AUSTRALIA	BRAZIL	CANADA	FIJI	GEORGIA	INDONESIA	IRAQ

KENYA	KYRGYZSTAN	LESOTHO	MALAYSIA	MALDIVES	MAURITIUS	MEXICO	MYANMAR	NAMIBIA

NEPAL	PAKISTAN	PAPUA NEW GUINEA	PHILIPINES	SRI LANKA	THAILAND	TUNISIA	UGANDA	USA

Election Commission of India

A young elector shows her inked finger with pride, Uttar Pradesh

VoICE International

VoICE International

The first issue of VoICE International launched on 24th January, 2017 on the eve of National Voters' Day of India

EDITORIAL BOARD

ADVISORY BOARD

EDITORIAL

The launch of the e- magazine VoICE International on VoICE.NET is a moment of joy, proud privilege and also an occasion of achievement and fulfillment. It is a mile stone for us in our joint vision for the cause of an enlightened and empowered voter, capable of competent ballot decision. The vision emanated from the collective resolve of participating EMBs, international institutions and experts in the form of the Delhi Declaration and the launch of VoICE.NET; the two laudable achievements of the October 2016 International Conference on 'Voter Education for Inclusive, Informed and Ethical Participation' held at New Delhi.

The inaugural issue of VoICE International appears as a knowledge platform where we get to learn from each other through our constant sharing of rich and vibrant experiences and major initiatives undertaken with regards to voter education. It may not be picture perfect at the moment, but I am confident that it will hugely evolve as time progresses with more contributions in future issues. I would humbly call it a bright start in view of the encouraging messages from the different EMBs and nomination of their representatives (as Member Secretaries) on the Advisory Board. I hope many more countries would join and strengthen this platform further by contributing their experiences, studies and good practices.

A voter is the fundamental stakeholder in democracy, who shoulders basic responsibility of building a democratic polity and future of the country. Voter should be both enlightened & informed for a vibrant democracy to function in its true spirit. EMB's responsibility is not limited to enrollment and conduct of elections only, but it extends further to educate voters to ensure they are empowered enough to make an ethical choice with regards to ballot decisions. At this juncture, I am reminded of the famous words of Franklin D Roosevelt, **"Democracy cannot succeed unless those who express their choice are prepared to choose wisely the real safeguard of democracies, therefore education."**
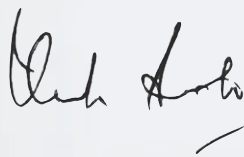
Voter education is a critical component in electoral participation. Strategic interventions through voter education and engagement helps in addressing the issues of voter apathy, a growing concern in many democracies across the world. Voter education is recognized by The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Article 21); the International convention on Civil and Political Rights (Article 25) and by different regional instruments. In this perspective, VoICE International is an initiative with tremendous significance in the field of voter education.

Election Commission of India has organized an International Conference on 'Strategies for Empowering Young and Future Voters' on 24th January, 2017. The papers and the proceedings of the conference will soon be made available on VoICE.Net as a matter of knowledge and experience sharing with the democracies of the world.

This issue of VoICE International also carries a special section with featured articles on the above mentioned subject. We further extend an open invitation to all the EMBs, institutions of excellence and experts to share their initiatives, practices, experiences and knowledge to be published as a separate volume.

I look forward to continuous support and guidance from the participating countries as well as from all the democracies of the world for strengthening this VoICE.NET initiative.

I dedicate this initiative to voters all over the world.

Umesh Sinha,
Executive Secretary,
VoICE.NET
editorvoiceinternational@gmail.com

Illustrations: Designed by Freepik

A girl playing 'Voters' Quotient' on wheels at the airport in Uttar Pradesh
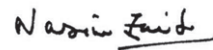
Dr. Nasim Zaidi
CHIEF ELECTION COMMISSIONER
ELECTION COMMISSION OF INDIA

Two laudable achievements of the October, 2016 International Conference at New Delhi were, the New Delhi Declaration on Voter Education for Inclusive, Informed and Ethical Participation and the launching of 'Voter Information, Communication and Education Network (VoICE.NET). These achievements are an expression of the common resolve of the Participating Countries and the International Organizations. It is heartening to note that seventeen EMBs have already nominated their Representatives on the VoICE.NET as Member Secretaries and many more have evinced interest in the Initiative. The ECI team has been working on building up of the infrastructure of the VoICE.NET with simultaneous focus on tangible outputs for the cause of the World of Voters. The ECI team has been working on VoICE International, a quarterly magazine for global knowledge sharing on voter education and an International Seminar on 'Strategies for Empowering Young and Future Voters' as a part of the National Voter' Day of India which falls on 25th January. Response for both these initiatives has been very impressive and encouraging and I thank the EMBs and the International Organizations for sending their messages and articles for the magazine.

I am happy to launch the Inaugural Issue of the VoICE International on the eve of India's National Voters' Day in august presence of Heads of EMB's of different countries and the International Organizations. It is a day of achievement for us. The Issue as also the 'Conference Reader' on 'Strategies for Empowering Young and Future Voters' form a part of the VoICE.NET Platform.

I congratulate Mr. Umesh Sinha, Deputy Election Commissioner, Mr. S D Sharma, former State Election Commissioner and now a Senior Fellow with us and the team of SVEEP, International Cooperation and Communication division of the Election Commission of India for their valuable contribution in bring out the digital version of the magazine VoICE International in such a short time. I am sure that this contribution will of immense value to a continued and sustained dialogue on the subject matter of voter education.

I dedicate this Initiative to the Voters of the World on VoICE.NET Platform.

Dr. Nasim Zaidi

MESSAGE

A K Joti
ELECTION COMMISSIONER
ELECTION COMMISSION OF INDIA

Democracies across the world have always attached high importance to voter education. The common Resolve of the Participating EMB's in October, 2016 International Conference at New Delhi on Voter Education for Inclusive, Informed and Ethical Participation added further significance to the relevance and importance of voter education through launching of VoICE.NET, the e Platform for Knowledge sharing in this area. The results have been very encouraging in the form of both, the representation and contribution to the VoICE. NET Knowledge sharing Platform. It is heartening to note that with in short span of two months, a new innovative and strategic global initiative has taken shape in the form of VoICE International, the quarterly e-magazine on VoICE.NET Platform.

I am happy to learn that VoICE International, the global e-magazine is being launched as a part of the National Voters' Day celebrations. I thank the EMB's and International Organizations for sending messages of encouragement besides valuable contributions on Knowledge sharing for this Inaugural Issue.

I congratulate Sh. Umesh Sinha, Deputy Election Commissioner, Sh. S D Sharma, former State Election Commissioner and now associated with the Election Commission of India as a Senior Fellow and their entire team for this significant contribution in the field of voter education in such a short time to the VoICE.NET Initiative.

I am sure that this contribution will be highly valuable for a continued Knowledge sharing experience for the Voters of the World of Democracies.

A K Joti

O P Rawat
ELECTION COMMISSIONER
ELECTION COMMISSION OF INDIA

Voter Education is critical to the well being of democracy, for now and in its future. In view of the significance of voter education for participation, world over in democracies, strategic, well designed and systematic initiatives have been developed and launched. There is significant scope for sharing the knowledge and practice of voter education and gain from each other's experiences.

The International Conference on 'Voter Education for Informed, Inclusive and Ethical Participation' held in October, 2016 witnessed the emergence of a 'Common Resolve' of the Participating EMB's for inter alia sharing of voter education resources on VoICE.NET, an e-Platform. Encouraging response to this global initiative from the Participating EMB's and International Organizations has generated a very valuable Voter Education Resource within a short span of less than three months. Starting with the ECI's contribution in the form of an impressive and holistic Conference Reader for the New Delhi Conference, two major works namely Conference Reader for the International conference on 'Strategies for Young and Future Voters' and now the Inaugural Issue of VoICE International, a quarterly magazine have been contributed to the Knowledge Resource of the VoICE.NET for sharing by the world of democracies for the Voters of the World.

While I thank the EMB's and International Organizations for their valuable contribution, I congratulate Sh. Umesh Sinha, Deputy Election Commissioner, Sh. S D Sharma, former State Election Commissioner and now associated with the Election Commission of India as Senior Fellow and their entire team for their dedication and significant contribution in the field of voter education in such a short time to the VoICE.NET Initiative.

I am sure that this rich voter education resource would be of great value to the Voters of the World in a sustained manner.

O P Rawat

Najibullah Ahmadzai
CHAIRMAN, INDEPENDENT ELECTION
COMMISSION OF AFGHANISTAN

On behalf of Independent Election Commission of Afghanistan (IEC), it is my pleasure to cordially congratulate Indian people while commemorating their National Voters Day (NVD). Election Commission of India (ECI) desired to be honored for promoting the inclusion of their citizens, especially vulnerable groups in democratic election processes through its largest voter education program and public outreach activities. Women and youth could play a major role towards full participation of voters in elections leading to strengthened democratic institutions by using ICTs at national and sub national levels. The launch of the quarterly e-Magazine by ECI on the VoICE.NET platform is a greatest commendable achievement to ECI. IEC hope that this platform will be beneficiary to all VoICE.NET members.

Mohammed Saneem
SUPERVISOR OF ELECTIONS
FIJIAN ELECTIONS OFFICE

I would like to applaud the Election Commission of India [ECI] for its efforts in increasing the registration of voters, particularly the fresh eligible young voters.

I also take this opportunity to thank the ECI for including the Fijian Elections Office [FEO] to be a member of the Voter Information, Communication and Education Network [VoICE.NET] and we are looking forward to sharing knowledge, resources and expertise on voter education with all Electoral Management Bodies.

Warm congratulations to all voters of India on the important occasion of the National Voters' Day 2017. A special welcome and congratulations to all newly registered voters who will be exercising their democratic right to participate in the electoral process for the first time.

CEC
ELECTION ADMINISTRATION
OF GEORGIA

Natia Zaalishvili
DIRECTOR, CENTRE FOR ELECTORAL
SYSTEMS DEVELOPMENT REFORMS AND
TRAININGS OF CEC OF GEORGIA

Credible elections are a result of a process that is trustworthy, which requires on the one hand the structures and procedures to be in place and on the other hand developing of the electoral culture. The EMB's contribution is crucial in regard to reach successfully the outcome of having increased electoral awareness, activity and credibility among voters.

The most effective tool best to tackle that challenges is permanent informational campaigns. Election Administration of Georgia and its Training Centre had established the sustainable system of civic/voter education and stand open to hold the networking with partners in order to share experiences on exercising the innovative education initiatives.

MESSAGE

Safaa Al-Musawy
COMMISSIONER
INDEPENDENT HIGH ELECTORAL
COMMISSION, IRAQ

On the occasion of Voter Day and in refer to the final statement announced in Delhi conference in October.

The voter's important role is to exercise his or her right to vote in election day and effectively participate in making the political and economical decision in his country and that is considered the minimum degree of participation.

The legality of every Government or political authority is earned through the voters vote and ensuring the right of voters to vote is considered the most safe and guaranteed process of handover the authorities and continuation of democracy in the society .

Our hopes and as appealed in Delhi conference (We should not leave any voter behind and have to reach every voter even if he is in the ends of the earth).

Ahmed Suleiman
CHAIRMAN
ELECTION COMMISSION OF MALDIVES

As chairman of the Elections Commission of Maldives I would like to express my sincere gratitude for the initiative taken to share and enrich the electoral knowledge among the EMB's in the region and worldwide.

It is a deeper concern even in established democracies about the overall low level of participation in democracies, especially among specific groups like youth, women and the indigenous population. Increasing reluctance among youth to participate in politics and exercise the right to vote is particularly alarming in amounts, according to some, to a weakening of democracy.

The platform, VoICE.Net will serve as an excellent medium to address the aforementioned issues and hope that all the EMB's will put a collective and collaborative effort to make it a success.

U Hla Thein
CHAIRMAN, UNION ELECTION COMMISSION
MYANMAR

I am so delighted for India's launching of Global Knowledge Network on Voter Education: the VoICE. NET) as a part of the National Voters Day celebrations in 25th January 2017. It will be a great opportunity for all the EMBs to share experience, practices and knowledge in the field of voter education.

I would like to acknowledge the Election Commission of India for the hard work and support to the VoICE.NET and it will be helpful in improving and the effective implementation of the operations of all the EMBs.

I am confident that VoICE.NET will provide good support for holding the elections successfully and will be a good network foundation for all the EMBs.

As a chairman of Union Election Commission, I'm grateful to be part of this network and we hope VoICE.NET will be a tool to strengthen the cooperation of EMBs in the region.

Dr. Ayodhee Prasad Yadav
CHIEF ELECTION COMMISSIONER,
ELECTION COMMISSION, NEPAL

Election Commission of Nepal welcomes the endaveours of Election Commission of India to publish an electornic magazine called VoiCE.NET as a collective initiative to expand electoral education through Global Knowledge Network. It is our common belief that the use of technology in elections not only enhances the efficiency and effectiveness in administering electoral process but also to encourage and strengthen all sections of societies including marginizlied community for active role in national building process through elections as a part of sharing democratic dividend.

Free, fair and periodic election is the essence of democracy the widely used governance system of the current world. In my experience, democracy is such an integral part of society which provides right choice and voice to all citizens irrespective of the social and economic status. Social and civic interaction as well as the economic wellbeing and value system of the nation has greater significance and instrumental role in practicing and implementing democratic process. More significant in this venture is not only the education which shape the ways of thoughts and actions for paving the cultural infrastructures for democracy but the ethical education that ensures the moral capacity of judgement and selection of right choice in terms of representations of their own. It makes democracy itself as a rational and justice system for everyone in the society and nation.

I believe, the current initiatives of VoICE.NET will be instrumental to share the best practices and learn from each other to enhance electoral excellence and contribute to strengthen better electoral and democratic process. It will also serve as a ready reference for election management bodies and concerned stakeholders.

LETTERS

I receive the kind greetings of the Electoral Commission of India on behalf of the Electoral Commission of South Africa.

Greetings from the Electoral Commission of South Africa.

Thank you very much for the invitation below and for the documents attached in your email summarising the Conference held in October.

I wish to acknowledge your invitation. It will be considered by the relevant governance structures in the Electoral Commission of South Africa as soon as possible. I expect to give you feedback not later than the end of February 2017.

Best regards,
Dr Nomsa Masuku
Deputy Chief Electoral Officer: Outreach
Electoral Commission of South Africa

Warm greetings from the Fijian Elections Office [FEO].

We would like to express our deepest gratitude for the opportunities provided by the Election Commission of India [ECI] towards a strengthened partnership in 2016.

These opportunities allowed us a platform to learn, share and improve our voter education knowledge with other Electoral Management Bodies and we are humbly grateful for this.

We are also extremely excited to be part of the VoICE. NET initiative which will greatly assist us in knowledge sharing on a global network on voter education.

Thank you once again as we look forward to a more collaborative approach in 2017.

Kind Regards,

Zubnah Khan | Stakeholder Awareness Coordinator | Strategic Development and Communications

Fijian Elections Office

Elections Canada

Bureau du directeur général des élections
Office of the Chief Electoral Officer

Our file: CEO-2016-030065

DEC 07 2016

Dr. Nasim Zaidi
Chief Election Commissioner of India
Election Commission of India
New Delhi, India

Dear Dr. Zaidi,
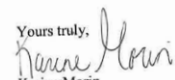
On behalf of the Chief Electoral Officer of Canada, Mr. Marc Mayrand, I would like to thank you for inviting Elections Canada to take part in the global knowledge network on voter education, VoICE.NET.

As you may be aware, steps toward a federal electoral reform have been announced in Canada. Additionally, Elections Canada will go through a leadership transition period at the end of the calendar year. These events greatly impact the availability of Elections Canada to undertake new initiatives. Consequently, we are in the impossibility to commit resources to this project. Thank you for your understanding.

For your consideration, the ACE-Electoral Knowledge Network has developed a similar tool: an online knowledge repository on the topic of Civic and Voter Education http://aceproject.org/ace-en/topics/ve/default. Please contact us or the ACE Secretariat directly if you are interested in more information on the subject.

Regardless, we wish you great success with the VoICE.NET initiative.

Yours truly,

Karine Morin
Senior Advisor, International,
Provincial & Territorial Relations
Elections Canada

30, rue Victoria / 30 Victoria Street, Gatineau (Québec) K1A 0M6 • 819-939-1810 / 1-800-463-6868
Télécopieur / Fax: 819-939-1802 • ATS / TTY 1-800-361-8935 • www.elections.ca

By this email we would like to confirm that your letter has reached us. Thank you for your consideration to the General Election Commission of the Republic of Indonesia (KPU).

Before deciding the Indonesia representation who will be the member of Voice.Net secretariat, we would like to know the responsibility and the rights of person who will in charge on that position, and what's the criteria.

Looking forward your response. Thank you,

Sincerely,

Kartika

Inter-Organization Division

General Election Commission of the Republic of Indonesia

On behalf of Professor Fábio L. Quintas, Director of the Electoral Judiciary School (Superior Electoral Court – Brazil), we inform that we connected our Facebook profile to the pages of every EMB and highlighted them through "Featured Pages" on the sidebar, as requested.

We congratulate you all for the initiative and look forward to strengthening our global network.

Yours faithfully,

Adisson Leal

Brazil

On behalf of to the President Councillor of the National Electoral Institute of Mexico, Dr. Lorenzo Cordova, we appreciate your kind invitation to join VoICE.NET.

As stated before, INE and ECI had been cooperating and sharing experiences since October 2004. We are interested to strengthen bilateral links between both EMBs. So we will have an official definition shortly. We will send you proper letter response.

Regarding the MOU signed on October 2004 by ECI and INE, Mexican Embassy in Delhi has sent us a note from Hon. Umesh Sinha, proposing to review and sign a new document. On this regard we want to know if you could be the focal point of ECI to discuss our new bilateral agreement

Warm regards.

Rafael Riva-Palacio

Director on International Cooperation and Liaison

The National Electoral Institute of Mexico

Many thanks for getting in touch regarding VoICE. Unfortunately we did not have the resource to send a representative to the Conference in October but we have been looking at the outputs and conference reports with interest. We are not able to nominate a Member Secretary at this time I'm afraid but do please keep in touch with information on any future conferences or reports.

We would like to wish you all the very best with VoICE and your ongoing efforts to share learning internationally.

Kind regards,

Suzanne King

Senior Communications Officer, Public Affairs

The Electoral Commission, London

Voting in
Australia

New publication from the Australian Electoral Commission

The Australian Electoral Commission recently launched a magazine which explains the history, workings and importance of the electoral system. *Voting in Australia* uses everyday language, images and infographics to explain complex electoral topics in a clear and open way. It is designed to provide information to all types of people but has been particularly popular with schools.

Class sets of *Voting in Australia* were distributed to all Australian schools and will soon be complimented by a series of online lesson plans for teachers, which offer activities that engage and interest students using the magazine.

The AEC has a long history of working with schools to ensure that the students learn about their electoral system as part of their formal studies. The AEC operates an education centre in Canberra, Australia's capital, in which visiting students learn by participating in their own election and counting the votes, which educates them on preferential system of voting in the House of Representatives and the quota system in the Senate. The AEC also has a dedicated education website which houses a range of information designed specifically for young people.

The new *Voting in Australia* magazine provides another way for Australians to learn about voting says Assistant Commissioner Education and Communications, Jonathan Nicholl, "While most of our education resources are online these days, there is also a need for a single, concise hardcopy publication. It can be used in classrooms as well as by the general public. The magazine format makes it attractive, easy-to-access and able to be distributed right around the country. It is simple and brief enough for people to flick through in a few minutes but it also contains a lot of information- not only about how to vote but about why voting is an important part of our democracy".

The magazine will also be made available as an online teaching resource early in 2017.

The AEC's education resources for young Australians can be found at http://education.aec.gov.au/ and further information can be sought from the AEC's Assistant Commissioner Education and Communications via email at: jonathan.nicholl@aec.gov.au ■

Election day

Elections are always held on a Saturday. Public buildings, such as local schools and halls, are used as polling places. Polling places are open between 8am and 6pm on election day.

Polling places are run by polling officials employed and trained by the AEC. They are there to assist, but they cannot tell you who to vote for.

When you enter a polling place, a polling official will direct you to an issuing table. You will be asked three questions before being issued with ballot papers:

1. What is your full name?
2. What is your address?
3. Have you voted before in this election?

The official will then check the certified list of eligible voters in the electorate, mark off your name, and initial each ballot paper in the top right–hand corner. The ballot papers are then handed to you, and you are directed to a voting screen where you vote in secret. After completing the ballot papers, fold and place them in the sealed ballot boxes. There are separate ballot boxes for House of Representatives and Senate ballot papers.

Compulsory voting

Voting was made compulsory for federal elections in 1924 in response to low voter turnout at previous elections. For example, the lowest turnout for a federal election was in 1903 when only 50.3% of enrolled voters voted. In the 1925 election 91.4% of voters cast a ballot. It is now usual for around 94% of enrolled voters to vote. Australia is one of the few countries in the world with compulsory voting.

A Quest For
Political
Accessibility

According to the World Health Organization (WHO) over one billion people live with some form of disability, a figure which represents one seventh of the world's population, numbers that are increasing due to population ageing and the growing incidence of chronic health conditions associated with disability, such as diabetes, cardiovascular and mental illnesses[1].

The concept of disability used as parameter to compose those numbers is wide, including both personal and environmental aspects. In line with WHO's World Report on Disability[2], it "refers to the negative aspects of the interaction between individuals with a health condition (such as cerebral palsy, Down syndrome, depression) and personal and environmental factors (such as negative attitudes, inaccessible transportation and public buildings, and limited social support)". Thus, disability is an umbrella term which includes not only physical or mental disabilities itself but also activity limitations and participation restrictions. Indeed, since the central idea is *inclusion,* it would not make sense to adopt a restrictive conceptual starting point.

In developing countries 80% of the people live with disability[3], highlighting the pertinence and urgency of that subject in Brazil. It has a wide range of legal protection, starting with the Constitution, which brings numerous legal provisions concerning the rights of persons with disabilities, such as article 7°, XXXI (against discrimination of workers with disabilities), article 37, VIII (holds public offices for persons with disabilities), and article 203, IV (habilitation and rehabilitation of persons with disabilities and promotion of their integration to community life as a goal of social assistance). This is a range of provisions that highlights Brazilian Constitution as a reference in formally enshrining rights of persons with disabilities.

On the international stage, the Convention on Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2007), known as New York Convention, should be highlighted. It decisively consolidates the enshrinement of the rights of persons with disabilities in the global context: by subscribing the convention, the nations adopt a speech for the protection of these rights in unison, internalised to each national constitution, just like in Brazil.

However, among those multiple legal provisions on the rights of persons with disabilities at different levels, there is always much more to achieve in order to reach a reasonable level of effectiveness. And there is a specific spot of the rights of persons with disabilities that remains considerably neglected: participation in political and

public life. Article 29 of New York Convention is an imperative of equality, which aims to ensure that disability won't be an obstacle to the enjoyment of political rights, including the right to vote and to be elected and to participate in the conduct of public affairs.

There are many efforts to implement the mentioned participation, for example, the accessibility program developed by Brazilian Electoral Justice. It was instituted by Resolution 23.381/2012 of Electoral Superior Court and it ensures accessibility to polling stations, Braille code and audio system in electronic ballots, among others. The results are eloquent: the exponential increase of the number of electors with disabilities is remarkable. For instance, from 2012 to 2014, that number in the state of São Paulo almost quadrupled[4]. Certainly the program has shown to be effective.

But the effective political participation is not measured only by electoral registration, as well as participation in public life is not just about electoral process. The focus of the mentioned program lies in the vote and the political participation deserves a broader approach, which starts forming and developing political conscience, goes through the electoral process, peaking with the exercise of the right to vote, until the effective participation of the person with disability in the definition of public policies and in the control of representatives' accountability. It is the enshrinement of that broad view of participation of persons with disabilities in the political course of the community that we call here *political accessibility*.

It is possible that due to the slow progress on physical accessibility we are not even aware of the political accessibility matter. Indeed, the first step is to achieve awareness. The report called *The right to political participation for persons with disabilities: human rights indicators,* issued by the European Agency for Fundamental Rights, points out that key political stakeholders, such as election officials, political parties, public authorities and media

providers lack training and awareness on how to realise the right to political participation of persons with disabilities. It also shows a disproportion between the interest that persons with disabilities have in politics and their effective political involvement. Finally, just to quote a few examples, it highlights that persons with disabilities have obstacles to the access to information, affecting thus "the heart of political participation"[5].

In this regard, the Brazilian law on accessibility, particularly Decree 5.296/2004, enshrines the *e-accessibility,* defining accessibility as "the condition to use with security and total or assisted autonomy spaces, furniture and urban equipments, buildings, transport services, systems and means of communication and information, by a person with disability or reduced mobility". In a more incisive way, Europe enshrined it in its *Disability Strategy* (2010-2020), extrapolating the legislative level and paving the way for the development of public policies. In Brazil, despite the legislative support, the prevalence of a broad concept of accessibility has been hindered by the lack of complementary legislative activities and effective public policies.

If for a long time we have discussed how to remove physical and social barriers, it is time to reflect upon the removal of political barriers that equally limit the effectiveness of human dignity of persons with disabilities. ∎

Fábio L. Quintas & Adisson Leal

Fábio L. Quintas - Director of Electoral Judiciary School (Electoral Judiciary Court - Brazil). M.Sc. and Ph.D in State Law at University of São Paulo (USP).
Adisson Leal - Chief Advisor of Electoral Judiciary School (Electoral Judiciary Court - Brazil). M. Sc. in Constitutional Law and Ph.D candidate in Civil Law at University of Lisbon. Visiting researcher at Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München.

[1] World Health Organization, World Report on Disability.

[2] World Health Organization, World Report on Disability.

[3] United Nations, International day of persons with disabilities, Background.

[4] Tribunal Superior Eleitoral, Acessibilidade na Justiça Eleitoral: Relatório de diagnóstico da acessibilidade na Justiça Eleitoral.

[5] European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, The right to political participation of persons with disabilities: human rights indicators.

Measures to ensure free and fair elections according
to the provisions of the Bulgarian legislation.

Best practices

1. **Transparency in the appointment of CEC. Procedure.**
   The Central Election Commission of the Republic of Bulgaria is the one of the most transparent bodies in the world. The members of CEC are selected on the basis of a public procedure – hearing of the candidate members which is carried out in the Standing Parliamentary Commission and is broadcast online and by the National Television. Thus, the citizens, the civil organisations and the media can gather their own impressions about each one of the candidates. Furthermore, as the CVs of the candidates are published in the website of the National Assembly at an earlier stage before the hearing, the citizens and the civil organisations can put their specific questions to each candidate wherein the answer can be given during the hearing.

2. **Transparency in the work of CEC.**
   CECcarries out all its work under the watchful eye of the public and the media. The meetings of the commission are broadcast online. Video archive of every meeting and the full verbatim of the meetings are posted in the website of the commission. The website of the commission provides full information about all decisions of CEC, notices of upcoming events, of parties, coalitions of parties and candidates thereof registered for participation in the elections, of received complaints and alerts and the progress thereon, of the rights and obligations of voters, etc.

3. **Public council at CEC.**
   Bulgaria has a unique institutionalized form of cooperation between CECand the non-governmental organizations which observe the elections. This is the Public Council at CEC comprising of representatives of the organisations participating with observers in the elections.

4. **Challenging. Judicial review of the decisions of CEC.**
   According to the Bulgarian legislation, all decisions and actions of the election commissions related to the preparation of elections can be challenged before the higher ranking commission and, if not solution is reached, they are ultimately adjudicated by CEC. All decisions of CECare appealable before the Supreme Administrative Court. Stringent time limits for challenging / disputing have been introduced with a view to arriving at a final resolution of the dispute and not preventing / impeding the participation of the different subjects in the election process. The judicial review of commissions' decisions is particularly important for ensuring free and fair elections.

   An exception to the principle of challenging decisions before a higher ranking commission is the case of detected administrative violations by the commission and the decisions concerning the proclamation of the election results.

5. **Enabling every voter to vote.**
   One of the main guarantees for free and fair elections is to ensure that every voter can exercise their right to vote. The Bulgarian legislation guarantees the exercise of the right to vote. Every voter can vote at their

permanent address or, where they have submitted a request within a pre-defined period, at their present address. Polling stations cover up to 1000 voters. At the same time, the law takes care of right to vote by persons living in remote settlements – in such cases polling stations are set up if there are not fewer than 20 voters. The law provides for setting up polling stations at medical-treatment and health-care facilities, assisted-living facilities and other specialised social service institutions and on board navigation vesselsflying the Bulgarian flag. The law also provides provisions in prisons and detention centres, provided that there are not fewer than 10voters. To enable school and university students to exercise their right to vote, the law grants them the option to vote at the polling station of the community where they study certified by the respective educational institution.

Special attention is paid to granting an option to vote to people with disabilities. It is the obligation of the mayor of the municipality to ensure access to the polling stations for the people with disabilities or their transportation to the polling station, if necessary. Where the disability is of a nature that prevents the voter from exercising his / her franchise, he / she may vote in his / her home by means of a mobile ballot box.

The law grants voters the option to vote abroad.

At the same time, the members of the election commissions, the observers, the persons officially engaged in the elections can obtain non-resident voting certificates so that they can exercise their franchise while discharging their official duties.

6. **Awareness-raising campaign regarding citizens' rights.**
Citizens' awareness of their rights and obligations during the preparation of the election process and on the election day is a main guarantee of free and fair elections. To raise that awareness, CEC conducts a broad awareness-raising campaign making use of the diversity of information channels. Thus CEC:

- Designs and distributes through the media audio and audio-visual clips on citizens' rights and obligations and on the voting method.
- CECdesigns brochures and leaflets on voters' rights and distributes them through printed media (as insertions), in the home mailboxes, through schools and universities for school and university students, through organisations of people with disabilities on the rights of people with disabilities, etc.
- For the upcoming presidential elections, CEC will personally address all persons who will vote for the first time.
- CEC conducts an awareness-raising campaign for the Bulgarians abroad by sending materials and information through the diplomatic and consular missions, the organisations of the Bulgarian communities abroad and in its website.
- CEC organises regular (weekly) briefings and many interviews on the organisation of the election process, upcoming events, citizens' rights; it sends communications to the media on the deadlines for exercise of rights.
- All audio, audio-visual, printed and other materials and communications are posted under a special heading for voters in the website of CEC.

7. **Legislation streamlining mechanism.**
The legislator has provided that after elections the CEC shall make an analysis thereof and file with the National Assembly proposals for streamlining the election legislation based on the accumulated experience. The previous experience shows that the parliament takes account of the proposals which CEC makes in this field. ∎

Voter Education through
Youth Engagement

The Fijian Elections Office [FEO] Conducts the Biggest Election in a Non-Election Year through Youth Engagement

The Fijian Elections Office [FEO] Conducts the Biggest Election in a Non-Election Year through Youth Engagement

FEO is an independent electoral management body established in March 2014 under the Electoral Decree, 2014. The FEO's role is to deliver credible Elections in line with international best practices.

The 2014 General Election was conducted after a lapse of eight [8] years under a new electoral system; Open List Proportional Representation. The FEO organised the Fijian General Election for the new 50-member Parliament under the 2013 Constitution. The Multi-national Observer Group [MOG] highlighted that the 2014 General Election in Fiji was credible and broadly represented the will of the Fijian people and saw the lowest number of invalid votes in Fiji's history – 0.75%.

The low number of invalid votes amongst those voting demonstrated the strength of the new electoral system, which gave every registered voter a single vote in a multi-member national constituency. Fiji recorded an impressive 84.6% voter turnout during the 2014 General Election.

The FEO conducted the election for the Fiji National University Students Association **[FNUSA],** marking the formalization of months of preparatory work by the student steering

FNU students casting their votes to elect their Student Association representatives.

Barrel draw conducted by the FEO to determine the order of candidates on the ballot paper

FEO's Returning Officer for the FNUSA Election, Mr Mesake Dawai, with the token of appreciation from FNU

FNU students casting their votes during the FNUSA Election on 25 October 2016

committee and laying the foundation for the formation of the first ever Student Association within the university.

The election itself was the largest ever conducted by FEO outside of an election year, spanning ten different campuses and involving about 3,301 voters. The contested positions were of the President, Treasurer, Secretary, Public Relations Officer, Social and Cultural Chairperson, Assets Chairperson, Education Chairperson, Sports Chairperson and Religious Chairperson, which were to be selected from a pool of thirty-two candidates.

The Fiji National University's campuses located in the Central, Western and Northern Divisions: Ba, Derrick, Koronivia, Labasa, Lautoka, Pasifika, Nabua, Namaka, Nasinu and Tamavua were covered.

Description

The FEO recognizes that there is a need to develop capacity in elections in Fiji, not only for FEO staff, but for all Fijians.

On 2 August 2016, the Fijian Minister responsible for Elections, exercising his power pursuant to section 154 of the Electoral Decree

2014, approved a request from the Office of the Chancellor of the Fiji National University **[FNU]** for the FEO to conduct FNUSA Elections.

Formed in 2010, The FNU campuses, either had student associations that were not very active or they lacked such associations entirely.

The FNU was formed in 2010 by bringing together various different schools and colleges throughout the country under the FNU umbrella. These schools, now called Campuses, either had student associations that were not very active or they lacked such associations entirely.

Following the approval, FEO immediately began preparing for the election.

The FEO implemented the following basic principles, which have consistently developed good electoral practices in small scale elections in Fiji to bring about consistency and high standards:

i.   clear and accurate timelines for elections processes;
ii. an accurate voter list;
iii. a proper and independent nomination process;
iv. a transparent and impartial polling process; and
v.   timely reconciliation of results and naming of office bearers.

The FEO prepared a proposed timeline for the election which was presented to the FNU team, as well as the representatives from the student-led Steering Committee. Once the proposed timeline was agreed, FEO advertised the Notice for the opening of nominations for the ten campuses.

At the close of Nominations period, it was found that many of the positions were returned uncontested. Those positions were immediately announced, however, there were twelve [12] positions from four [4] campuses that were

contested and which required the FEO to conduct campus elections.

The 2016 FNUSA Election was conducted in line with recognized electoral best practices, which included:

1. The appointment of Mr Mesake Dawai, FEO's Review and Compliance Officer, as Returning Officer, to create an independent and impartial electoral environment. Mr Dawai was also able to act as a conduit between the FNU and the Steering Committee during the process to ensure all stakeholders were able to cooperate and support the process.

2. The publication of election notices in the media, which enhanced voter access and boosted interest in the election.

3. The campaign guidelines in the FNUSA regulations that helped foster a peaceful, ethical and calm electoral environment.

4. FEO's implementation of a standard Nomination Form for all Candidates. This allowed for appropriate vetting, as per the Constitution, and greater transparency, in case a nominee wished to appeal the decision of the Returning Officer.

5.   The Office of the Registrar at FNU's submission of a list of eligible members who were entitled to vote in the election five weeks prior to the election. This comprehensive list assisted the FEO in determining the validity of Nominations.

6. The "barrel draw" conducted by the FEO to determine the order of candidates on the ballot paper. This event was open to all candidates and other stakeholders.

7. The FEO's Postal Voting and Attendance Voting programmes ensured maximum access for students. The polling stations were open from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. at all four campuses. Postal voting was available to

CHALLENGES

1. Formulating election standards, given that there were no regulations governing the procedural conduct of FNU elections and the Draft FNUSA Constitution only contained guidelines for candidacy. In response, the FEO decided to derive the procedures for the conduct of the election based on standards previously implemented in the successful Trade Union Elections.

2. Availability of students on Election Day or low voter turnout. Most students were not aware of elections taking place with some students being away on industrial work attachments.

3. Some voters were turned away as their names were not present on the voter list as FEO relied on the list given by the University.

SWOT ANALYSIS
Strengths

1. The 2016 FNUSA Election was conducted in line with recognized electoral best practices.

2. The FEO maintained constant contact with student leaders to ensure they understood the processes involved resulting in direct capacity development.

3. Throughout the election, media organisations demonstrated consistent interests in the electoral process and outcome. They actively reported on the elections and showed a strong commitment to supporting election events. Their invaluable support played a major role in publicizing candidates in the media – adding a layer of excitement and encouragement for those young people interested in pursuing politics.

4. During the electoral process, the FEO worked in close conjunction with the Vice Chancellor's Office at the FNU, which provided all the necessary information and logistical support that made the electoral process a success.

Weaknesses

1. Compilation of Voter list required FNU to make exceptions to the university policies on release of student details.

2. General nature of the FNUSA electoral rules created some ambiguity at various stages of the process.

3. Low turnout due to inappropriate timings for elections in some campuses.

Opportunities

1. Enhance the participation of students in the processes involved in elections.

2. Establish better means of awareness amongst students.

3. Allocate dates for elections during normal lecture schedules.

Threats

1. Lack of interest from students in participating in the voting process.

2. Candidates and voters not understanding the electoral process.

OUTCOME

The first election for the FNUSA presented the FEO with an opportunity to directly engage and at the same time demonstrate the running of elections to young voters.

Students of the FNU were able to participate in elections that were officially organized by the country's Electoral Management Body [EMB]. In reciprocation, this exercise contributed to building confidence in the EMB and the electoral process the EMB conducts.

Whilst majority of the positions in most campuses were returned uncontested in this election, it is envisaged that the experience from this election will certainly promote participation in future elections as the FNUSA grows older.

The FEO will continue its engagement with the executives of the FNUSA and promote good leadership practices as well as electoral awareness in this one of the larger University in Fiji.

The FEO is a strong advocate in the electoral development of young Fijians with youths being one of our most important stakeholders. The FNUSA Election provided us with an opportunity to promote understanding and participation of the best electoral practices amongst our young leaders.

those students who were on industrial attachments on the day of elections.

8. The Polling Place setup replicated the

General Election Setup, and the polling materials were the same as the General Election. The FEO did not use indelible ink in this election, as there was only one

FNU Chancellor, Mr Iqbal Jannif, presents the token of appreciation to FEO's Returning Officer for the FNUSA Election, Mr Mesake Dawai

voter list and only one polling place – this is sufficient to prevent double voting in a small scale election.

9. The 12,000 ballot papers printed by the FEO for this election. Printing was done in-house and it was decided that different positions up for election would be assigned different color ballot papers. Depending on the polling locations, voters received up to five different ballots to select candidates.

10. An open ballot counting held on Wednesday, 26 October 2016 at venues assigned by the FNU. The counting was widely covered by the media.

11. The formal announcement was made through the media, to the Steering Committee, the Registrar's Office and all the candidates following the Count.

According to FNU Vice Chancellor, Professor Nigel Healey, it is in the interests of students to have a very strong representative student body, and the FNUSA is now more qualified than ever to speak on behalf of students.

He added that it is very important that there is a student association that actually provides services to students – that is actually supporting them. People come to university, not just for an education, they come in for a holistic experience.

A token of appreciation was also presented to Mr Mesake Dawai, from the FNU during the FNUSA Inauguration on 26 November 2016.

The FNU Acting Vice Chancellor, Dr Eci Nabalarua, said the University carried out this election in partnership with FEO to conduct a transparent poll to elect the inaugural FNU student body.

She added that FNU acknowledges the contribution of the FEO in facilitating the campus election and is grateful for a smooth and transparent election process.

It is vital that an understanding of electoral systems is imparted to the youth, as the future of the country, so that they can uphold the values of a democratic system. ∎

Overview of Voter Education in Georgia

Centre for Electoral Systems Development, Reforms and Trainings (Training Centre) of Georgia was established on January 6, 2010 according to the amendments made to the Election Code of Georgia. The Training Centre wears the status of legal entity of public law and appears to be an active partner of Central Election Commission of Georgia (CEC).

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

Electoral Development Schools

crucial importance for increasing electoral participation towards the elections.

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

election and non-election period in two ways: informing voters and educating voters.

Informing Voters focuses on providing society with information to explain voting procedures and types of elections. In this direction, the Training Centre ensures the preparation of various materials (Illustrated brochures; Educational films; Voter E-learning programs) and organizes informative events, here are some examples:

- Students' debate-clubs were created with the purpose of motivating young people as well as increasing awareness, with debates being organized annually. The winning team is given certificates of achievements. The topic of the latest debates among the students was gender related issues in the elections;

- CEC has opened election exhibition at its own premises and hosts on permanent basis for young voters, including representatives of ethnic minorities, enabling youth to learn about history of the Elections in Georgia and relevance of elections in promoting Democracy;

Students Debate Club

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

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

- On the primary study level of the project, 'Elections and Young Voters' is implemented for public schools' students of XI-XII grade. The initiative is aimed at the enhancement of civic electoral awareness among youth. Project is achieved successfully in cooperation with ministry of education of Georgia and covers Public schools in ethnic minority and high mountain municipalities;

- On a fundamental study level, the study course in the Electoral Law is delivered in 19 universities for one semester, according to the curriculum designed by the Training Centre. The project aims

Puzzle Event

to promote electoral culture development of youth and to enhance necessary professional knowledge and practical skills of students of law and journalism faculties;

- On informative introductory study level, CEC Georgia and Training Centre has developed "Electoral Development Schools" project. It aims at increasing civil engagement in the electoral process and contributes to the promotion of electoral issues among citizens. The curriculum of 10 days trainings developed by the Training Centre gives the opportunity to the participants to receive knowledge on electoral issues including: electoral systems, election administration, electoral stakeholders, and democratic electoral principles. The project was piloted in 10 election districts and aims to expand and cover the whole Georgia gradually;

- On Specialized study level, the Training Centre has introduced "Electoral Administrator Courses". The course offers the study of polling procedures and is aimed at the enhancement of civic awareness around electoral matters and at the same time, contributes to the formation of potential election administration officers' database and qualified human resources for other electoral stakeholders.

- Series of Grant Competitions are provided by CEC and Training Centre encouraging the involvement of NGO sector in the process of promoting the voting culture and increasing voter activity in the elections. Grant competitions are held on an annual basis targeting the groups of young voters, voters with disabilities, ethnic minorities and women.

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

Natia Zaalishvili
Training Centre Director, Georgia

Umbrella Campaign

SVEEP and Elections in India

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

- A pledge, which gained popularity among newly eligible voters in India during the past seven years, changed the attitude of young India towards elections, thanks to SVEEP (Systematic Voter's Education and Electoral Participation) initiatives by Election Commission of India (ECI).

Voters' Participation in the democratic and electoral processes is integral to the successful running of any democracy and the very basis of wholesome democratic elections. Thus, it becomes an integral part of election management. In India, the constitutional mandate of the ECI for 'superintendence, direction and control' of elections contain the built in high responsibility to have every eligible Indian on the electoral roll and get everyone on the electoral roll to voluntarily vote. The election management processes have gone from strength to strength over the decades and have responded ably to emerging challenges.

India's Constitution laid out the aspiration that every adult Indian regardless of gender, formal education, socio economic status or location would have a right to vote and every vote would count the same. To many it looked an audacious aspiration, even impracticable in a country of this size, with limited physical infrastructure, with low levels of literacy and wide diversity.

Election Commission of India(ECI) successfully converted this aspiration into a reality. This was undoubtedly a gigantic task, right from enumerating voters to locating polling booths at easily accessible places and ensuring secrecy and security of the ballot paper. The sheer number of voters and the logistical challenges on account of distances and accessibility were truly huge.

ECI has also been quick in keeping itself abreast of technological changes and in introducing improvements in the electoral process. Photo Electoral rolls are computerized, voters have voter identity cards, proceedings in sensitive polling booths are video-graphed, polling at several booths is webcast, political parties have free time on national television and national radio, ballot papers and ballot boxes have been replaced by electronic voting machines, Voter verifiable paper audit trail (VVPAT) has been introduced to verify that votes cast by the voter goes to the intended candidate. Results now get declared in one day. Each of these changes was, in some sense, a break-through. These improvements have contributed not only to the speedy conduct of elections but also to enhancing the transparency and credibility of the whole electoral process.

Dimensions and challenges of Voter participation

Lok Sabha 2014 elections involved up to 834 million electors[1], using over one million Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs) and covered over 919,452 polling stations. Like many democracies across the world that are experiencing declining voter turnout and increasing apathy to vote amongst specific groups of people, India faced the same problem. In the 2009 parliamnetary elections (Lok Sabha), 417 million voters turned up to vote. 717 million were registered as electors and 300 million people did not turn out to vote. It was observed that women, youth and urban electors had lower participation in these elections.

Realising the gravity of this participation deficit in the electoral process, ECI chose the theme for the Diamond Jubilee Year of the Election Commission in 2010 as "Greater Participation for a Stronger Democracy". ECI underlined that it needed to tread the last mile, where issues like healthy and complete electoral rolls, urban apathy, women's participation deficit and youth indifference to the electoral process were to be tackled. Participation based on voluntary inclination/ motivation of the individual voters and persuasion by election management machinery needed to be encouraged. The Commission thus decided to bring Voter education to the center table of election management and allocated it necessary priority and resources.

The Foundation of Voter Education

To meet the challenge of eligible and yet unregistered citizens and not so high voter turnout, ECI started reaching out to citizens to understand what was stopping them from registering in the electoral rolls and voting. Certain amounts of Information, Education

and Communication (IEC) activities were taken up in 2009 to benefit the voters. This was subsequently revamped in 2010 as a national programme titled Systematic Voters' Education and Electoral Participation (SVEEP).
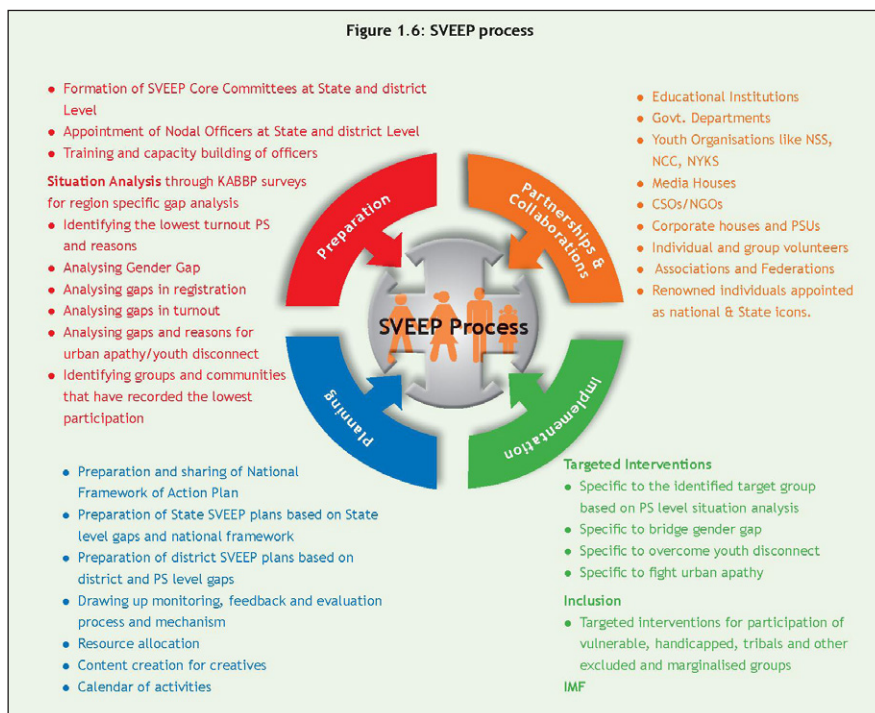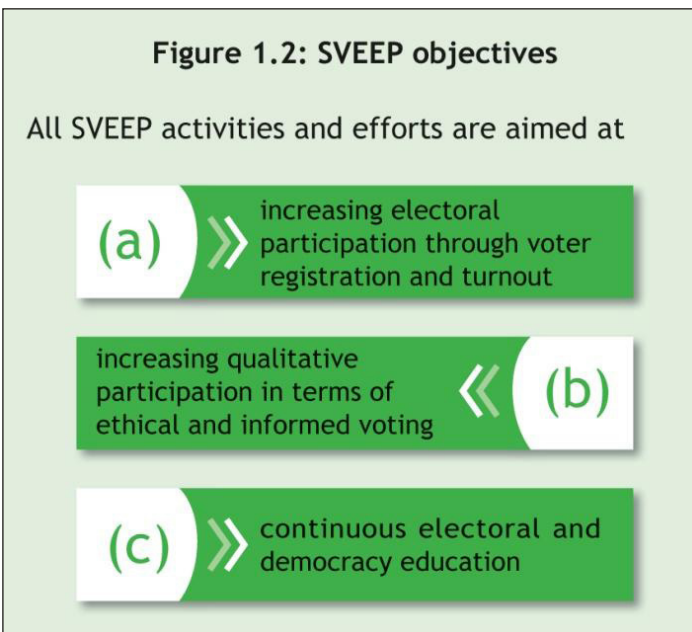
Since its inception, SVEEP has grown into a strategic, scientific, systematic and synergistic programme with well chalked out framework and robust structural set-up at national, provincial and grass root level for its effective implementation.

Figure 1.2: SVEEP objectives

All SVEEP activities and efforts are aimed at

(a) increasing electoral participation through voter registration and turnout

(b) increasing qualitative participation in terms of ethical and informed voting

(c) continuous electoral and democracy education

At national level, SVEEP Division at ECI formulates policies, lays down the framework, plans interventions and monitors implementation besides carrying out continuous discourse with voting publics, civil society groups and media from a national perspective. At provincial level, in each of the State Chief Electoral Office, an officer is assigned the charge of the SVEEP programme in the state. Core groups comprising representatives from educational institutions, youth organizations, women's organisations and Civil Society Groups guide the State election machinery in evolving and executing a comprehensive SVEEP plan. At District level the institution of District Collector- the administrative head of the district traditionally plays the key role in election management and spearheads the implementation of the SVEEP programme. A district SVEEP committee is constituted at the District level headed generally by the Chief Executive officer or Chief Development Officer to supervise the implementation of the programme in the district.

Since 2006, ECI has introduced the institution of Booth Level Officers, popularly known as BLOs, who generally cover one or two Polling Stations and are responsible for maintaining the Electoral Roll in good health. They now constitute primary block SVEEP related connectivity with citizens.

SVEEP- Systematic Voters' Education and Electoral Participation

The overarching framework of the strategy for voter registration and participation named as IMF (Information, Motivation and Facilitation) comprises of a plethora of systematic interventions to involve the people in the electoral process.

Figure 1.6: SVEEP process

- Formation of SVEEP Core Committees at State and district Level
- Appointment of Nodal Officers at State and district Level
- Training and capacity building of officers

Situation Analysis through KABBP surveys for region specific gap analysis
- Identifying the lowest turnout PS and reasons
- Analysing Gender Gap
- Analysing gaps in registration
- Analysing gaps in turnout
- Analysing gaps and reasons for urban apathy/youth disconnect
- Identifying groups and communities that have recorded the lowest participation

- Preparation and sharing of National Framework of Action Plan
- Preparation of State SVEEP plans based on State level gaps and national framework
- Preparation of district SVEEP plans based on district and PS level gaps
- Drawing up monitoring, feedback and evaluation process and mechanism
- Resource allocation
- Content creation for creatives
- Calendar of activities

Preparation

Partnerships & Collaborations

Planning

Implementation

SVEEP Process

- Educational Institutions
- Govt. Departments
- Youth Organisations like NSS, NCC, NYKS
- Media Houses
- CSOs/NGOs
- Corporate houses and PSUs
- Individual and group volunteers
- Associations and Federations
- Renowned individuals appointed as national & State icons.

Targeted Interventions
- Specific to the identified target group based on PS level situation analysis
- Specific to bridge gender gap
- Specific to overcome youth disconnect
- Specific to fight urban apathy

Inclusion
- Targeted interventions for participation of vulnerable, handicapped, tribals and other excluded and marginalised groups

IMF

Situation analysis

The systematic assessment of current and previous electoral data is carried out to guide the interventions. In addition to comparative studies of statistical and numeric data, a simultaneous evidence based analysis of socio-cultural and economic factors is done in order to have a clear understanding of reasons for non-participation. The assessment is done based on population data, elector-population ratio, gender ratio on roll as against census figures, elector's photo identity card (EPIC) coverage, age cohort, etc. Survey agencies are engaged for carrying out baseline and endline survey to find the underlying reasons for under registration, last mile problems in updation of Electoral Rolls, EPIC take off and low voter turnout and to identify the demographics of elector segments with lower electoral participation so that suitable interventions can be mounted and their impact assesses. The nomenclature of Voters' behaviour survey has been changed to survey of knowledge, attitude and practices (KAP) of voters.

Targeted Interventions

In order to improve participation of all sections of electorate, ECI decided to bridge the gap through targeted interventions for meeting gender gap, fighting urban apathy and overcoming youth disconnect. Targeted interventions are carried for identified left out groups/communities in partnership with identified agencies/support groups for meeting registration gaps during roll revision and ahead of elections

Partners and Collaborations

Working with partners is an important part of the strategy, as any implementation as well as planning process shall require inputs and support from various agencies and departments. The Election Commission collaborated with educational institutions and youth organizations to particularly tap the new voters in the age group of 18-19yrs, promote greater awareness amongst youth and students about electoral process and to seek their assistance in facilitating voter registration. It also collaborated with Central and State Government Departments like the departments of health, education, women and child development, Cooperatives, Welfare etc., so that these departments can extend their existing infrastructure and manpower (field functionaries) for electoral education and outreach. Collaboration with Government and private media as well as Civil Society and credible NGOs for increasing people's awareness regarding electoral participation has also helped in creating voter awareness. Even the private media houses and Corporates are joining in and extending support to the SVEEP programme. ECI has developed separate 'Framework of Engagement' with CSOs, Media Houses and Corporate.

Media & Communication

A range of media are utilised for communication and reaching out to the potential voter population with a variety materials and campaigns for taking the message forward. For the widest possible availability of information easily and readily various mediums of information are employed for the purpose. Mass media like Electronic (Radio, TV, Film), Print, mid media, Social media, Inter personal communication, local and folk media and innovative collaterals are used for the purpose.

- Communication campaigns through mass media, folk media and other media vehicles besides direct people-to-people contact.
- While rural women were targeted through inter-personal communication through literacy and health workers, Social media and internet is used to reach out to the urban population and youth.
- Posters and pamphlets and folk media including street plays are widely used to reach out to rural population.
- The facility for online registration of voters is the only system in India where

one can get an identity card, i.e., Elector Photo Identity Cards (EPIC) without visiting a government office. National Voter Service Portal (NVSP) provides all kind of information and services to citizens. Social media is being used at district and state level for enhancing voter awareness and increasing voter turnout   increasing polling percentage. Most of the state chief electoral offices own face book pages for reaching out techno-savvy young voters.

Motivating the people

The task of enthusing and inspiring the disinterested and alienated citizens and address their apathy and skepticism to make possible their participation in the electoral process is imperative for greater electoral participation. It is crucial to associate a sense of pride with the right and duty of exercising one's franchise. Identifying the ability of inspirational personalities to establish authentic connection with the masses, ECI associated with renowned Indians from various field enjoying national appeal and appointed them as ECI's National Icons to motivate Voters. Similarly renowned individuals in states were appointed as State Icons.

Physical Events and Activities

A variety of physical events and activities are taken up under SVEEP for motivation and mobilisation.

- Competitions like drawing, debates, declamations, quiz in educational institutions on elections and voting
- Activities like local and folk art competitions targeting rural women
- Song writing competitions and Rock festivals in public places to interest urban youth
- Sporting events like kite flying, motor rallies, cricket tournaments, wrestling events, marathon runs
- Mass mobilisation events like rallies, human

chains, and candle light vigils are utilized with good effect
- Pledge to vote by masses in educational institutions, gram Sabha, gathering and special events
- Entertainment shows converging with awareness inform of street plays, magic shows, fashion shows
- Flash mobs in malls, celebrity endorsement, online quizzes targeting urban populace
- Mock polls and dummy polling stations are effectively used to engage people

Facilitating the Voter

Greater participation of the public in elections can be guaranteed by making the process and procedures voter-friendly. The final step of the SVEEP strategy holds great importance as an informed, aware and motivated public geared up to contribute to the democratic machinery needs to be complemented with measures that make their participation easier and smoother. There could be a risk of credibility loss if after generating demand, there is a shortfall in supply.

Voter Facilitation Centres, providing voter slips ahead of polls, separate queues for women and aged, women polling officials to assist women voters, and increase in number of polling stations so that every voter can reach one within 2 kilometers are some of the popular facilitation measures.

- Online registration made available on ECI website and also CEO's website
- Name search facility on electoral roll on the CEO's website and also ECI website
- SMS based service for searching name and polling booth
- Information on election laws and rules and the Guidelines and also details regarding the Election Officials including the ROs, AROs, BLOs available on CEO website
- Voters' Facilitation Centres are citizen friendly centres to facilitate citizens on electoral roll issues and EPIC cards". Electoral roll issues of citizens are additions,

deletions, modifications and transpositions of their names to the roll. VFC is a one stop service for citizens.

- Registration Forms made available at prominent places including Banks and Post Offices, Colleges and Universities, and also in High Schools for newly eligible electors.
- Special registration camps in weekly markets, during festivals and through mobile vans ahead of elections.
- Poll hours extended to 11 hours in most regions to facilitate voters in the national elections 2014.
- Assured Minimum Facilities (AMF) - ramps, toilets, electricity, sheds and drinking water at every Polling Station.
- Model Polling Stations (MPS) established at various locations to provide additional facilities to voters to make voting a pleasant experience.
- Separate queues for men and women at the polling stations to facilitate women voters. Also in infirm, old and physically challenged voters are given priority in voting at the booth.
- Volunteers at Polling Booths to assist senior citizens and infirm voters, wheelchair for persons with disability.
- Braille facility on EVM and tactile signages for visually challenged voters.At each polling station, an alphabetical list of electors is also displayed prominently which makes the task of locating the elector's serial number in the polling station much easier.
- A basket of alternate photo identity documents that can be used for voting are announced ahead of poll day. Wide publicity is given about these alternate documents to facilitate people to vote in absence of EPIC.
- Voter Guide and Photo Voter Slips for every voter delivered at residence few days ahead of poll day. These carry the name and details of the polling booth and serve as identification on the poll day.
- Voters' Facilitation Centres to assist voters and provide requisite information about voting and services like display of Voter lists, issue of duplicate EPIC etc.
- Search facility for name on voter list on national and CEO websites and through SMS.
- Voters' Helplines in districts to facilitate the voters in getting right information.
- Polling day reminders through SMS and also on Radio and Television and through Public address systems.
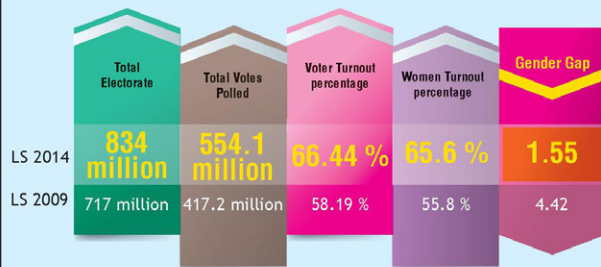
Monitoring & Evaluation

To assess the efficacy of implementations and derive learnings for improvement, mid period review and constant monitoring of SVEEP programmes are conducted. Regular Video Conferences are organised by CEO with all DEOs for review of implementation. The programme is reviewed at the national level by the Director General who keeps the Commission briefed. Statistical studies, innovations and case studies along with the creative material produced are compiled at DEO and CEO level and shared with the Commission for replication and scaling up.

During the actual period of conduct of elections, Awareness Observers (senior professionals from the Central level) are deployed to monitor the implementation of the programme in that critical time. To encourage and felicitate outstanding contributions for greater electoral participation individuals and organisations are presented awards on the National Voters' Day. The National Best Electoral Practices Award instituted since 2011 are given out to officials in various areas of conduct of elections. The National Awards for Media, Public Sector Units/Corporate and CSOs given simultaneously commend the efforts of Media, Corporate and CSOs for supporting SVEEP objectives through their voluntary campaigns. ■

[1]Total electorate for Lok Sabha election 2014

OUTCOME

Figure 2.2: Voter turnout highlights of Lok Sabha election 2014

|	Total Electorate	Total Votes Polled	Voter Turnout percentage	Women Turnout percentage	Gender Gap
LS 2014	834 million	554.1 million	66.44 %	65.6 %	1.55
LS 2009	717 million	417.2 million	58.19 %	55.8 %	4.42

→ The turnout for LS 2014 stands at a record high of 66.44 per cent. The highest turnout was recorded earlier in 1984 at 64.02 per cent.

→ The electorate in LS 2014 was around 117 million more than in 2009.

→ There was an increase of voters by 32.71 per cent over voters in 2009 and in real number terms, approximately 137 million more voted in LS 2014.

→ The gender gap between the male turnout percentage and the female turnout percentage now stands reduced at 1.55 percentage points against more than four percentage points in 2009.

→ 16 States/UTs recorded a historic turnout while 33 among the 35 States/UTs recorded a higher turnout than in LS 2009 election.

→ 16 States/UTs recorded a higher women turnout and among these, women voters surpassed men for the first time ever in any Lok Sabha elections in nine States/UTs.

→ Urban turnout recorded an increase across the country over the turnout percentage in 2009.
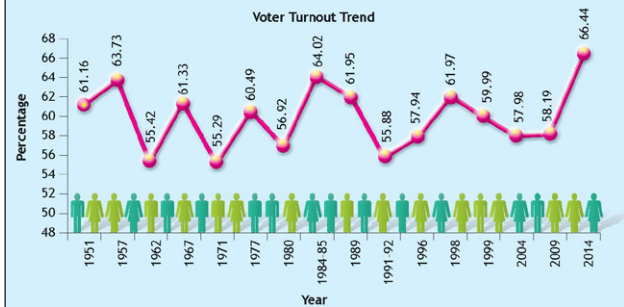

Graph 2.7 : Gender Gap in voter turnout in national elections in India (%)
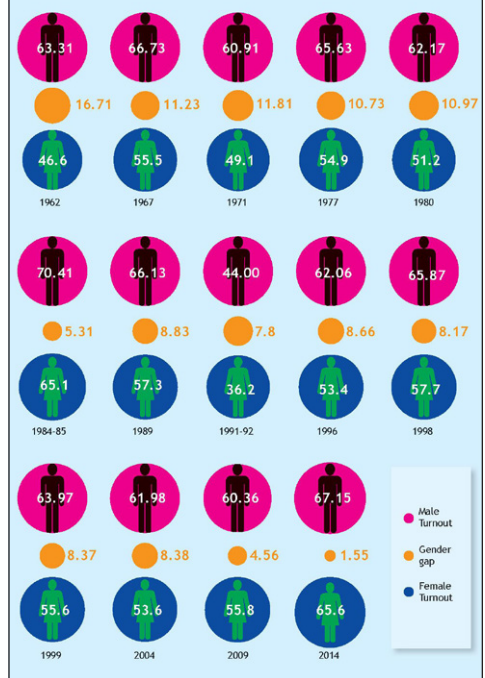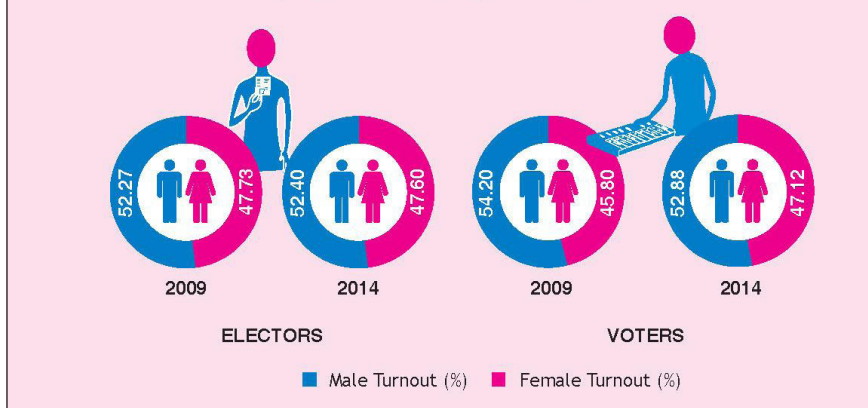

Graph 2.2: Comparison of electors and voters in national elections
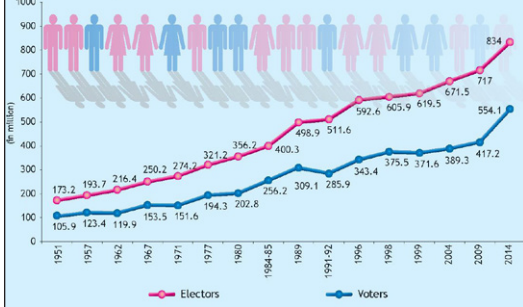
Graph 2.1: Voter turnout in Lok Sabha elections
Voter Turnout Trend

Graph 2.8: Gender breakup of electors and voters

■ Male Turnout (%)   ■ Female Turnout (%)

Enhancing Participation of Special Groups of Voters

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

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

Inclusion of Iraqi voters abroad

In accordance with Iraqi election law, the Commission has developed procedures to ensure the right to vote for the Iraqis abroad in the parliamentary elections. In 2005, the Commission did not have the detailed and accurate information about the number of Iraqis abroad. But later years of 2010, it requested the assistance of the Organization (IOM) for the election procedure abroad. In 2014, IHEC made Iraqi employees aboard to vote from different countries of the world through conduct of elections abroad amounted to Iraqis voting from twenty countries.

For the staff on diplomatic missions, the voting was conducted in the same polling stations where votes were cast by Iraqis abroad and outside the buildings, embassies and consulates chosen by the Commission. IHEC is developing an integrated educational program to educate voters abroad on how to exercise the voting process to ensure they vote properly.

Inclusion of Iraqi security forces

Iraqi law allows the Iraqi security forces to vote, and the voting process for them is conducted two days before the day of election. While the security forces of the army and police vote in special centers, but the process of counting for this category takes place later when the process of counting the public vote is conducted. The Commission is also interested in an elaborate scheme to educate security forces around the polling station on voting.

In order to secure their votes image the plan includes, lectures to members of the security forces and the distribution of publications and posters in addition to advertising on satellite channels.

Special Voting facilities for the staff and patients in medical hospitals

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

Up-left and Up-right - Security forces personnel casting their vote.

Down-left and Down-Right-Special Voting arrangements for patients and staff at hospitals

good knowledge on how to vote at the special voting centres.

Voting Arrangements for the staffs and security personnel working in prisons and inmates

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

Voting by staff Working at the polling stations

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

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

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

To ensure the plans yield best results, IHEC, through election educational institute in

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

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

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

Safaa Ibrahim Jasim
Commissioner, IHEC

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

Investing in the
Future of Democracy

Voter and Civic Education; Curricular and Extracurricular Models;
Curriculum and Content Development for different levels

Introduction

The Elections Commission of Maldives (ECM) was established on 7th August 2008 as an independent and impartial institution to conduct and supervise all state election and public referendums as well as to monitor the regulatory framework partaining to the functioning of political parties. Under the Elections Commission Act (2008), 5 members are appointed by the President for a 5 year term with approval of People's Majilis.

With regard to the Constitution and the Elections Commission Act include educating and creating awareness among the general public on the electoral process and its purpose. Voter and civic education is highly essential for inclusive, informed and ethical participation.

Civic education deals with and pays attention to educating the public about the various concepts underpinning a democratic society including types of government, political systems, citizen's responsibilities, and the role of media and other special interests.

Voter education, on the other hand, deals with more complex types of information about the voting process including voter rights, human rights, roles and responsibilities of voters, the meaning of concepts such as secrecy of ballots, public accountability, as well as the relationship between democracy and free and fair elections.

Development of a Civic Education Program

In collaboration with UNDP, Elections Commission of Maldives started work on developing a curriculum for civic education in the year 2015. This project was successfully completed with the accomplishment of four different modules with their content. These modules were designed in such a way that the participants learn through the activities in which they actively participate in. UNDP carried out the teaching of trainers, who could deliver the four modules to the public.

Piloting and conducting the program

In order to test the newly shaped civic education program, it was organized in two

Civic Education Program for School Students

islands in Raa Atoll called Raa Meedhoo and Raa Maduhvari. A total of 108 participants took part in this program. The participants for the piolet program were selected on the basis of a diversified criteria, including school students, parents, working citizens, NGO's, and general public.

After the pilot round, which was held in Raa Atoll, the necessary amendments were made to the civic education program and a second test round was conducted in Gn. Fuvahmulah for a total of 66 participants.

Finally, with the final amendments the program was conducted in more than 24 Islands for a total of 1023 participants.

Future enhancements for the current civic education program

In the process of conducting the program involving a variety of participants, it was noticed that the content of the program needs to be also inclusive of the following components:

- Youth Participation which will affect the number of new voter turnout

- Women Empowerment, not only as voters but as candidates and as political appointees
- Disability mechanisms of delivering the messages to the disable people in the most efficient manner

TOT completed trainers with UNDP and ECM Members

Civic Education Program for public

SUMMARY OF THE MODULES

MODULE 1:
DEMOCRACY

In this module the participants learn

- The basic concept of democracy
- Important principles of democracy
- The pillars of democracy with the roles and responsbilities of each.

MODULE 2:
ACCOUNTABILITY

Learning outcomes of this module are:

- What accountability is

- Importance of making the elected parties / candidates accountable
- What are the areas where they need to be accountable
- As a citizen, what is the importance being accountable in choosing candidate/s.

MODULE 3:
ELECTIONS AND ELECTIONS PROCESS

This module directly focuses on the three main elections conducted in Maldives; Presidential Election, Parliamentry Election and Local Council Election. The processes, durations given for various activities, such as duration for registration, re-registration, campaign duration and observer durations are main highlights.

MODULE 4:
PARTICIPATION AND CITIZENSHIP

This module emphersises:

- The importance of each citizens participation in a democracy
- Who can be a citizen of Maldives
- Importance in participating in decision making process

Development of Voter Education Strategy

In collaboration with UNDP, Voter Education Strategy (VES) 2017 - 2019 was developed by a local consultant. To come up with efficient and effective strategy, there were discussions with stakeholders, employees of the Commission, Commissioners and also with related NGO's (Non-Government Organizations).

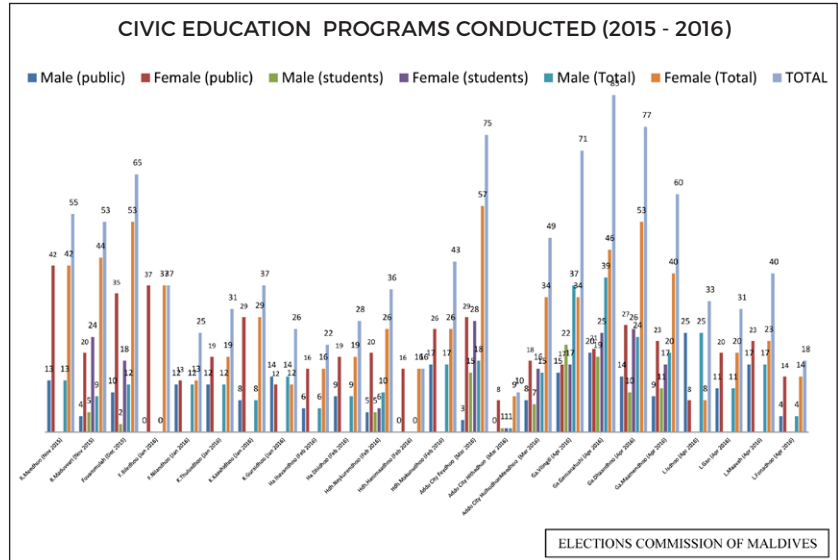In this voter education strategy, some of the key areas which were focused upon are:

- Development of a Mobile application with voter education and awareness content

Civic Education Program for the General Public

Civic Education Program completed batch

- Carrying out social media campaigns in a wide range
- Provide a better platform for young people to express their concerns and come up with innovative solutions to address these issues
- Various forms of educational messages and methods must be employed to break gender stereotypes
- Disabled community members (including sign language interpreters) could be used in developing and delivering many of the related content
- Engaging constructively with the public on key issues of concern and developing consistent campaigns of education could potentially change the negative perceptions

Implementation of Newly designed Voter Education Strategy

The newly designed voter and civic education strategy is ready for implementation and the first phase of it will function in the first quarter of 2017. In this phase a wide range of consultation meetings will be conducted for stakeholders. Wide array of modes will be discussed with the media to impart the information to the general public. Communicating of the Civic modules to emerging voters via school curriculum will be held at utmost importance in the first quarter of 2017. ■

Voter Education
Initiatives

Introduction

The 2015 Elections in Myanmar required a comprehensive voter education that could reach 33.4 million eligible voters and provide technical information that would ensure voters were aware of electoral procedures and events. There are a total 118 ethnic languages in Myanmar. There was a challenge to give voter education not only in the urban areas but also in rural areas to ensure that messages were understandable.

UEC Voter Education developed included information on Voting rights and responsibilities, how to vote, electoral systems, government systems, voter registration, transparency, credibility and impartiality of the elections. There were series of voter education materials on voter list displays.

Materials Developed

The technical information (pamphlets and posters) provided information about the

need to check the voter list, as well as the forms to submit to the correct voter list. The motivational posters encouraged people who were excited to vote in the 2015 elections and the need to check the voter list. It also provided the dates of the display period.

The UEC also developed 6 videos for voter education which provided overviews of polling procedures, procedures to check the voter list, information about civic knowledge, information about election observers, and voter list procedures. Additional materials including 4 operational manuals were developed for the UEC that were also shared with stakeholders:

• Polling Manual
• Electoral Dispute Resolution Manual
• Operations Checklist Guide
• Advanced Voting Manual

More than 6,000,000 pamphlets and more than 1,000,000 posters were distributed.

To reach voters across the nation, Mass Media Voter Education focused on utilizing social media and SMS messages through mobile phone networks as well as using traditional mass media platforms like TV, Radio, Newspapers.

Delivery of Message

UEC produced 9 FAQs Guides that provided information or voters and other stakeholders on a series of topics including the voter list displays, candidate nomination practice, electoral dispute resolution procedures, and results management among others. UEC also created 45 voter education materials. But it was needed to ensure that these materials were delivered to local communities. In this case we used two strategies to conduct delivery of voter education

• Stakeholder Engagement
• Mass Media

Engagement with stakeholders was mainly focused on local CSOs. 509 representatives from 352 CSOs met with UEC representatives and coordinated voter education during the preliminary voter list display. During the national voter list display and the campaign period, the UEC coordinated with 368 members of 253 CSOs as well as 212 members of political parties.

To reach voters across the nation, Mass Media Voter Education focused on utilizing social media and SMS messages through mobile phone networks as well as using traditional mass media platforms like TV, Radio, Newspapers.

A total of 8 SMSs were sent to 29 million mobile users through the three telephone networks in Myanmar. The messages sent provided updates about the voter list displays and election day. UEC also developed a Facebook page where voter education materials including videos, posters, pamphlets and FAQs Guides were available and this page, as well as other pages run by CSOs made a large impact on the youth.

The UEC developed the 2013-2018 Strategic Plan and one of 12 pillars devoted to Civic and Voter Education is Pillar 8. Its strategic goal is to create awareness of the electoral process among all citizens and increase participation through coordinated and effective civic and voter education campaigns. UEC worked with CSOs to map voter education activities prior and during the preliminary voter list display. UEC shared drafts of voter education materials including posters, polling station designs, videos, and pamphlets with CSOs to consultations. 6,349,065 pamphlets and 1,208,674 posters were distributed. 6 radio stations, 4 TV stations, and 4 newspapers aired voter education messages. 4 artists conducted voter education videos.

Target Groups

Myanmar has a population of 33.4 million voters and this includes a diverse population:

• Over 17 million women
• Over 2 million persons with disabilities
• 118 Ethnic Languages
• Many first time voters

To reach these groups, the UEC held regular stakeholder meetings at the national and regional level to ensure coordination and support distribution of materials throughout the country.

• 9 National Meetings with over 60 CSOs
• 2 Rounds of Regional Meetings with over 800 CSO representatives

UEC distributed voter education materials to CSOs for conducting voter education in communities. CSOs held trainings and meetings in communities to discuss electoral events, such as voter list display, how to make corrections to the voter list, how to mark a ballot properly, and polling simulations. Trainings were held in local languages and focused on inclusion of ethnic populations, persons with disabilities and women.

Voting for Persons with Disabilities and multilingual messaging

UEC met frequently with members from organizations that represent persons with

The impact of the voter education program can be seen in the overall turnout on Election Day. And it was recorded at 69.82% of voters. The UEC compared pre and post- election surveys in cooperation with international organizations.

disabilities and also piloted 18 polling stations in 6 States/ Regions. CSOs developed the "Awareness Booklet on Disability Inclusive Elections" and a "How to Vote Guidebook for persons with disabilities" that were based on UEC materials and regulations.

Myanmar has 118 Ethnic Languages and translating information in all of these languages was not feasible. However, voter education materials were developed in the following languages, which also includes estimates about the number of people that speak these languages:

• Shan: Spoken by 3.2 million
• Karen Languages: Spoken by 2.6 million
• Jingphaw: Spoken by 900,000
• Chin Languages: Spoken by 780,000
• Mon: Spoken by 750,000

Additionally, voter education was developed in 16 Ethnic Languages, FAQs in 7 Ethnic Languages, videos in 8 Ethnic Languages, Radio Broadcasts and Newspaper Advertisements were translated by local media outlets. The total number of printed voter education materials was 369, 723. To further bridge language barriers, the UEC also relied upon local CSO networks and political parties that would meet with local communities. The CSOs and parties used the materials that were provided by the UEC and often explain them in the local languages at meetings, political party rallies, and voter education activities. The UEC also learned about 10 CSOs that translated the materials distributed into 11 different ethnic languages.

The SP Pillar 9: The Promotion of Inclusive Participation and its goal is to encourage more inclusive participation from women, ethnic minorities, persons with disabilities, and internally displaced persons (IDPs) who each face different challenges and barriers to participating in the election process. All materials promoted the inclusion of ethnic minorities, persons with disabilities, and women. UEC added 1,073 women to UEC positions through a hiring process to have included representatives from ethnic minority groups.

Conclusion

The impact of the voter education program can be seen in the overall turnout on Election Day. And it was recorded at 69.82% of voters. The UEC compared pre and post- election surveys in cooperation with international organizations. It was an important step to use cartoons, pictures and simple messaging, and also translating these materials into 16 ethnic languages. However, one of the more important mechanisms in 2015 was coordination with local CSO networks and political parties that were able to use the materials developed by the UEC in local communities and adopt them into relevant languages when conducting voter education in ethnic communities. ■

Voter Education:
Building Awareness for Qualitative and Inclusive Electoral Participation

The Constitutional mandate of the Election Commission of Nepal is to conduct, supervise, direct and coordinate the elections of different levels and offices. These include the election of the President, Vice President, Federal Assembly, Provincial Assembly and local level Bodies with the entire responsibility of electoral management.

The entire electoral management is basically evaluated from the prespective of participation of eleigible citizens in electoral process and quality of the respresentatives selected. In addition to these, the electoral process, its legitimacy and credibility have a greater role to enhance the acceptability of electoral results. Besides the procedures adopted, voter's turnout or participation of eligible voters in the electoral process is one of the important aspects of ownership of the process by citizens. In electoral process, it is important to create conductive environment for all potential voters including women, marignalized community as well as people with disability in terms of their will and access.

One of the major instruments to motivate potential voters in the electoral process is dissimilation of Voter Education (VE). VE intends to increase voter participation to elect and be elected and it also creates an environment to promote quality voting i.e., selecting appropriate candidate as informed voters and reduction of the number of invalid votes. In that sense, VE is necessary to ensure voters' understanding of their rights and responsibilities, political system, electoral contestants they have to choose from, as well as methods, procedures and timing of vote.

ECN has carried out the systematic voter education program since 2007 AD focusing on the first CA election in 2008. The major objective of the voter education was to increase the citizen's participation in electoral process i.e. in all cycles of election and to decrease invalid votes. After the assessment of the outcome of the voter education, the scope and dimension has been expanded to create the informed and qualitative ethical voters. The overall voter education strategy is developed as a part of the 5 year strategic plan of ECN. Various modalities of voter education have been developed by adopting the best practices from different parts of the world and customizing them in Nepalese context. Some activities carried out by ECN have been mentioned below:

Establishment of Electoral Education and Information Center (EEIC)

ECN has established an Electoral Education and Information Center in 2012. The main service of the center is to impart electoral education for all sectors of society including school/university students, civil society organsiations, political activists and their local level caders and all other who are interested in the elections and its management.

The EEIC offers world class state of arts in its

programme which comprised of observation, interactive learning and audio visual materials in additon to the Q & A session on elections, democracy and governance. The EEIC operates its programe in groups of around 40 people at a time. The visitors observe the mini museum in around 10 minutes, where different electoral materials are on display. It gives the knowledge to observers about the history of the electoral materials and helps them get familiar to the election materials. Then, they are taken to mini theater. In the mini theater, a documentary named *Democracy and Election* is displayed for 25 minutes, which highlights the transformation of the state from an autocracy to a democratic regime and the chronology of the electoral practices in Nepal. Having these basic historical prespectives and observations of electoral museum, the visitors are directed to an Interactive Room where visitors can have a broad overview of five different thematic subjects namely, Democracy, Constitution and Elections; Individual Rights and Responsibility; Electoral System and Electoral Process; Political Parties and Political Process and Stakeholder's Roles and Responsibilities among others.

In this interactive room, the whole group is divided into 5 different groups and moved around turn by turn interacting with different learning methodologies and technologies. Following this activity, the visitors are given an opportunity to take part in mock polling where practical aspects of voting will be learned by visitors taking part in role play as a candidate, election staff, security personnel etc. They are expected to get knowledge and experience on the entire electoral process followed on the day of polling and counting.

Around 24 thousands visitors have visited this center till now. Most of them are secondary and higher secondary students who are the potential voters. The lesson learnt from the EEIC made ECN to expand its access to regional level by establishing Regional EEIC in Pokhara and Dhangadhi. A new regional EEIC is going to be established soon in Biratnagar. In this

way, EEIC has attempted to enhance electoral education in a systematic way.

Capacity Building Program

The Election Commission of Nepal is implementing its Second Strategic Plan (2015-2019 A.D.). In fact, it is a basic strategic document to bring the entire electoral reform and to execute new programs in the commission. Capacity building program is one of the major pillars of the Strategic Plan. ECN has adopted BRIDGE modular trainings since 2007. Besides BRIDGE trainings many other Non-BRIDGE trainings are conducted as an interactive training method. All the interaction programs, trainings and other activities of ECN are focused to make voters realize their rights and responsibilities. Regular capacity building program is conducted for election staff and stakeholders. The capacity building programs mainly include the following areas:

a. Specific BRIDGE modular training like; Introduction to electoral management, Gender and election, Access to electoral process, Electoral dispute resolution, Political finance have been conducted to ensure more ethical and more credible

elections. These trainings are generally focused on the youths, political party cadres, women groups, civil societies etc.

b. Electoral education trainings have been organized with great enthusiasm to social study teachers at the district level throughout the country. This type of training has been completed in 27 districts and will be completed in two years in all 75 districts. ECN hopes that the voter education program to youth students and social studies teacher will have a lifelong impact on them. ECN has invested a huge amount and time to conduct the program. ECN believes that the program results in ethical voting by all voters including the grass root level.

c. ECN has also conducted outreach programs for people with disability (PWD) in addition to the training at the EEIC. The focus clusters at present are minorities, people with impaired vision , the deaf and physically disabled poeple.

d. EEIC has a practice of developing manuals for each type of training so that it can be used in cascade base (many training are provided as cascade training, MTOT - RTOT and DTOT) to enhance the capacity of the electoral staff and major stakeholders.

e. Research and development is one other part of EEIC where customized best practices of voter education from different parts of the world are conducted.

Voter Education

ECN has started to impart the voter education in a systematic way since the CA election, 2008. Varieties of voter education modalities have been applied through the means of pamphlets, street drama, radio, TV, FM et cetera. Audio Visual productions and disseminations focusing on special target groups have been very effective to impart the electoral education. ECN is also applying contextual catchy native folk songs to attract the folks (like dohori), educational, promotional especially in public vehicles, theatre etc. It has also practiced the use of public figure as an icon to promote

participation in the elections. Considering the massive coverage of the voter education, ECN has developed voter education materials in different local dialects and Public Service Announcements (PSAs) are also disseminated in those language focusing the meaningful participation of the excluded and the minorities.

ECN has taken three approaches in Voter Education, first, ECN invites the stakeholders at the EEIC, second, ECN conducts outreach programs and third. it conducts the interactive learning method at ECN. Interaction with different stakeholders is also taken as voter education. ECN allocates annual budget for school education programs to impart electoral education through district election officer. At present, Election Commission has focused not only on how to vote but also why to vote. As good governance begins from good elections, ECN is trying its best to make the election free, fair and credible.

In the recent days, ECN has also brought into practice the new voter education modality i.e. Mobile EEIC. It is the miniature of the central EEIC. It is assumed that this education modality can help those people who live in remote areas and are out of reach from modern means of communication. It is used as an outreach program.

Reform in Electoral laws and Code of Conduct

ECN is intensively working for formulating new electoral laws so as to make compatible with the new Constitution. It is also working for addressing new issues and expectations of the people through new electoral laws. ECN has formulated the permanent nature of code of conduct to bring all in moral bindings to promote ethical aspects in the electoral process.

Regular Interface with Stakeholders

Regular interaction programs have been held

with the stakeholders for better electoral management. ECN is trying to make it clear that election should be held in a peaceful manner and it should be free, fair, and credible. Election is the greatest decision making event for a nation. So every voter should know their inherent rights and responsibilities and voters should be informed about the candidates, political parties' activities and manifestos of political parties' so as to facilitate them to make a rationale decision. All the activities of the political parties should be transparent and their financial transactions should be disclosed in time so that the voter can assess and judge properly.

Information and communication: the civic engagement

ECN has given emphasis to the dissimilation of electoral information to the general public. Regular TV and Radio programs at the Central level and the periodic FM programs at regional and district levels have been conducted. Additionally, brouchures and leaflets related to the voting procedures, role of citizens, code of conducts et cetera have been prepared and displayed at the places where public access is high. Environmental aspects have been given due consideration while displaying such information. Street programs, dramas and video brodcasting have been a regular activity in addtion to the web access to every stakeholder. Media and potential voters are the priority in this context.

Others

ECN has developed many resource manuals. To boost up the ethical values in the voters, following slogans have been included in the manuals which help in ethical participation in elections:

- Free, Fair and Credible election is the mission of all the elections.
- Your Vote is your choice.
- Exercise your right to vote, save tomorrow by voting today.

- One person one vote one value.
- Your vote, your future.
- Freedom wins when everyone who can vote does vote.
- The roll right, the poll right.
- Commitment to code of conduct.

ECN is practicing to impart the electoral education in formal education; it has made much important interaction with Curriculum Development Center of Nepal to incorporate factual information to the potential voters. It is also working in inclusive electoral literacy through informal education channel. The participation of the special categories of voters is also of high priority to ECN. Election Commission uses suitable communication technology for voter education. Besides these areas, ECN is trying to prepare quality voters by building awareness in them. Ultimately, to cope with the current issues and meet the expectations of the general people, ECN is on a long journey towards making voters informed and their voting ethical. Moreover, ECN is also preparing an Umbrella Civic Engagement Policy which includes voter education strategy, media mobilization strategy, CBO mobilization strategy and arrangements of Election Day for this.

Conclusion

Election Commission of Nepal is in preparation of three elections that are to be completed within one year. In this preparatory phase, VE has high importance and ECN has targeted to reach up to every voter. These initiatives are supported by face to face voter education, media communication and interaction with the citizens. The impact of voter education is highly visible as the voter turnout at CA election was about 78 percent compared to the previous CA elections where the number was around 60 percent. Hence, voter education and outreach programs are taken as a measure to increase participation of citizens in electoral process ultimately supporting the promotion of good governance and strengthening democracy in the country. ∎

Educating Youth for
Democracy's Future

Around the world young people are fighting to be represented within their democratic institutions and processes. These calls have manifested in uprisings that have toppled governments, as witnessed throughout West Asia and North Africa, street protests across Africa and an increase in digital engagement and grassroots activism in Asia, among others. Despite these calls for larger representation however, youth remain marginalized in decision making as governmental institutions and democratic processes around the world still include relatively few youth within their ranks. One evidence of this is the low numbers of young people in parliaments, where people under 30 only make up 2 per cent of the world's members of parliament.[1]

Needless to say however, young people can play an important role in bringing forth the voices of their generation and ensuring that their concerns are reflected in policies that affect both the present and their future.

Furthermore, the early involvement of young people in democratic institutions and processes has a great potential to solidify their ability to effectively contribute to a country's democratic future. By not tapping into this enormous potential, the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA)[2] believes that governments and citizens are losing out on an enormous creative force, new approaches, and a solid cadre of future leaders.

A 2015 UN study notes that there are approximately 1.8 billion people between the ages of 10-24 years old in the world[3] . In 2012, the Asia and Pacific region alone had 717 million young people between the ages of 15-24, comprising approximately 19% of the region's population[4] and around 60% of the world's youth.[5]

The combination of these statistics with national perceptions that there are too few

Figure 1: Youth aged 15-24 years, by region, 1950-2060
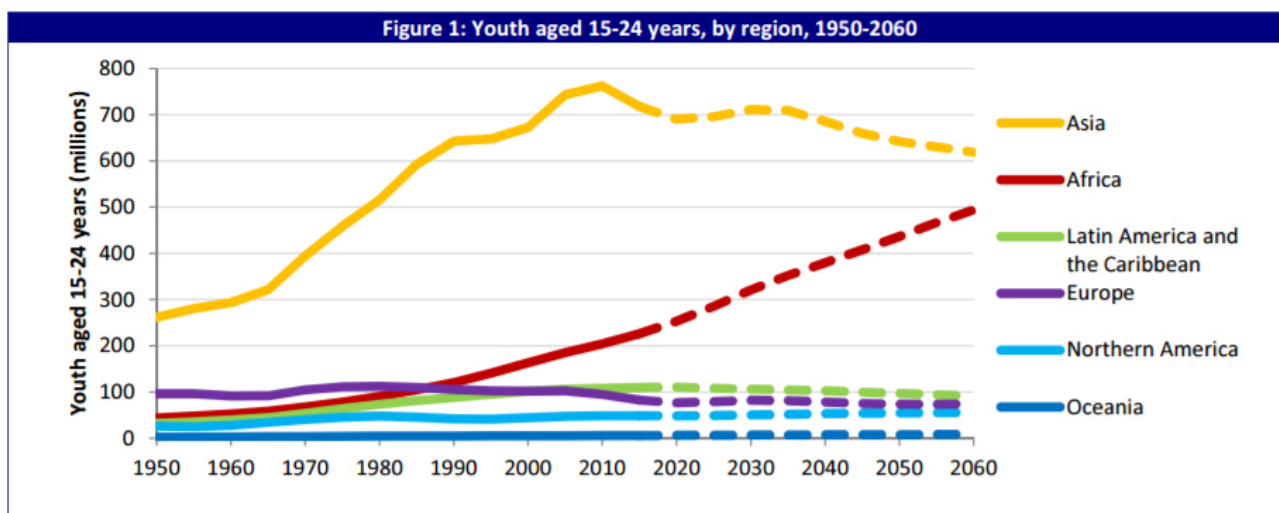
Data source: United Nations (2013) *World Population Prospects: The 2012 Revision.*

young people deemed qualified to make a meaningful contribution to democratic processes[6], inspired International IDEA to embark on the development and implementation of a global youth democracy curriculum designed to build both the knowledge and skills of young people in the field of democracy building. The curriculum brings International IDEA's 20 years of experience and knowledge into an accessible format that encourages young people to explore their democracies and come away with a better understanding of democratic principles, both as pertain to their individual context and from a globally comparative perspective.

In order to do this, the curriculum employs highly skilled facilitators and uses a two-pronged approach of building both the knowledge and skills of young women and men over the course of 12 specified modules. Within this, one element of the curriculum is the development of technical knowledge on areas such as electoral processes, constitution building processes, political parties and parliaments, local democracy, civil society, the media and other. Crosscutting themes throughout all modules include gender, diversity and security. Embedded in each of the activities and learning outcomes is the development of practical skills such as debating, writing, public speaking, team building, negotiating, analytical thinking and more.

In order to ensure that both a national and global context is presented, an important phase of the curriculum's implementation is its customization to the country in which it will be run. This process ensures that national examples and processes can be better understood, while providing participants with a global perspective, thereby allowing for a deeper analysis of their democratic structures. The customization process brings together highly qualified experts in the various topics in order to ensure the highest quality of knowledge is presented.

UNESCAP's 2012 regional review states that although youth unemployment in Asia remains the lowest in the world, 'the transition from education to employment is one of the main obstacles facing youth, especially those from South and South-West Asia, South-East Asia and the Pacific.'[7] In order to ensure that the knowledge and skills gained from the curriculum are brought to a workplace setting, International IDEA is using its wide network of national partners, including election management bodies, political parties, parliaments and civil society, as well as its partnerships with international organizations working in the field of democracy building to provide paid internship programmes for programme graduates. This will allow young people the opportunity not only to use their newfound knowledge, but so too does International IDEA believe that the provision of qualified youth will help shift mind sets about the quality of inputs that youth can bring to democratic institutions.

International IDEA is now implementing the curriculum in Tunisia in partnership with the International Development and Research Centre and looks towards its implementation more globally in 2017 and beyond. ∎

Shana Kaiser
Programme Manager, International IDEA

[1]Inter-parliamentary Union, 'Youth Participation in National Parliaments 2016.' Accessed 10 December, 2016 from www.ipu.org/pdf/publications/youthrep-e.pdf

[2]International IDEA is an intergovernmental organization with 30 Member States and over 20 years of experience in supporting sustainable democracy worldwide. The Institute has a primary focus on four key impact areas including electoral processes, constitution building processes, political participation and representation processes and democracy and development. Throughout all of its work International IDEA also mainstreams gender, diversity and security. International IDEA works to provide knowledge to democracy builders, provide policy development and analysis and support democratic reforms. Based in Sweden, it has country offices around the world including in Tunisia and Addis Ababa.

[3]United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs Population Division, 'Population Facts'. May 2015. No 2015/1. Accessed 10 December, 2016 from: http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/documents/youth/fact-sheets/YouthPOP.pdf

[4]United Nations Division for Social Policy and Development – Youth, 'Regional Overview: Youth in Asia and the Pacific', 11 November, 2013. Accessed 10 December, 2016 from http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/documents/youth/fact-sheets/youth-regional-escap.pdf

[5]United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP), 'Regional Overview: Youth in Asia and the Pacific, 2012'. Accessed on 10 December, 2016 at http://www.unescap.org/our-work/social-development/youth/about

[6]Feedback received from International IDEA during discussions with national partners across West Asia and North Africa

[7]UNESCAP, 2012.

Enhancement of Participation by Special Categories of Voters:
Overseas Citizens

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

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

Oversees voting is a special cause for me. As a Sri Lankan citizen living abroad since I was

11eleven, I have not been able to cast a ballot in Sri Lanka. I have worked with over 22 EMBs in my career but have never had the privilege to vote. And I know I am not alone.

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

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

In addition to these commonly referred to legal instruments relating to the right to vote, there are articles in the UDHR and ICCPR that refer specifically to the right to information – which includes the right to voter education:

> **UDHR, Art 19:** Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this

right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.

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

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

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

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

- Return voting
- In person oversees polling station
- Embassy voting
- Postal voting

- Internet voting
- Fax voting

Conducting out-of-country voting is incredibly complex and challenging for an EMB. In many cases, the diaspora population is large and spread across many different countries, which makes it difficult to assess the interest in participation amongst the various diaspora communities. The EMB needs to ensure that materials are delivered, staff trained, polls conducted, and results returned from locations around the world – locations that are not directly under the supervision of the EMB.

Out-of-country voting operations are generally much more expensive than in-country voting. International experience shows that nationally conducted elections typically cost in the range of US$1-3 per registered voter in stable democracies. Out-of-country voting operations often cost at least five to 10 times more, depending on the way a voter casts a ballot, resulting in a cost of US$5-20 per voter. This can make out-of-country voting prohibitively expensive for many nations. While not a reason to ignore the operation completely, the costs involved may limit the extent and scope of out-of-country voting.

It is a minimum requirement for elections that all voters (including eligible out-of-country voters) should receive credible information regarding:

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

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

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

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

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

1. **Communicate Timelines, Eligibility Criteria and Registration/Voting Mechanisms**
   One of the key tasks facing an external voting program is informing eligible registrants of the timelines, eligibility

criteria, and mechanisms for registering and casting a ballot. A recurring problem in oversees voting programs is that rules and regulations in post-conflict elections are often newly devised, transitional in nature, and may be significantly different than pre-war electoral procedures. In Liberia, the pre-war electoral formula was based on a single-member majoritarian system. Given the significant population displacement, both ECOWAS and the UN believed a new electoral formula would be required and instituted a proportional system in a single national constituency. As one report notes: "This decision allowed Liberia to defer the difficult process of conducting a census and redistricting, but it was never understood by many Liberians."[1]

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

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

3. **Host Country Limitations**
   Host country may limitations on gatherings – this may affect campaigns and voter education. In the case of Libya it was not possible to hold large gatherings with the community in the UAE. This was not a significant issue for Afghanistan OCV in Pakistan.

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

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

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

7. **Utilize Multiple Means of Outreach**
   Social media, mass SMS and call centers have proven to be effective in reaching out to voters without direct contact, and in situations where direct contact may not be possible. Libyan case, this was extremely useful.

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

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

8. **Targeted VE materials for specific segments of the electorate, such as voters with disabilities, women and youth.**
   Association with community elders and appointing community representatives. An EMB that directly interacts with the electorate will enhance confidence in the process and the outcome of the elections

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

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

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[1] Voting for Peace: Postconflict Elections in Liberia, Terrence Lyons, Brookings Institute Press, p 46

[2] Enfranchising Conflict-Forced Migrants: Issues, Standards, and Best Practices, IOM, Jeremy Grace, Jeff Fischer, 2003

Including Persons with **Disabilities** through Voter Education Campaigns

The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that there are approximately one billion persons with disabilities, or about 15% percent of the world's population. As they take part in political and public life, many men and women with disabilities encounter barriers due to physical inaccessibility, stigma, non-inclusive legal frameworks, and other barriers. Voter Eeducation campaigns are an ideal opportunity for Eelection Mmanagement Bbodies (EMBs) and dDisabled Ppersons' Oorganizations (DPOs) to engage persons with disabilities and , to reduce ing the effects of barriers that restrict their participation in the electoral process. Creative, inclusive and accessible voter education campaigns empower men and women with disabilities as citizens and voters, ensuring that all voters are able to participate in elections.

The International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES), an international nonprofit organization dedicated to ensuring that all citizens have a voice in elections, has collaborated with local EMB and DPO partners around the world to plan and develop disability-inclusive campaigns.

Disability-inclusive voter education campaigns are both inclusive and accessible. An **inclusive** campaign means that materials show positive representations of men and women with disabilities participating in elections. For example, a poster or video could show a woman with a physical disability voting. An **accessible** campaign means that information is provided in formats that are easy to use for persons with disabilities. For example, Nepal provided voting instructions in braille for voters who were blind or had low vision, and Georgia provided sign language interpreters during political debates to facilitate access for participants who are deaf or hard-of-hearing.

Campaigns also can be considered to be targeted or to mainstream inclusion. A

A Nepali woman who is blind reads voter information in braille

The boîte á images includes a voter using a wheelchair in the picture above

targeted campaign is directed toward persons with disabilities, while a campaign that **mainstreams** disability rights is a general message that is inclusive. For example, an image of a person with a disability can be included in a voter education message that is used with a broader audience.In Mali, *boîte á images*¸or image boxes, were used by the Electoral Access Project in Mali (PAPEM) for a voter education project supported by IFES in 2015. The pictures integrated persons with disabilities throughout the document, which used images to explain to voters how to participate. By including voters with disabilities in the drawing, the project not only encouraged persons with disabilities to take part in the election but also increased awareness of other voters of the right of persons with disabilities to take part in political and public life.The wordless format also enhanced access of persons with low literacy as well as voters with intellectual disabilities.

Targeted Campaigns

The Disabled Center for Development of Education and Culture (PAROS) led a coalition of 9 disability organizations to implement a project supported by IFES designed to empower Armenians with disabilities to participate in the 2007 and 2008 elections for the National Assembly (parliament) and Presidency. PAROS led the development of an informational campaign to raise awareness on the equal rights of Armenians with disabilities, including political and electoral rights. A series of televised public service announcements were aired nationally, and Armenian journalists provided positive media attention on project activities (such as the development of a tactile ballot guide). An increased awareness of disability rights was complemented by strong support from the Armenian government and endorsements by high-ranking elected officials and election candidates.

In Liberia, IFES organized voter education

This poster from the campaign in Armenia calls for equal access to polling stations

Voters in Monrovia with visual disabilities try the new tactile ballot guide in advance of the Liberian elections

activities to increase knowledge of persons with visual disabilities on how to use the new tactile ballot guide in 2005. The campaign raised awareness about the guide and included an open house to try out the assistive device. Providing the opportunity to use the assistive device in advance of the election enabled persons who were blind or had low vision to become familiar with the guide's layout, building their confidence to use the new device. The project empowered persons with disabilities to vote independently and in secret instead of telling their vote to an assistant on Election Day.

Accessible Messages

In the Dominican Republic in 2012, the "Right to Choose" project, established by *La Red Iberoamericana de Entidades de Personas con Discapacidad* (the Iberoamerican DPO

network, or La Red) and supported by IFES, utilized multiple formats to reach voters with disabilities. An inclusive television spot was produced, which showed persons with disabilities participating in the community and voting. It also incorporated an inset box with sign language interpretation in order to reach voters who are deaf or hard-of-hearing. The video empowered persons with different types of disabilities to take part in elections as active citizens and demonstrated the voting process.

La Red expanded the campaign beyond the video, producing a booklet that compiled best practices and lessons learned, pamphlets, and materials in braille to reach voters who were blind. Disability rights organizations such as the Association of People with Physical-Motor Disabilities (ASODIFIMO), the National Federation of Dominicans with Disabilities (FENADID), and the Circle of Women with Disabilities (CIMUDIS) played an important role in the project, and through their participation, helped to achieve the project's success in defending the rights of people with disabilities. The National Council on Disability (CONADIS) also supported the implementation of sensitization activities.

Inclusive Messages

In advance of the October 2016 elections in Georgia, IFES worked with local youth-led groups to draw murals in Tbilisi related to

participation in elections. As part of this campaign, disability was mainstreamed by including images of persons with disabilities. One of the murals focused on disability inclusion, showing a wheelchair-user with the words "Elections without Barriers." This initiative not only demonstrated messaging that was inclusive of persons with disabilities but also provided an opportunity to local youth with disabilities to take part in the creation of the mural.

In 2013, an Electoral Access Working Group, which included members of the Libyan General National Congress, disabled persons' organizations, disability rights activists, and civil society members, was formed in Libya. Together, Working Group members launched a successful social media campaign called *Zaykum Zayna* ("As you are, we are") to promote awareness of the U.N. Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) in Libya, emphasizing the right to political participation for men and women with disabilities.

The *Zaykum Zayna* campaign led to the development of voter education material in braille and the provision of sign language interpreters for all press conferences hosted by the High National Election Commission. A collection of advocacy tools and information about trainings was also developed through the campaign.

This screenshot from the "Right to Choose" video shows a group of people who are deaf talking about elections

This mural was part of a broader voter education campaign in Georgia in 2016

A young woman with a disability holds a leaflet from the campaign

Musicians with disabilities perform popular songs and talk about the voting process on a mobile stage

Innovative Voter Education

During Myanmar's historic 2015 election, the Myanmar Independent Living Initiative (MILI), a local DPO, organized a mobile "get-out-the-vote concert" with IFES' support. This campaign presented a unique method to inform persons with disabilities about their right to vote and to encourage them to cast their ballots on Election Day.

For three days, MILI members drove around in an open-bed truck lined with voter education posters and a band of musicians with disabilities. The truck stopped in six towns where the band performed popular songs to gain the attention of persons in the neighborhood. After performing the first few songs at each location, MILI spoke to voters about the elections, providing information on voting and polling procedures as well as emphasizing how voting empowers citizens and allows them to have a voice in their country's future.

During this time, volunteers also distributed 4,000 voter education pamphlets. One pamphlet outlined information on polling procedures for voters with disabilities and highlighted the different types of available assistance. A second pamphlet described the

step-by-step process of voting and included illustrations of voters with visual, hearing or physical disabilities.

MILI targeted locations that were among the 15 towns where the Union Election Commission (UEC) piloted more accessible polling stations

Conclusion

on Election Day. At these polling stations, which were located near schools and hospitals, polling officials who had received disability access training from MILI and other DPOs were available to assist voters with disabilities. At these locations, voters with visual disabilities were also able to use brailleballot guides when casting their ballots. These guides allowed voters who are blind to cast their ballot independently and in secret.

Messages that are inclusive of and accessible to women and men with disabilities are critical to build active, engaged constituencies that include all voters. Providing voter education that targets or mainstreams persons with disabilities reduces some of the barriers that exist to their participation. As demonstrated in the examples above, activities that inform citizens of their rights that are inclusive of persons with disabilities expand the outreach of EMBs and provide the opportunity to find innovative ways to engage the electorate. ■

Rebecca Aaberg
Senior Inclusions Specialist, IFES

Promoting **Inclusive** and **Participative** Elections

With presence in more than 170 countries, the UNDP helps governance institutions in countries bring constitutional reforms, organize credible elections, strengthen parliaments, and address policy and institutional options for peace, risk-reduction and development through reconciliation, empowerment and inclusion. Through its programmes, UNDP brings people together within nations and around the world for, fostering partnerships and sharing ways to promote participation, accountability and effectiveness at all levels. It also offers strategic assistance throughout the electoral cycle, from support in designing more effective systems, to

mechanisms to address disputes after the votes are counted.

It aims to ensure that elections are credible and fully owned nationally; increase awareness of the role of elections as part of a broader democratic governance framework and as a vital means to safeguard human rights, exercise choice and express opinions. The objective is to support democratic systems to become more inclusive and accountable, and to be able to meet expectations for participation, services and security during election processes. For example, in during 2014, UNDP programmes strengthened electoral processes

Delegates being briefed on the use of Electronic Voting Machine (EVM). Delegation from Bhutan, Kenya, Myanmar, Uganda along with nine other countries from the League of Arab States, visited Shimla (Himachal Pradesh, India) to witness the election management process. UNDP and the Election Commission of India supported 20 countries in learning from India's experience in managing elections during 2014 Lok Sabha elections. Photographer: Prashanth Vishwanathan/ UNDP India/ 2014

around the world and helped register 18 million new voters and in 2013 it provided electoral assistance to 68 countries in Africa, the Arab States, Asia Pacific, Latina America and the Caribbean and Europe and the CIS region.

In India, under the aegis of South-South Cooperation, UNDP has been partnering with the Election Commission of India since 2011 to promote the exchange of knowledge and experiences in the field of election management and administration with other developing countries.   UNDP has been privileged to support the India International Institute of Democracy and Election Management which is emerging as a knowledge resource institution facilitating capacity building of the Election Management Bodies to acquire the necessary skills to organize elections that enjoy the confidence of electoral stakeholders and playing a leading role in promoting participatory democracy and election administration world-wide.

The Election Commission of India's experience in conducting the largest democratic elections is unparalleled in the world and is well known globally for more than 60 years. The nationwide general elections held in 2014 saw over 554 million people vote across the country. The Election Commission of India also manages State Assembly elections for 29 states and 7 Union Territories every 5 years.

The inclusion and participation of youth, women, traditionally marginalized groups, minorities and indigenous peoples into election processes are important tools to strengthen the democratic processes.   The ECI's 'Ssustained and Ssystematic Voters' Education and Electoral Participation' strategy to increase people's participation in the electoral process has evolved with every election and use of innovative practices have resulted in substantial increase in the participation of voters, especially women and youth. ECI has made concerted efforts to foster democratic dialogue, engagement and participation

Polling agents along with polling officers conduct and witness mock polling at a poll booth in Agra (Uttar Pradesh, India). International delegations from Lesotho, Mauritius, Nigeria and Malaysia witnessed mock polling and the polling process on election day during 2014 Lok Sabha elections.
Photographer: Prashanth Vishwanathan/ UNDP India/ 2014

with civil society, political parties, women's and youth groups as well as learning among the Election Management Bodies of other countries.

Innovation in the electoral cycle is something that EMBs have the responsibility to lead on and deliver faster and more efficient, safer, credible and inclusive elections to their societies. Election Commission of India is known for its successes in use of technology in election management. The electoral process needs as much affordable and effective technology as will make participation easier, particularly for youth who like technology and are fast learners.

The launch of the VOICE.NET knowledge network moderated by ECI is yet another innovative approach to share good practices in election management with election management bodies across the world. It will serve as an important platform to foster democratic values and to develop capacities of election staff and election management bodies, particularly in emerging democracies. ■

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Featured Articles

An Open Invitation to contribute articles on 'Strategies for Empowering Young and Future Voters'

This section is dedicated to 'Strategies for Empowering Young and Future Voters.' It consists of a Concept Note and some select articles on the subject with the aim of extending an open invitation to EMBs, institutions of excellence and experts to share their initiatives, practices, experiences and knowledge on VoICE.NET platform to be published in VoICE International as a separate and stand-alone volumededicated to the subject.

Election Commission of India has organized an International Conference also on the subject on 24th January, 2017. The papers and the proceedings will soon be made available on VoICE.Net platform for knowledge and experience sharing with the democracies of the world for the cause of citizenship development for electoral participation.

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

Concept Note

Strategies for Empowering Young and Future Voters

The importance of developing the practice of citizenship and electoral participation is vital to investment in future of democracy and its sustenance. One of the key goals of society is to have an active democratic citizenry originating in integrated civic and voter education and participation right from a young age. As per the UN population statistics (2010) there are about 600 million 'young people' in the age group 15-19 in the world (a significant part of this population is a part of the democracies) of which 120 million (Census: 2011) are in India only. Given the registration and voting age of 18, there is a sizeable voter age population besides an equally large population of the 'future voters' in the age group 15-17 who will become voters in the next couple of years. The young and future voters, demonstratedly, constitute a sizeable part of democratic polity and its future.

In this context it is necessary that young people's and future voters' voices are heard, their interests for electoral participation

Featured Articles

understood and encouraged through careful study, research and investment in the future of democracy. Investment focusing on educating, engaging and empowering them through well designed strategic interventions would help in generating a population capable of exercising informed and ethical ballot decision. While today's youth is the most connected in history, their potential in creating electoral awareness and educating and engaging the communities, peer group and future generations needs to be effectively appreciated and harnessed through innovative strategies and effective engagement.

Democracies across the world have approached the subject as per their own socio-political and legislative framework. Coupled with serious and analytical research work, strategic and well designed initiatives have been launched by EMB's in different countries for educating, engaging and empowering young and future voters. Such strategic initiatives include inter alia, curriculum based school level courses for different levels, student and teacher resources, extracurricular interventions, technology driven and mediated communication models and outreach, mock vote, campus engagement, facilitate registration as voter, confident and ethical participation etc.

In India, major initiatives of the Election Commission of India include the national flagship programme Systematic Voters Education and Electoral Participation (SVEEP). SVEEP inter alia focuses on several thrust areas for young people in the age group

15 to 19 yrs such as Social Media, Campus Ambassadors and National Service Scheme volunteers in awareness campaigns for electoral engagement, enrollment and active participation in ballot exercise. SVEEP III Project Plan includes sustained efforts for this age group in the form of strategies and initiatives which include designing educational materials and full training kits, introduction of electoral literacy in formal curricula, linkages and networking with National Service Scheme, National Cadet Corps and 'Nehru Yuvak Kendras' (Youth Centers) in outreach, youth Voter festivals, mediated communications besides Youth Parliament and 'Election Schools' etc.

Significant, substantive and notable good work has been done on the subject by different countries through strategic initiatives for empowering young and future voters.

Yet, lots more needs to be done. In this pursuit, visiting these initiatives, sharing experiences and enriching knowledge in this area of significance and appropriately bringing these practices to Democracies of the world on a continued manner is envisaged on the VoICE. NET Initiative set up in Oct, 2016 as a global Knowledge Network on Voter Education.

National Voters' Day (NVD), as you may be aware, is celebrated in India on 25th January every year. It is an important day for India, the largest democracy of the world with almost 850 million voters. In view of the importance we attach to the young and future voters, it is proposed to initiate a robust interaction on the subject to start with through an International Seminar on **'Strategies for Empowering Young and Future Voters '**on 24th January, 2017 as a part of this year's NVD celebration. ■

S D Sharma and Padma Angmo

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Citizenship Development for Electoral Participation:

Strategies for Empowering Young and Future Voters

Importance of developing the practice of citizenship is vital to investment in future of democracy and its sustenance. Strategic, systematic and well designed practice of Citizenship Development is foundation of strong democracy and its future. Citizenship development in a democracy is about developing inter alia effective voter education, electoral engagement, participation, making informed choices and ethical ballot decisions. In the given context, one of the key goals of society is to have an active democratic citizenry originating in integrated civic and voter education and carefully inculcating the habit of meaningful electoral participation right from a young age.

As per the UN population statistics (2010), there are about 600 million young people in the age group 15-19 in the world (a significant part of this population is a part of the democracies) of which 120 million (Census: 2011) are in India only. Given the registration and voting age of 18, there is a sizeable voter age population besides an equally large population of the future voters in the age group 15-17 who will become voters in the next couple of years. The young and future voters, demonstratedly, constitute a sizeable part of democratic polity and its future.

In this context it is necessary that young peoples' voices are heard, their concerns noted and given due recognition, their interests for electoral participation understood and encouraged. This has to be done through careful examination of challenges and barriers to engaging young people and a robust research on the issues involved followed by strategic investment for obliterating any voter apathy or perceived civic deficit. Investment focusing on educating, engaging and empowering them through well designed strategic interventions would help in preparing a citizenry capable of voluntary, confident and comfortable and robust electoral participation besides exercising informed and ethical ballot decisions. We have to constantly be asking ourselves as to what we can do to improve the way that we address aforesaid issues in citizenship development in our continued endeavor for strengthening democracy.

While today's youth is the most connected in history, their potential in creating electoral awareness and educating and engaging the communities, peer group and future generations needs to be effectively appreciated and harnessed for citizenship development.

Voter education is recognized by The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Article 21); the

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International convention on Civil and Political Rights (Article 25) and by the Regional Charters on Human and People Rights and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989, the emphasis on giving children an opportunity to express their opinions on matters of their concern has gained momentum across the world. Deriving strength and support from the Covenants of the above UN instruments, the Democracies across the world have approached the subject as per their socio-political and legislative framework. Coupled with robust analytical research work, strategic and well designed initiatives have been launched by EMB's in different countries to for educating, engaging and empowering young and future voters. Such strategic initiatives include inter alia, curriculum development based school level courses for different levels, student and teacher resources, extracurricular interventions, technology driven and mediated communication models and outreach, mock vote, campus engagement, facilitate registration as a voter, confident and ethical participation etc.

Significant good work has been done on the subject by different countries through strategic initiatives for empowering young and future voters. Yet, lots more needs to be done. In this pursuit, we intend visiting these initiatives, share our experiences and enrich our knowledge in this area of significance and import to our democracies on a continued manner as a part of the VoICE.NET Initiative. We stand to gain from sharing of the experiences; And the Democracy gains.

In India, major initiatives of the Election Commission of India include the national flagship programme namely Systematic Voters Education Electoral Participation (SVEEP). SVEEP inter alia focuses on several thrust areas for young people in the age group 15 to 19 yrs such as Social Media, Campus Ambassadors and National Service Scheme volunteers in awareness campaigns for electoral engagement, enrollment and active participation in ballot exercise. SVEEP III

Project Plan (2016-20)   includes sustained efforts for this age group in the form of strategies and initiatives which include designing innovative educational materials and full training kits, introduction of electoral literacy in formal curricula, linkages and larger networking with National Service Scheme, National Cadet Corps and Nehru Yuvak Kendras in outreach, youth Voter festivals, mediated communications besides Youth Parliament and 'Chunav Pathshala' and the Children's Panchayat or in local parlance the 'Makkal Panchayat' in Karnataka etc.

Children's Panchayat (Council) or the 'Makkala Panchayat' comprises of representatives elected by all children between 6 and 18 years of age in the gram panchayat. It follows a proportional representation system with leaders from various interest groups including working children, school-going children and children with disabilities. Makkala Panchayat members have developed their own protocol which consists of rules related to elections; procedures for holding their meetings and for conducting.

National Voters' Day (NVD) is celebrated in India on 25th January every year through a almost a million countrywide events at the National, State, District, Sub divisional and Polling Station level for engaging young and future voters. It is an important day for India, the largest democracy of the world with almost one billion voters. The National Voters Day 2017 is being celebrated carries the central theme of 'Empowering Young and Future Voters.' In view of the importance we attach to the young and future voters, an International Seminar is being organized on 24th January, 2017 on 'Strategies for Empowering Young and Future Voters' as a part of the activities of the activities under the NVD celebrations.

In Australia the Youth Electoral Study (YES Project) was launched by the Australian Electoral Commission for investigating the reasons of youth disengagement and youth voting behavior, what motivates Australia's

young people to participate in voting and democracy. The study examines the participation behavior of youth at 17to 25 years age group recommends   focus at the school level and special emphasis on the above age group for achieving desired objectives of enrolment   and participation. Australia, it may be mentioned, has developed well designed and structured programmes electoral education along with hands on practice for school levels with legislative support. New media has also been used as an instrument of larger engagement amongst youth. "Get Voting', Professional learning workshops, visits to National Electoral Education Center; and National Indigenous Youth Parliament are important initiatives. NIYP is a very interesting weeklong event for engaging young indigenous people in inclusive participation. A brief on NIYP is annexed in the Supplement for ready reference.

Elections Canada is mandated for special attention to teaching democracy, hands on experience, enhancing youth voter registration and turnout. Recent Initiatives of Elections

Canada through a series of robust programmes on its own or through partnerships such as 'Student Vote'(CIVIX), use of Social Media and new technologies have helped in enhancing voter turnout especially amongst youth. Elections Canada studies and analyses the entire Youth Engagement Initiative and has made the inter alia the following three strategic recommendations to the Parliament: Allow pre-registration of new, young electors; allow voter information card as documentary evidence of address and allow young people to work as election workers.

In **the US**, Help America Vote Act, 2002 provides for school level special interventions including Mock Vote and Campus Engagement

for students under the guidance of Electoral Assistance Commission of the US. The Act further provides for collaborations with the Non partisans for supporting school and college level electoral and civic education programmes, hands on experience, mock vote, campus engagement, facilitating young voter registration and voting. A large number of institutions of excellence, non partisans are engaged in robust and high grade research and support to school and campus electoral engagement.

The low levels of electoral participation by young people (18-24 years age group) have been a matter concern for the UK democracy. This has been a subject matter of research studies by the Electoral Commission of the UK as also the other Institutions. The Electoral Commission of UK has made a series of strategic interventions for removing the barriers to registration, partnerships with National Students Union, use of internet and Social media besides addressing issues of social, political and economic exclusion and reducing the distance between the young people, polity and electoral process. Youth Parliament of 11 to 18 years age group is an interesting feature for providing first hand live experience of electoral democracy and

its functioning. A brief note on the UK Youth Parliament is at Supplement II.

In **Scotland**, citizenship development and electoral participation by young people has been given high priority. Reduction of voting age to 16 years, National School Registration Programme, Modern Study Teaching in all Schools, Hands on Citizenship Development have been recommended for consideration.

In **Brazil** 'Voter of the Future' (Eleitor do Futuro) programme was launched in the year 2002 as a parallel mock election for the young people of 10 to 15 years. The programme was aimed at inculcating a sense of civic responsibility for enhancing electoral participation in future voters. It was felt desirable to engage the youth to address the issue at an early age as in Brazil, voting is optional for youth over 16 years of age and mandatory for all citizens over 18 years of age. Thus the main objective was to encourage youth engagement with the political process and teaching of the skills necessary to engage them in electoral processes in an astute and informed manner.

In **Kenya**, the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission launched an ambitious Voter Education Project for schools in collaboration with the Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development. The project focuses more on the secondary school students because they are about to turn 18 years of age and will therefore be eligible to participate in elections. The project intends to foster understanding of the electoral process and develop leaders of integrity from an early age. IEBC in collaboration with Kenya Institute of Education has developed impressive curriculum for voter education including the young and future voters. In Kenya the voter education is supported by the Constitution and the electoral legislation and the IEBC attaches high importance to voter education. Voter education is recognized by The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Article 21); the International convention on Civil and Political

Rights (Article 25) and by the African Charter on Human and People Rights, (Article 13),

In **Namibia** the Election Commission has a strategic focus through curriculum development for schools as per the Policy and the legislative mandate. Voter Education Policy of Namibia recognizes that 'An educated voter is our democracy's best citizen.'

A careful analysis of all these illustrations brings out need for special focus on young and future voters in the age group of around 15 to 19 years for developing the practice of citizenship as an investment in the future of democratic sustenance.

The Common Strategies broadly include Focus on Voter Education, Curriculum Development, Mock Vote, School Debates, Voter Education Weeks, Hands on Experience, Pre registration at school level for age group 15 to 17, elimination of all barriers to registration and building up of confidence for voting through strategic initiatives for the young people of age group 18-20 besides use of New Media or the Social Media for empowering young people in this age brackets. Many countries have the support of legislation for the Constitution for voter education in general and the young and future voters in specific.

The Initiatives mentioned in this article are illustrative only. Many other Democracies in the world have developed and implemented strategic and significant initiatives in this area. As a part of the VoICE.NET Knowledge Network Initiative, it is proposed to share our experiences and enrich our knowledge in a continued manner with a view to invest in the young people of our countries for citizenship development and to empower them for robust, confident, informed and ethical electoral participation for enriching our democracies in a sustained manner. ■

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Australia:
National Indigenous Youth Parliament

The National Indigenous Youth Parliament (NIYP) is a week-long unique learning programme for young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the age group of 16 to 25 years and interested in learning about Australia's democracy and to have a say in Australia's future.

NIYP brings together the future Indigenous leaders from around Australia to discuss and deliberate the issues affecting their communities. The participants interact with law makers, gain hands on experience in functioning of the Parliament especially the legislative process.

The first Indigenous youth parliament was held in 2012 to commemorate the 50th anniversary of granting the right to vote to Indigenous Australians in federal elections. 50 parliamentarians in the 2012 NIYP were selected from a field of more than 180 applicants; 35% came from remote communities, 45% from regional centers and 20% from urban communities. The next programme was held from 28th May to 3rd June, 2014

Announcement for NIYP 2017 has already been made by the Australian Electoral Commission. Prior to the national programme the participants attend a day long training session in their respective State

Aims and Objects

NIYP is an exciting opportunity for young aboriginals and Torres Strait island people in the age group of 16 to 25 years to learn about Australian Democracy. It provides firsthand experience of democratic polity in operation

Coming soon - National Indigenous Youth Parliament 2017! Learn about democracy and have your say in Australia's future. Applications open late January but you can register your interest today at www.aec.gov.au/Indigenous.
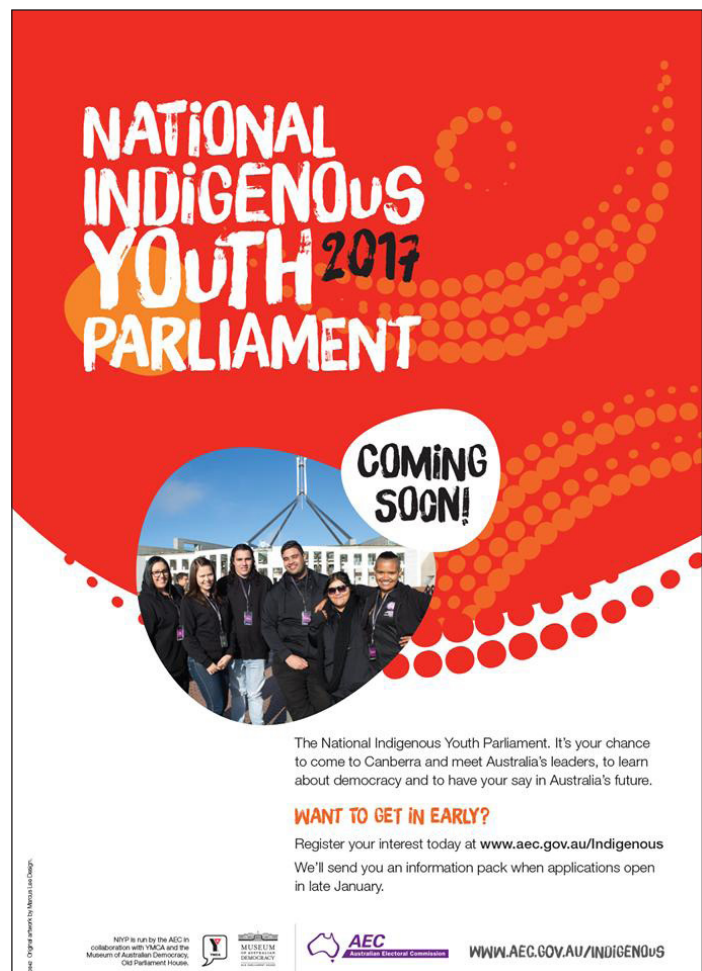
Make sure to like our Facebook page to keep up-to-date with all things #NIYP2017.

Also a massive congratulations to former 2014 NIYP participant Elijah Douglas – QLD finalist for the 2017 Young Australian of the Year award!"

to these young indigenous people. The programme also aims to reduce Indigenous disadvantage in electoral participation

Participation and the Programme

NIYP is organized by the Indigenous Electoral Participation Programme of the Australian

Electoral Commission in partnership with the Museum of Australian Democracy and the YMCA at Old Parliament House in Canberra.

Fifty young Indigenous people from different parts of the country participate in this week-long leadership programme which promotes youth advocacy, active community leadership and a commitment to democracy and its processes.

The participants are chosen on the basis of their community leadership activities, nature and relevance of their deliberative contribution to the event and the learning experience they carry with themselves back to their communities. Six people are chosen from each state and territory, and two from the Torres Strait Islands.

The programme includes expert training in how government functions, the legislative process, debating on different issues and dealing with the media. Participants get an opportunity to interact with and learn from the nation's leaders, members of Parliament, dignitaries, the parliamentary press gallery, Indigenous community leaders, senior public servants and academics.

One of the important components of the programme is a two-day simulation of the parliament at work. This event is organized at the Museum of Australian Democracy at Old Parliament House, where participants debate bills and important issues of relevance to their communities.

NIYP provides a unique opportunity for young Indigenous Australians to build networks and meet other young Indigenous Australians from remote, rural, regional and urban settings. It is an opportunity to talk about community issues, to develop awareness about the matters that affect their everyday lives and to make their voice heard. Former youth parliamentarians support and mentor the participants.

(Source: Australian Electoral Commission) "More information is available at www.aec.gov.au/Indigenous.

Supplement II
UK Youth Parliament

Introduction

The UK Youth Parliament (UKYP) provides a unique opportunity to the young people of age group 11-18 years in the United Kingdom a firsthand experience of democracy in operation where they use their elected voice to bring about social change through meaningful representation and campaigning.

The idea for a youth parliament originated from young people in 1996. Andrew Rowe, a Member of Parliament championed the cause of the UKYP. He was later described as 'Founding Father' of the UKYP. From 1998 to 2000, a steering group of young people and organisations chaired by James Moody (a young person), established the organisation and conducted the 1st Annual Sitting of UKYP in January 2001.

Members of youth parliament are elected in youth elections throughout the UK. Once elected, MYPs attend and organise events and

projects, run campaigns and help decision makers on the issues that matter to young people.

Aims and Objects

Aims and objects of UKYP include inter alia, giving a voice to the young people of the UK on relevant issues for due consideration by:

- Local, regional and national government
- Providers of services for young people
- Other agencies with interest in the views and needs of young people

Key Features of the UKYP

- Comprises of representatives of young people in age group 11-18 years from across England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales.
- Encourages participation from all young people and operates on a local level through Local Authorities (England only).
- Ensures that young people in the UK get a voice on issues that affect them (Reference Article 12 of the UN BYC Convention on the Rights of the Child.)
- Gives young people the opportunity to be involved in the democratic process at a national level.
- Empowers young people to take positive action within local communities.
- Solely issue based and a non-party political organisation, and as such, seeks to represent no party political voice.

Youth Parliament is for everyone

Youth parliament provides numerous opportunities to engage young people in electoral literacy, from supporting campaigns to debating in online forums, utilising social media and filling in ballot papers online. It also encourages young people to stand` for elections.

Manifesto

The views of young people are reflected in

the UK Youth Parliament Manifesto, which contains statements on the issues MYPs think are most important. Manifesto may be seen at UKYP website: www.ukyouthparliament.org.uk

Representation

Each Local Authority across England represents one UKYP constituency. Each constituency is entitled to at least one Member of the youth parliament. The allocation of members to each constituency depends on the number of young people living in that constituency.

Role of the Youth Voice Programme

The youth parliament is managed by the British Youth Council, as a part of the Youth Voice programme. Day-to-day management is carried out by the BYC staff. The work

across the regions and nations is overseen by a team of Youth Democracy Coordinators. Their role is to support the work of elected MYPs. They organise the induction meeting, BYC Conventions and support the work of the Procedures Group representative (PG) and Regional Secretary (RS).

The Procedure Group takes decisions that guide the development of UKYP. PG also makes requisite arrangements for the Annual Sittings and other sessions of the UKYP.

The Campaigns; 'Make Your Mark' consultations

'Make Your Mark' is the largest youth consultation of the UK. It is run by the British Youth Council with the topics as may be decided by the UKYP. At the House of Commons event, Members of Youth Parliament debate top 5 topics from 'Make Your Mark' and vote. In view of the devolved nature of the UK democracy and to ensure proper representation of the issues from the all nations, two priority campaigns (one on a devolved issue and the other on a reserved issue) are run every year.

Youth Parliament connect with Different Levels of Governance.

There are various areas where Members of the youth parliament can have a positive impact as discussed below:

Local level

Members are elected in their respective constituency. At the point of their election, they may choose to work on local campaigns and raise a profile of young people's voice in their respective constituency.

Regional level/Devolved level

Members attend Youth Council Conventions. They get an opportunity to share best practices, network with other youth parliaments and

youth councils as well as join forces on local campaigns at these forums. Their role is to speak to the group on behalf of the young people of their constituency. The PG representatives then take this to a national platform and make decisions in the Annual Sitting and the House of Commons event.

National level

There are two national events for UK youth parliament; the Annual Sitting and the House of Commons. The Annual Sitting takes place each summer, towards the end of July. Members of the youth parliament are expected to consult their constituents before attending this sitting for enabling themselves to amend the UKYP manifesto. After the manifesto has been voted upon, a national consultation is launched in a manner that every 11-18 year old in the UK can take part in called 'Make Your Mark' followed by the House of Commons debate in November.

At the House of Commons event MYPs decide the two priority campaigns for the coming year. They do this by debating the top five topics from the 'Make Your Mark' consultation. Based on these debates they cast two votes for their priority campaigns, one for a devolved (England only) issue and one for a reserved issue (UK wide). This is due to the devolved nature of the UK democracy and to ensure relevant representation of the issues from the all nations.

Code of Conduct and Commitment

A well structured Code of Conduct and Commitment has been defined for the Members of the UK youth parliament. This code outlines the principles, conduct and commitment   that are expected of the Members of the UKYP during their term of the office.

(Source: The UK Electoral Commission)

Youth Civic Education

is Crucial to a Country's Democratic Health

Introduction

Recent large-scale youth survey findings suggest that today's youth – the largest young generation ever – are less engaged in political processes than previous generations and are beginning to "opt-out" of democratic systems.[1,2] Unresponsive institutions and other barriers to youth participation and influence in public life are often cited as major contributors to this decline. In response, election management bodies and international organizations have noted the importance of effective civic education, and have offered recommendations to mitigate or remove institutional barriers, such as the adoption of legal and policy mechanisms – legislative quotas, youth parliaments, lowered voting age, among others – as a means to increase youth engagement in political processes and public life.[3,4,5]

During its 30-year history, the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) has found that a culture of democracy flourishes only when citizens are informed about democratic principles, and translate that knowledge into action by: engaging with institutions and other public structures; performing community service; and, exercising leadership. Through its global portfolio, IFES advances good governance, and empowers underrepresented populations to participate in the political process; youth civic education is an integral part of this work.

The term "youth" typically refers to the transitional period from childhood to adulthood during which individuals' relationships with government change from passive to active; reaching the age of enfranchisement is a milestone that enables young people to formally participate in public structures. Investment in young people offers communities and societies a tangible demographic dividend as research suggests that early civic education and engagement establishes life-long patterns of participation in community and public affairs. Educating young people on the values, culture, and practice of democracy through effective youth civic education before they reach voting age is crucial to a country's future democratic health, and ultimately, peace and stability.

IFES designs and implements youth programs that foster an understanding of citizens' rights and responsibilities in a pluralistic society and creates a culture of engagement for those who have not yet reached the voting age in their communities. IFES also provides training, incentives, tools and opportunities for new voters to participate in elections and advocate for positive change within their communities. With IFES support, in countries around the world, young people have built networks and other public fora to discuss and debate issues of importance; trained for and served as poll workers and election observers in their communities in order to uphold principles of free, fair, and transparent elections; and

ensured themselves a seat at the table during peaceful democratic transitions by drafting codes of conduct applied during high intensity pre- and post-election periods.

Measures for Effective Youth Engagement

Formal School-based Civic Education
Occasionally schools and other youth-serving institutions in a country lack curriculum, qualified teachers and/or other resources dedicated to youth civic development. Yet in countries where traditions of civic education and democratic society are nascent, these resources are vital in fomenting democratic values, attitudes, and habits in young people. To address this need, IFES developed a fully-accredited university-level civics course titled *Democracy & Citizenship*, and piloted the course in six higher-learning institutions in the Republic of Georgia. Today, the course is offered in 27 universities across the country in collaboration with the Georgian **Civic Education Lecturers Association,** and seeks to strengthen students' understanding of governance; civic responsibility and civil society; enhance their critical thinking skills; and encourage active participation in public life. There are more than 7,000 alumni throughout Georgia who have taken this course, many of whom have undertaken a variety of civic activities since their studies. For example, one group of students created an audio version of the *Democracy & Citizenship* course book after learning that the text book was only available in print format; another group of students created an Accessibility Corner in the library of Tbilisi State University – the largest university in Georgia – outfitted with a braille printer and other accessible technology; and many others have gone on to found NGOs, serve as domestic election observers, or volunteer as Election Day poll workers.

Similarly, in Kenya IFES works with the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission (IEBC) and the Kenya Institute of curriculum Development (KICD) to develop curricular materials for primary- and secondary- level schools. These materials seek to demystify the election process, and ensure that young voters will exercise their constitutional right to register and vote when they reach voting age.

Non-formal Civic Education
Outside of the classroom, young people often have the opportunity to engage in creative or experiential learning which is an instructional method that emphasizes learning from experience, and can include internships, volunteerism, field studies, or simulations. IFES supports this type of learning through a variety of activities including multi-day residential "Democracy Camp" featuring a program of lectures, small group exercises, competitions, theater and sports, where students hone problem-solving skills and explore values such as leadership, responsibility, and civic participation. Additionally, other activities such as debate and after-school clubs, street theater, and peer-to-peer communication and mentorship programs help ensure knowledge of civic and voter information.

Applying Theoretical Knowledge to Public Life
The development of practical skills associated with active civic engagement is best achieved when students apply theoretical concepts explored inside the classroom to daily life outside of school. An outgrowth of the *Democracy & Citizenship* course is a micro-grant program where youth-led organizations compete for funding in order to conduct projects of their own design. Putting theory into practice helps young people cement the link between conceptual notions of what citizenship is, and the look and feel of active citizenship in practice.

During the summer of 2016, IFES provided grants to 11 youth-led organizations in Georgia working to address voter and social issues throughout the country. These dedicated young people seek to make the lives of others

better through their work. Meri Namgaladze, founder of Youth for Public Interests in Batumi, Georgia, noted, *"my experience with [IFES'] civic education courses and action project encouraged me to establish my NGO, Youth for Public Interests, together with my course mates, who are fellow D&C course alumni."*[6] These dedicated young people reached thousands of their peers and other Georgian citizens through their work, which has an important impact on their communities.

Youth & Peaceful Societies
In the current climate of globally targeted terrorist attacks and civil wars that are increasingly likely to export catastrophe beyond their borders, identifying the causes of youth radicalization and mitigating violent extremism have captured the world's attention. As such, international bodies have recognized that it is more important than ever to ensure that young people have meaningful opportunities to engage in mainstream civic and political processes, as well as provide economic opportunity.

The U.N. Security Council (UNSC) passed Resolution 2250 in December 2015, which urged member states to actively include youth in political dialogue, with a focus on the 18-29 age range. IFES believes that including youth as active participants in their societies decreases the likelihood that they become involved in violent conflict and civic unrest because it provides them with greater awareness of the rights of others and the various legitimate means of resolving grievances peacefully. In particular, this can help to stabilize high intensity pre- and post-election periods. By engaging youth in the aftermath of violent revolution and ethnic conflict, IFES has found these efforts ultimately contribute to peaceful elections.

In support of youth's role in peaceful elections IFES helped students in Burundi address electoral violence and conflict in their communities by supporting the drafting of a Code of Conduct that was disseminated

IFES established the first ever university debate program in Afghanistan in June 2010. The debate club program served as a unique building block for enhancing students' public speaking and communication skills, research and critical thinking skills, and self-confidence. To accommodate growing interest in debate among Afghan students, the 2012 debate club program expanded to include eight universities.

throughout the country; additionally, in consultation with the electoral commission, IFES organized a series of workshops that brought together nearly 23,000 young people to discuss elections and promote non-violence. These workshops helped participants understand what is at stake during elections and equip them with tools to mitigate potential election-related conflicts.

In Syria, IFES organized the Musharaka Youth Forum, which is focused on providing a safe space for displaced Syrian youth living in Turkey to share their experiences, engage with others in their communities and begin taking steps toward creating the stable and secure community environment that is a necessary foundation for meaningful civic participation. ■

Bill Sweeney
President/CEO, IFES

[1]Afrobarometer; International Youth Day: Despite interest, African youth are not connecting with political processes; No. 41; August 2015.

[2]Arab Youth Survey 2015; Asda'a Burson-Marsteller; 2015.

[3]Enhancing Youth Political Participation throughout the Electoral Cycle; United Nations Development Programme; 2012.

[4]Youth Participation in National Parliaments; Inter-Parliamentary Union; 2014.

[5]Nearly every country has some type written policy, action plan, or strategy focused on youth. YouthPolicy.org offers a list of countries with links to their respective youth documents: http://www.youthpolicy.org/nationalyouthpolicies/

[6]International Foundation for Electoral Systems Dialogues on Democracy featuring Meri Namgaladze; http://www.ifes.org/multimedia/podcast-dialogues-democracy-featuring-gvantsa-tughushi

Empowering Young and Future Voters
Investing in the Young

The national elections in India held in April-May 2014 witnessed historic voter turnout of 66.44%. Around 554 million voted in 2014 out of the 834 million who were registered as electors. This was a whopping increase in turnout over the previous national election in 2009 when India recorded a turnout of 58.19%. It was observed that women, youth and urban electors had lower participation in 2009 and earlier elections.

Realising the gravity of this participation deficit

in the electoral process, Election Commission of India launched a national voter education programme after the national elections in 2009 – '*Systematic Voters' Education and Electoral Participation* (SVEEP)'. The participation challenges were identified as:

i.   Gender gap
ii. Youth disconnect
iii. Urban apathy

Accordingly overcoming the 'Youth Disconnect'

with the electoral process was one of the focus of SVEEP programme. Various interventions were designed around the youth, with additional gender focus within this segment, to remove any information gap and to facilitate youth participation in elections. Motivational campaigns were taken up to mobilise youth and encourage them to register in the electoral roll and vote in elections.

National Voters' Day

In 2011, ECI initiated a practice to celebrate the 'Voter' on its foundation day, 25th January by celebrating it as National Voters' Day. Since then the foundation day of ECI is observed every year as National Voters' Day in every polling station location, at district and state headquarters.

With the aim to give the younger generation a sense of responsible citizenship and to encourage them to exercise their new franchise, ECI felicitates the newly eligible registered voters in over 0.7 million polling station locations as part of the National Voters' Day observance. They are handed over their Elector Photo Identity Cards (EPIC) and a badge with the slogan "Proud to be a Voter-Ready to Vote". They also take an oath to strengthen democracy by taking part in the elections, which is now popularly termed as NVD Pledge. This forms the essential components of any NVD celebration.

The national NVD function is held at New Delhi. Besides the three essential components, the national function also awards election officials for 'Best Electoral Practices'. Partners and agencies who contribute to ECI's efforts towards holding free, fair and participative elections are also felicitated at the national NVD function every year.

The National Voters' Day is being celebrated with great enthusiasm across the country along with a series of outreach measures ahead of NVD like symposiums, cycle rally, human chain, folk arts programmes, mini-marathon,

competitions and awareness seminars. Most of these activities are targeted at youth.

Campus Ambassadors

Campus Ambassadors are appointed from among the students in Colleges and Universities to bridge the gap in youth electoral participation. The Campus Ambassadors identify students, teachers and non-teaching staff and their family members who are not registered in the electoral rolls and facilitate their registration in the Electoral roll in co-ordination with the election machinery. They assist election machinery to organize special drive for registration including correction of errors, transposition of names etc in the electoral roll. Campus Ambassadors facilitate inclusion of voter education in various co-curricular activities /festivals of the campus through different activities such as slogan writing, poster making, quiz, debate, essay writing, song, street plays etc and also help in organising National Voters' Day programme in their campus besides acting as an educator and motivator in the family and neighbourhood and helping them in filling registration forms.

Engaging with Educational Institutions

Chief electoral Officers in the states have partnered with educational institutions, mainly colleges and Universities to reach out to the youth. College festivals, marathon runs, competitions like debates, plays, song composition etc have been successfully used to engage with students and disseminate electoral information among them. Special registration camps have been held in campuses to target newly eligible and young voters.

Partnership with Ministry of Youth and Departments

For reaching out to youth outside educational institutions, ECI has partnered with the Ministry of Sports and Youth Affairs and engaged various youth organizations affiliated with the Ministry. Special activities are

planned with the youth organization for wide dissemination of information relating to electoral process. Special registration drives are held to include the youth outside educational institutions in the electoral roll. Sports competition in both rural and urban areas is among the popular activities taken up for engaging with these youth.

Use of popular media including FM Radio

Cinema slides, TV spots, hoardings have been widely used to appeal to youth. Besides interactive media like street play, flash mobs and similar activities which are popular among youth have been used to disseminate important information. FM radio is highly popular among the youth and it has been widely used by election managers to engage the youth with electoral process. Popular radio programmes and famous radio jockeys have included electoral awareness in their broadcast. Private FM Radio channels have held road shows ahead of elections in coordination with election machinery. Talk shows on radio have featured election officials to discuss various topics related to elections, interaction with voters have been arranged through phone-ins.

Cartoon strips *'Wah Election Wah!'* were used in dailies to stir the complacent young urban non-voters with wit and humour, while also disseminating information of how, where and when. Set in a train travelling through various parts of the country, the radio programme *'Loktantra Express'* is also aimed at youth and uses song and speech, adding regional flavours to motivate listeners from different regions, age groups and sections to participate in the task of nation building by practicing their right to vote.

Use of Technology and Social Media

While mobile phone has high penetration in India, youth use the mobile phones for accessing various services besides just making calls. Special apps have been developed to facilitate voters and make enrolment easier besides accessing other information related to elections like locating polling stations, checking names on voter list besides getting SMS alerts for registration and voting.

Other popular media like internet and social media are widely used for imparting electoral education and information and for mobilising young voters.

Physical Events and Activities

A variety of physical events and activities are taken up under SVEEP for motivation and mobilisation. Competitions like drawing, debates, declamations, quiz in educational institutions on elections and voting enthuse young people. Activities like local and folk art competitions are used for targeting young rural populace. Song writing competitions and Rock festivals in public places interest urban youth. Sporting events like kite flying, motor rallies, cricket tournaments, wrestling events, marathon runs, mass mobilisation events like rallies, human chains, and candle light vigils are utilized with good effect. Mock polls and dummy polling stations are effectively used to engage young people.

Icons

The task of enthusing and inspiring the disinterested and alienated citizens and address their apathy and skepticism to make possible their participation in the electoral process is imperative for greater electoral participation. It is crucial to associate a sense of pride with the right and duty of exercising one's franchise.

Identifying the ability of inspirational personalities to establish authentic connection with the masses, ECI associated with renowned Indians from various field enjoying national appeal and appointed them as ECI's National Icons to motivate Voters. Similarly renowned individuals in states were appointed as State Icons.

Celebrities popular among youth have been engaged by ECI to be ambassadors or Icons to motivate youth to participate in electoral process. While former President of India Dr A P J Abdul Kalam who had mass appeal, could reach out pan India, sportsperson like M S Dhoni appealed to youth. Olympiad Saina Nehwal and Marykom are youth icons and especially had appeal among women. Actor Aamir Khan promoted informed and ethical voting message of ECI for clean elections.

Electoral literacy for Young Adults

ECI partnered with the National Literacy Mission Authority (NLMA) to take forward electoral literacy in the villages among young adults who are non or neo-literates. Electoral literacy content has been developed on all aspects of elections in form of flash cards and the same has been widely used by the election officials during the State and national elections.

Prospective or future voters

Under the third phase of the Systematic Voters' Education and Electoral Participation programme (SVEEP-III), one of the important target segments is prospective voters. These are the young people falling within the 15-17years age group and who are on the threshold of adulthood. Special interventions have been conceived to inculcate electoral literacy among young people through curricula and co-curricula in Schools.

Special interventions are simultaneously planned for those in the same age-group and outside schools. The theme for 7th National Voters' Day (NVD) is 'Empowering Young and Future Voters' and the same is the focus of ECI in the year 2017.

Electoral Literacy through Schools

State level Committees were set up in 2016 to assess the electoral literacy component in school curriculum and suggest additions, wherever required. The Committees have
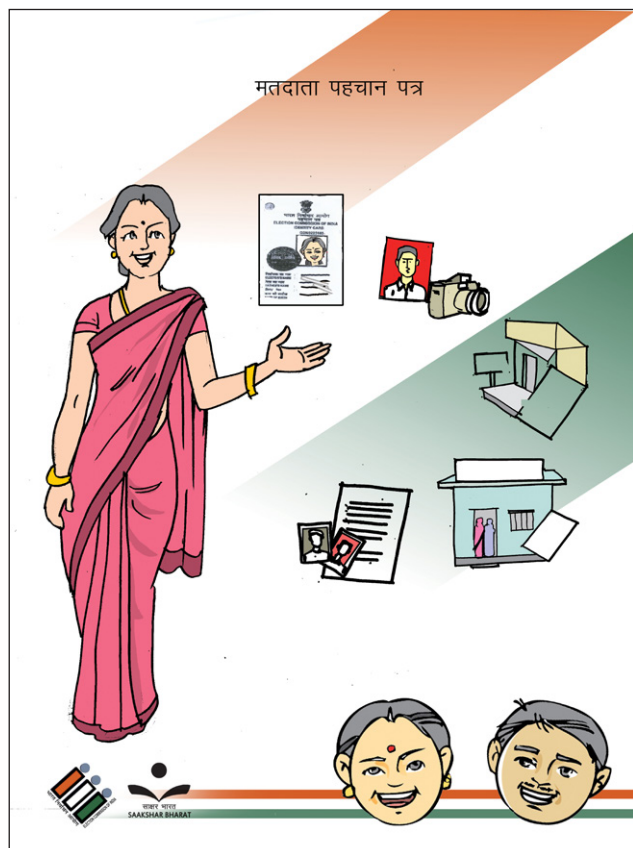
representation from State Education Board and election officials besides experts.

A national working group has been set up which consists of members from Education Department, Academics, CSO working in the field of education, Experts and Election Officials to chalk out co-curricula content and activities on electoral literacy, which can be suitably included in schools and adapted to impart awareness among those outside schools.

Interactive School Engagement

This is one component under the initiative of outreach to future voters wherein the around 6000 Electoral Registration Officers (EROs)

covered atleast one school within their constituency in January 2017 ahead of the 7th NVD and interacted with the students in 15-17 year age group (9th-12th standard). They responded to queries from the students on various aspects of elections and electoral polity. The ERO were equipped with a 'Voter Education' kit for their interaction with the school students. More than 600 District Election Officers (DEOs) and 36 Chief Electoral Officers (CEOs) also covered atleast one school, within their district and State/UT respectively during the same period. Badges reading 'I am the Future Voter of India' and Brochure on 'How to Register & Vote' were distributed among the students.

Electoral Literacy for those outside Schools

The production and distribution of voter edutainment material for continuous education in an interesting and comprehensive manner was taken up in collaboration with United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in 2013. Focusing on consistent education and motivation, this project also takes from the concept of pyscho-social learning. After studying and identifying potential target group for each tool in the initial stage, a field test of the tools was also done to assure their effectiveness. Frequently asked questions (FAQ) related to the electoral process and other topics are pictorially depicted and discussed through the story of the brother-sister duo of Abha and Abhay in the colourful and easy-to-understand picture book *'Garv se banein Matdata'*, meant largely for new and semi literates, women and children.

The board games *'Vote Ki Baazi'* and *'Ready Steady Vote'* designed upon the traditional board games using folk art and motifs but with the twist of voter education, imparts education in an interesting and engaging way.

Stories in Popular Children's Magazines

Aiming at engaging the to-be voters and to catch them young, specific stories on voter education were taken up in popular children's magazines Tinkle and Lotpot. While in Tinkle the trope of the jungle was used, popular characters Motu & Patlu appeared discussing voting related topics in Lotpot, in a pictorial, colourful and interesting way of cartoon-strip format to attract the readers. The initiative aimed at long term effect of motivating and encouraging children and youth for greater participation in voting. ■

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

The Australian Electoral Commission's National Indigenous Youth Parliament

The Australian Electoral Commission's third National Indigenous Youth Parliament (NIYP), a week-long residential leadership program for young Indigenous Australians, will be held in Canberra (the nation's capital) from 23-29 May 2017.

The aim of the NIYP is to develop young Indigenous leaders.Participants will learn about the government and the political process and develop advocacy skills, as influencers for their communities.

The NIYP brings together the Indigenous leaders of the future, young people prepared to debate issues and look for solutions to tackle Indigenous disadvantage.

Fifty candidates aged 16-25, six from each state and territory and two from the Torres Strait Islands (to the north of Queensland), are selected based on their contribution to the community and their leadership potential.

The program's centrepiece is two-day simulated parliament held in the historic Old Parliament House, where the participants debate bills on pertinent issues that propose practical change for the benefit of Indigenous Australians. The final bills are presented to the Australian Government for consideration.

Participants will also speak on the matters of public

importance and in the adjournment debate, where they canexpress their opinions, voice their concerns and be heard by parliamentarians and the media.

Indigenous Australians, particularly Indigenous youth, are less likely to enrol and vote and more likely to vote informally than other Australians. For the AEC the goal of NIYP is for participants to carry home a message on how participating in the electoral process can work for their community.

Participants will meet with the Prime Minister, the Leader of the Opposition, Members of Parliament and the Governor-General, as well as Indigenous leaders, senior public servants and the members of the parliamentary press gallery,to learn about leadership and to discuss youth and Indigenous issues.

Of the 50 candidates at the 2014 NIYP, 35 percent came from remote Australia, 45 percent from regional centres and 20 percent from urban communities.

The National Indigenous Youth Parliament is run by the Australian Electoral Commission in collaboration with the YMCA and the Museum of Australian Democracy at Old Parliament House. ◼

International Conference:
A scintillating global event organized by ECI

International conference on 'Voter Education for Inclusive, Informed and Ethical participation' organized by Election Commission of India was a resounding success. The three-day conference held from 19th to 21st October at New Delhi witnessed global participation with heads as also delegates from Election Management Bodies (EMBs) of 25 (twenty five) countries namely Australia, Afghanistan, Brazil, Canada, Fiji, Iraq, Mauritius, Nepal, Namibia, Georgia, Brazil, Thailand, Indonesia, Kenya, Lesotho, Malaysia, Maldives, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Tunisia, India, Mexico, Pakistan, Uganda and USA. Participation of research scholars from international organizations likes UNDP, International IDEA, IFES, Malaysia Commonwealth Studies Centre and Haifa University further enriched the conference.

The conference began with the opening of the exhibition. The exhibition showcased the best practices in voter education adopted all over the world as well as the SVEEP initiatives in India. Interactive games and a Model Polling Booth with the EVM machine, where the visitor could vote for the best section of the exhibition, were thronged by visitors throughout the conference period. Opening was followed by the inauguration of the conference.

In the Inaugural session, Dr. Nasim Zaidi, Hon'ble Chief Election Commissioner of India during his key note address stressed upon the significance of every single vote in a democracy. Dr. Zaidi stated that

the feedback, inputs received and discussed upon in the course of this Conference would be instrumental in achieving the Election Commission's motto "No voter to be left behind".

A. K. Joti, Election Commissioner of India highlighted the application of Information Communication and Technology for empowering all the stakeholders during the electoral process to ensure smooth and hassle free election. O. P. Rawat, Election Commissioner of India emphasized on the need of having stringent mechanism to ensure free, fair, transparent & accountable election. Marina Walter, Deputy Country Director, UNDP underlined the efforts towards Voter Awareness and Education and expressed that such Conferences would benefit all democracies across the world.

Umesh Sinha, Deputy Election Commissioner made a presentation focusing on identification of issues and challenges posing participation deficit. He underlined the significance of Voter Education and SVEEP (Systematic Voter Education & Electoral Participation) for greater qualitative and quantitative participation.

This paved the way for the first technical session of the conference based on the theme '**Electoral Literacy in formal education'**. The session witnessed presentations from six countries namely Canada, Georgia, Sri Lanka, Australia, USA and India focusing on voter education in curricula and extra-curricular.

Presentations by delegates from participating EMBs

Dr. Nasim Zaidi, CEC discusses the New Delhi Resolution draft

Dignitaries on dais during session V

The speakers talked at length about the current voter education scenarios in their countries, coupled with the challenges they face and how they have come up with pioneering initiatives in order to combat those challenges. The session commenced with Canada experience and how they have made efforts to fight the declining youth voter turnout rate. The audience was enlightened about the multifaceted approach that Canada uses to impart education among its students and youth. After this the audience learned about the unique pyramid form of education used by Georgia. Sri Lanka, which is among the youngest Election Commissions in the world, talked about the voter engagement at school levels by the way of youth parliaments and various voting programs.

Australia talked about its 'Get Voting Program' which is an online platform which enables students to get literature on voter education and conduct school elections. USA shared about how it gives the grants to

THE RESOLVE:

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

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

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

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

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

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

1. Address the issues of participation deficit and endeavour to enhance both quantitative and qualitative participation.

2. Endeavour to formulate systematic, strategic, structured and universal voter awareness and education as per the needs of the voters and communities and develop effective outreach to maximize the comfortable, confident informed and ethical participation.

3

3. Engage with governments in introducing voter education in school and college curricula as electoral literacy in primary education goes a long way towards cultivating youth that are well-prepared, well-informed and responsible voters and citizens; Best practices from various countries can be adapted.

4. Educate the electorate not covered by the formal educational system or cut-off from the mainstream due to various reasons under the ambit of focused informal voter education.

5. Impart inclusive voter education through specific and targeted interventions aimed at removing gaps in gender, youth and marginalized segments of society.

6. Collaborate to produce voter education in accessible formats and develop inclusive materials that feature citizens with all types of disabilities.

7. Enhance transparency in the electoral process to provide relevant information related to the candidate to enable people to make informed choice

8. Ensure that voters are able to vote freely for the representatives and parties of their choice and are not unduly influenced by any kind of inducement

9. Enhance the reach and effectiveness of voter education programs through innovation and use of technologies accessible to people with different levels of literacy background and with disabilities.

10. Promote cooperation and partnerships with civil society organizations, media and other relevant entities in designing, developing and implementing effective voter education programmes.

11. Endeavour sufficient financial and human resource for Voter Education.

12. To share experiences, ideas and knowledge resources under a global Knowledge Network on Voter Education with Election Management Bodies, Institutes engaged with democracy and elections, and individual experts.

4

its various schools and colleges to engage its young students to help them become responsible voters. The audience witnessed the diverse initiatives taken by India at all levels, in order to ensure that 'No Voter is Left Behind'.

The session was further enriched by the interactive session where the audience threw up some interesting observations and comments.

The post lunch technical session II was based on the theme '**Inclusive Electoral Literacy through informal education channel"** : to reach out to those outside schools and other marginalized groups i.e. Persons with Disability (PwDs), women, people working in unorganized labour sector, tribals etc. Presentations in this session were made by eight countries namely Indonesia, Iraq, Myanmar, Nepal, Namibia, Pakistan, Tunisia and India also an expert from IDEA.

The inclusion of all the sections of the society was emphasised to maintain the true spirit of democracy. Reaching out to the marginalized sections in their respective countries, a more accessible system for people with disabilities has been devised in most of the countries. Efforts for registration of tribals and the unorganized labour sector and graphical representations for illiterates were made to spread voters' awareness. Various gender inclusion practices (for women and transgenders) were also discussed.

According to majority of EMBs, cooperation with stakeholders and involvement of media held major importance. Indonesia shared its initiative for First-time voters: 'KPU Goes to Campus', Myanmar talked about ethnic inclusion, Nepal shared its initiative on creation of election museum and Namibia talked about its 'Touch and Feel' EVM for voter awareness. Pakistan has incorporated the messages of its Election Commission in utility bills, public transport and postal services to reach out to everyone.

Youth-motivating programmes were also undertaken by Tunisia. India shared its initiative for inclusion of homeless besides other groups like tribals, women, first time voters and other marginalised segments. Sheri Meyerhoffer, an expert from IDEA, Nepal, emphasized on how a democracy requires all citizens to understand and take ownership to effect change.

Hon'ble President of India, Sh. Pranab Mukherjee addresses the delegates of the conference

An immensely informative session, it paved the way for reflections and exchange of ideas on inclusion.

The first day of the event concluded with all the delegates from EMBs, the Commission and senior officers from ECI calling upon the Hon'ble President of India at Rashtrapati Bhawan. It was indeed a memorable experience for each delegate!

On 20th October, the conference commenced with the Technical Session III: '**Enhancement of participation by special category of voters**' like defence personnel, diplomatic mission personnel, polling personnel and overseas citizens, which witnessed the presentations from Australia, Iraq, Lesotho, Mexico, USA, India and IFES.

Through the presentations, it was erudite that special facilities for overseas citizens and defence personnel were provided by most countries. In addition, Iraq and Australia also allowed patients, staff in the hospital, inmates and employees in prison to exercise their right to vote through a special provision. Interestingly, the US also received its first vote from a citizen in space. However, a number of challenges like the lack of information and awareness as also registration and receiving votes through post or online were cited.

Privacy of vote, the most important right of the voter, was also bound to be compromised in internet voting. Mexico also used famous Mexicans abroad to spread awareness. Funding was another major issue, as pointed out by Lesotho, which has no such facilities due to monetary constraints. India while giving its presentation about the initiatives taken to reach out to its overseas electors, concluded the presentation with the launch of an online Knowledge, Attitude and Practice (KAP) survey cum competition for the Non-Resident Indians (NRIs) who retain their Indian citizenship and can thus vote in Indian elections.

IFES has been working in many countries and gave a glimpse of various initiatives being taken in these countries to reach out to the special categories of voters. As IFES stated, the right to vote is a fundamental human right and should be extended to all, including the refugees.

This was followed by session IV which focussed on '**ICT (Information, Communication & Technology)** role in voter education'. Philippines, Fiji, India and UNDP gave presentations in this session.

Philippines shared how they implemented automated elections for the third time in 2016 with the objectives being credibility and enhanced voting experience for the voters. They stressed how it was important for them that besides the election results being credible, they should be perceived as credible as well. Philippines selected a few areas and termed them 'Key Result Areas' which were judged by a scorecard or report card. The elections saw an increase in voter turnout reaching approximately 82%.

Fijian Elections Office had adopted a '545 sms-ing'
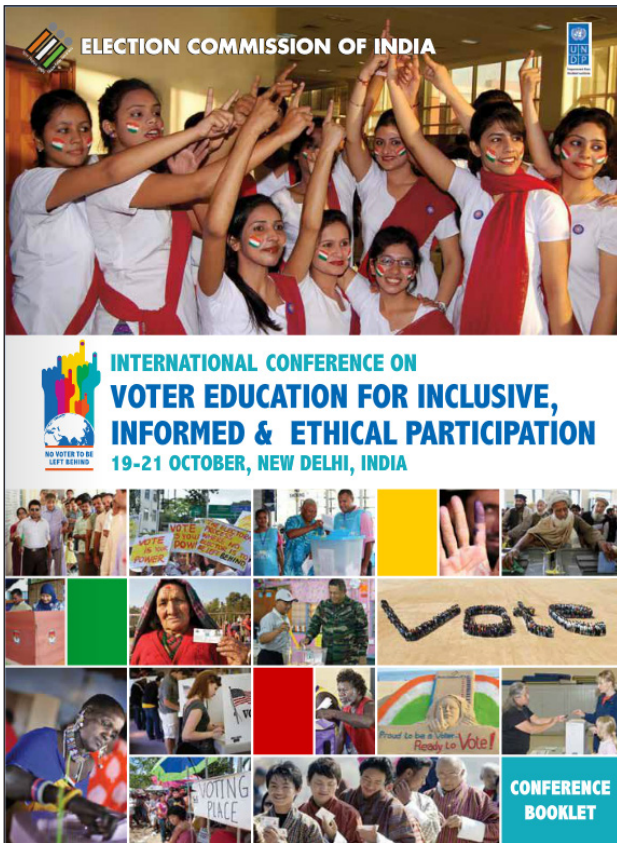
Conference booklet

Conference Reader

platform for the fast dissemination of information for the 2014 elections. By messaging a unique voter ID number to 545, an instant message was received by the voter, with the details of the polling station of the voter. The voting day was reduced from seven days to one day and implemented through precinct voting and increased polling stations, hence, reducing the number of votes from 4,000 to 500 per polling station. It was recorded that 90% of the votes cast consisted of voters who had acquired information from the messaging service. Along with it, the Call Centre received around 38,000 calls. The percentage of invalid votes was record breaking with just being 0.75% and the voter turnout being 84.6%.

Najia Hashme, Regionalist Specialist of UNDP shared that UNDP has adopted an 'Integrated approach' to support 'Inclusive Political Processes (IPP)' to improve citizen participation. She stressed on the examples of the Arab countries and highlighted the case of Tunisia where information technology has been used for improving voter turnout. Media like Twitter, YouTube were utilized to spread awareness and incite interest amongst the population especially the young voters.
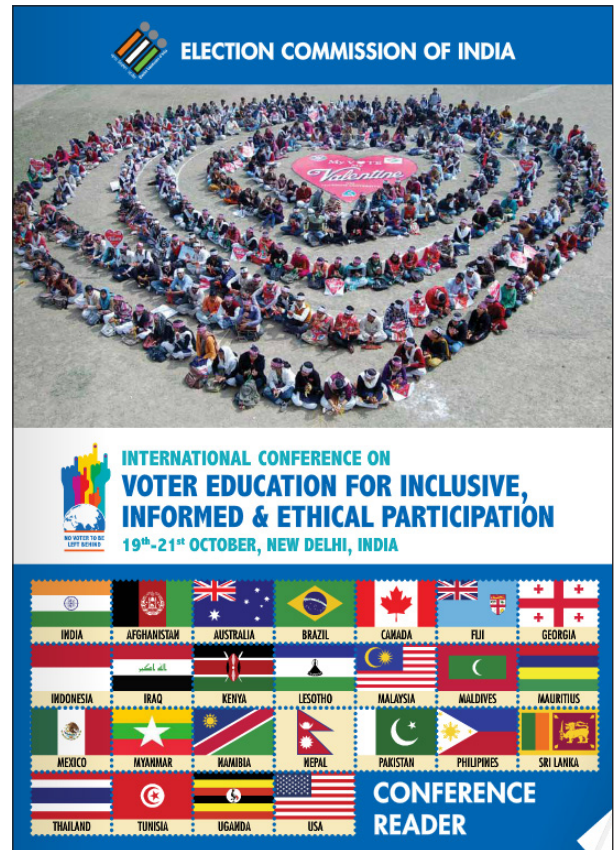
India talked about the recent elections held in May 2016 to share the advent and mass usage of information technology in the electoral process. Because of mobile and internet penetration, there was a two-way communication established which provided Election Commission of India with continuous feedback. The electoral roll was computerized completely and the local services were added to cloud. The session ended with a question and answer session on different possibilities to educate voter through ICT.

The fifth session of the conference saw presentations on **'Informed and Ethical Voting'** which is a relevant issue in almost all the democracies across the world. The session comprised of nine comprehensive presentations from Election Management Bodies of Afghanistan, Brazil, Kenya, Malaysia, Maldives, Mauritius, Thailand, Uganda and India and also two presentations by experts.

Independent Election Commission of Afghanistan shared how they focused on electoral literacy through informal education channels and described the public

outreach methods for participation of 16.7 Million People. Electoral Judicial School of Brazil, spoke on democracy and citizenship in everyday life and talked about the role of Civil Societies in Brazil to spread voter awareness, train people and implementation of citizen watch centres. Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission, Kenya talked about the 2010 constitution that empowered voters and how the Commission stressed on the involvement of school children and university students, as also a collaboration with UNDP to promote electoral literacy among marginalised groups.

Election Commission Malaysia shared their initiative to increase voter turnout, including registration at high foot-fall urban areas and the election campaign enforcement team. Election Commission of Maldives shared how they focus on civic education and voter awareness through modules, trainings, posters, TV, Social Media and so on. Electoral Commissioner Office of the Mauritius showcased the link between their voter education programme and their culture. Election Commission, Thailand, gave a presentation on the roles of Thai citizens in promoting and developing democracy and election in sub-district level. Focusing on the political situation of Thailand, he talked about creating voter friendly curriculums, democracy tree and the importance of participatory learning.

Electoral Commission of Uganda, gave a detailed presentation on ethical voting and its definitions, quoting excerpts like "Your Vote, Your Power, Your country" from voter education material. She also explained how to ensure greater ethical voting through voter education, proper declaration of results. Karamjit Singh, an expert in the electoral field from Malaysia Commonwealth Studies Centre shared UK's initiatives for voter education, and stressed on the crucial role played by NGOs, political parties, media in voter education and stressed that success of voter education programme can be assessed in terms of outcome as well as change in behaviour. Ornit Shahi of Hafia University, talked about the evolution of Indian democracy and its landmarks. She also focused on the condition of refugees, and if they should be given the right to vote. Election Commission of India, focused on the challenges to ethical voting, taking India as an example, and the

International Conference team at the exhibition

initiatives taken under SVEEP to fight money power and lure of inducement through voter awareness and education.

With an unmatchable vigor that was witnessed in the informative two day conference, finally the event proceeded towards the closing. The session commenced with an immensely comprehensive presentation on the notable voter education points of all the participant nations. The demonstration was steered by Umesh Sinha, Deputy Election Commissioner of India, who acknowledged the remarkable initiatives taken by the different countries for the enforcement of voter literacy in their homelands. Furthermore, the valuable suggestions and comments of the contributing officials on the Draft of **New Delhi Resolution** were discussed at length.

After this, the much awaited launch of the VoICE. NET took place. **VoICE.NET** (Voter Information, Communication and Education Network) is a global knowledge network on voter education, which is an online platform for sharing knowledge, resources and expertise on Voter Education.

Then, closing remarks on the theme of the conference were given by Jaco Cilliers, UNDP Country Director and Dr. Nasim Zaidi, Chief Election Commissioner, who extended his words of appreciation and encouragement to the participants, officials and the organizers, and declared International Conference as *'a scintillating global event organized by Election Commission of India'.* ■

NRI survey cum competition

Creatives for promotion of NRI survey cum competition

The Election Commission of India (ECI) in collaboration with Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS) has brought forth a unique survey cum competition for Non Resident Indians holding Indian passports. It is based upon the theme of "Every Indian Vote Counts" and hence is available at http://everyindianvotecounts.in/

The survey aims to study and determine the registration and participation rates among overseas electors. It also asks about opinions of the overseas voters on voting. The survey would help the Commission understand the NRIs and their perspective as enthusiastic electors. The Commission is determined to shape their opinions into path-breaking ideas. Moreover, filling the survey also provides an opportunity to participate in a competition. The competition is devised to crowdsource creative ideas from overseas Indians holding Indian passports.

It includes the following categories:

• Slogan
• Song (original composition)
• Posters
• Photograph
• Essay
• Short Film and Audio Visual

The prize winning creations would win the participant a round trip to India and a lifetime opportunity to be honoured by the Election Commission of India on National Voters' Day, 25th January 2017 at New Delhi. ∎

NIYP 2017 – coming soon

The National Indigenous Youth Parliament (NIYP) is an exciting opportunity for young Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people aged 16 to 25 to learn about Australia's democracy and to have a say about Australia's future.

More information about NIYP 2017 and how to apply will be available on this page late January 2017.

Register your interest for NIYP 2017

Schedule for the General Elections to the Legislative Assemblies of Goa, Manipur, Punjab, Uttarakhand and Uttar Pradesh

4th January, 2017

By virtue of its powers, duties and functions under Article 324 read with Article 172(1) of the Constitution of India and Section 15 of Representation of the People Act, 1951, the Commission is to hold general elections to constitute the new Legislative Assemblies in the States of Goa, Punjab, Manipur, Uttarakhand and Uttar Pradesh before expiry of their present terms.

The dates for polling and counting for the respective states are given below:

S.no	State	Phase	No of ACs	Date of Polling	Date of Counting
1	Goa	Single Phase	40	04.02.2017 (Sat)	11.03.2017 (Sat)
2	Punjab	Single Phase	117	04.02.2017 (Sat)	11.03.2017 (Sat)
3	Uttar Pradesh	Phase-1	73	11.02.2017 (Sat)	11.03.2017 (Sat)
4	Uttar Pradesh	Phase-2	67	15.02.2017 (Wed)	11.03.2017 (Sat)
5	Uttar Pradesh	Phase-3	69	19.02.2017 (Sun)	11.03.2017 (Sat)
6	Uttar Pradesh	Phase-4	53	23.02.2017 (Thurs)	11.03.2017 (Sat)
7	Uttar Pradesh	Phase-5	52	27.02.2017 (Mon)	11.03.2017 (Sat)
8	Uttar Pradesh	Phase-6	49	04.03.2017 (Sat)	11.03.2017 (Sat)
9	Uttar Pradesh	Phase-7	40	08.03.2017 (Wed)	11.03.2017 (Sat)
10	Uttarakhand	Single Phase	70	15.02.2017 (Wed)	11.03.2017 (Sat)
11	Manipur	Phase-1	38	04.03.2017 (Sat)	11.03.2017 (Sat)
12	Manipur	Phase-2	22	08.03.2017 (Wed)	11.03.2017 (Sat)

The Commission seeks the active cooperation, close collaboration and constructive partnership of all the esteemed stakeholders in the electoral process and strives to employ the collective synergies towards delivering smooth, free, fair, participative and festive elections.

THE SECOND MASS VOTER REGISTRATION CAMPAIGN

January 16th to February 14th, 2017

REQUIREMENTS TO REGISTER AS A VOTER

- Be a Kenyan of 18 years of age and above
- Not be of unsound mind
- Have an original national identification card or valid Kenyan passport
- Physically present yourself at the registration center of your choice
- Fill in a form of request to be registered as a voter

IEBC   info@iebc.or.ke   f iebckenya   @iebckenya   @iebckenya

The Republic of the Union of Myanmar Union Election Commission

Announcement on Advance Voting of Voters who are in the Country but out of their respective Constituencies

1st December 2016

1. Union Election Commission has announced, with Notification Number (23/2016), that By-elections will be held on 1st April 2017 for the vacant constituencies.

2. The Voters who are out of their constituencies are to proceed as follows:

   (a) The Heads of respective Trainings, Schools, Hospitals and Jails are to contact the respective Election Sub-commissions in the area of your offices and ask for Form (15)s.

   (b) The Heads of respective Trainings, Schools, Hospitals and Jails are to submit the Form (15)s filled out by the respective voters back to the respective Township Election Sub-commissions no later than (20.1.2017).

   (c) Township Election Sub-commissions are to send the Envelopes containing Advance Ballot Papers to respective Trainings, Schools, Hospitals and Jails no later than (1.3.2017).

   (d) It is to be arranged to cast the Advance Votes at respective Trainings, Schools, Hospitals and Jails on a convenient day between (3.3.2017) and (10.3.2017).

   (e) The Envelopes containing Advance Ballot Papers are to be submitted back to respective Township Election Sub-commissions no later than 4 p.m. of (1.4.2017).

3. The Heads of respective Trainings, Schools, Hospitals and Jails are to inform and cooperate with the Township Election Sub-commissions in the area of your office about the Date of Casting Advance Votes mentioned in Paragraph 2 (d) at least 3 days in advance.

4. If there are detainees or patients who got to Hospitals, Myanmar Police Force and Police Custody or Prisons which are under the Prisons Department after (20.1.2017), that matter is to be liaised with respective Election Sub-commission.

5. Therefore, in order for the Eligible Advance Voters, who are out of their constituencies because they are in Trainings, Schools, Hospitals or Jails, not to lose their right to vote, we hereby request and announce that the respective Heads and respective Election Sub-commissions are to liaise and cooperate.

The Republic of the Union of Myanmar Union Election Commission

Designated Schedule for process of holding By-elections Notification

Nay Pyi Taw 18, October

The Union Election Commission has notified that by-elections for vacant seats to Hluttaw(at different levels) will be held on 1st April , 2017 (Saturday). For political parties, Hluttaw candidates and the whole populate to thoroughly known and prepare themselves before hand, time-table for the process is hereby announced.

Sr. No	Subject	Expected Date
1.	Announcement of date to hold by-elections for vacant seats in vacant constituencies	27.10.2016
2.	Date for delivering form (15) to respective embassies for overseas voters to cast vote in advance	from 15.11.2016 to 5.12.2016
3.	Date for submission of names of candidates	from 28.11.2016 to 7.12.2016
4.	Deadline for withdrawal of application forms for candidates, if ever	9.12.2016
5.	Date for commencing to scrutinize the candidate application forms	from 12.12.2016 to 18.12.2016
6.	Date for Candidate List Announcement Form (10) to be passed	2.1.2017
7.	Tenure for launching election campaign	from 30.1.2017 to 30.3.2017
8.	Date for holding by-elections	1.4.2017
9.	Date for Announcing Parliamentarian-elect	From 2.4.2017 to 5.4.2017

Union Election Commission

Voter Information, Communication & Education Network

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

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