

International  
Seminar  
on  
**'Strategies for  
Empowering Young & Future  
Voters'**

Proceedings  
24<sup>th</sup> January, 2017  
New Delhi,  
India



# International Seminar on 'Strategies for Empowering Young and Future Voters'

24<sup>th</sup> January 2017, New Delhi, India





## MESSAGE FROM THE CHIEF ELECTION COMMISSIONER OF INDIA

International Seminar on 'Strategies for Empowering Young and Future Voters' would be remembered as an important event in the chronicle of voter education for many good reasons. To mention some of them I would say that it is a robust expression of furtherance of our common resolve arrived at the International Conference on 'Voter Education for Inclusive, Informed and Ethical Participation' held at New Delhi in October, 2016 and this happens to be the first event on the VoICE.NET Platform. The encouraging response in the form of Participation by the esteemed Heads of the EMBs, International Electoral Organizations, Experts from over a dozen prominent democracies of the world who joined us for sharing extremely valuable and high grade papers, presentations on experience during the interaction. The central theme of the seminar happened to be central theme of this Year's National Voters' Day celebrations as well. The launch of the Inaugural Issue of the VoICE International with the central theme of 'Young and Future Voters' and lastly, the signing of Memoranda of Understanding with Australia, Bosnia Herzegovina, Fiji and Nepal during the seminar.

All this, let me say, was not coincidental. It was a strategic exercise and a reflection of our concern for investment in young and future voters for their larger electoral participation. While the central theme of the seminar is of larger significance to us at this juncture when we are at the threshold of a shift to mainstreaming of 'Electoral Literacy' as a part of the Strategic Plan of the ECI for the period 2016-25, the rich interaction at the seminar and the inputs in the form of global experiences in voter education especially for the young and future voters introduces an impressive knowledge resource as a guidance for addressing issues and challenges in this area. I thank Mr. Umesh Sinha, Deputy Election Commissioner and his team and Mr. S D Sharma, former State Election Commissioner and presently with the Election Commission of India as Senior Fellow for dedicated hard work in preparing this valuable document.

I find this Volume on Proceedings as a valuable addition to the reference resources. It provides a global insight into realm of citizenship development for electoral participation among young and future voters. I hope, the work will be further enriched on a continued basis with contributions and inputs under VoICE.NET and provide a one stop knowledge resource for voter education for young and future voters.



A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to be 'A.K. Joti'.

**Shri A.K. Joti**

Chief Election Commissioner of India



## MESSAGE FROM THE ELECTION COMMISSIONER OF INDIA

I am pleased to see this volume on the proceedings of the International Seminar on 'Strategies to Empower Young and Future Voters'. The Volume presents the strategies, innovation, initiatives and experiences from Participating EMB's, International Institutions and Experts as a firsthand account from the interactions at the Seminar. It also marks the continuity of inputs in our endeavor for knowledge enrichment on the subject and presentation on the VoICE.NET for a larger sharing with the democracies of the World for the cause of 'Young and Future Voters'. The Volume along with the Conference Reader and the Articles appearing in the 'Featured Section on Strategies for Empowering Young and Future Voters' in the Inaugural Issue of the VoICE International provide a substantive contribution to the Knowledge Base on the subject through VoICE.NET Platform.

Democracies of the world have been concerned over the emerging issues and challenges in citizenship development and electoral participation by today's young people. Voter Apathy and disengagement among young people has been a subject of research, analysis and debate in democratic countries. In this context it is essential that young peoples' interests are understood, encouraged and their participation enhanced through strategic interventions and innovation for elimination of all barriers for engaging them in electoral participation.

In India, Young and Future Voters have been given a high priority in 'SVEEP', our flagship voter education program especially in the form of National Voter's Day celebrations every year. Now, we are in the process of a strategic shift towards mainstreaming of electoral literacy under Strategic Action Plan for 2016-2025 and SVEEP Phase III.

I take this opportunity to commend the efforts of Mr. Umesh Sinha, Deputy Election Commissioner, his team and Mr. S D Sharma, Senior Fellow with the Commission for dedicated work in preparing this document. I hope this enrichment of knowledge resources and experience sharing on the subject will be continued on VoICE.NET Platform for the benefit of young and future voters globally.



A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read 'O.P. Rawat'.

**O.P. Rawat**

Election Commissioner of India





## FOREWORD

The International Seminar on Strategies for Empowering Young and Future Voters is an important milestone in our endeavour to consolidate and move further in practice of citizenship development for electoral participation critical to investment in democracy, its deepening and sustenance. We had with us, the Heads of the Election Management Bodies, Institutions of Excellence and Experts who brought scholarship, knowledge and rich experience from across the democracies of the world for the cause of voter education for empowering young and future voters. The event came as a part of the National voter's Day celebrations and was marked by the signing of Memoranda of Understanding with Australia, Bosnia Herzegovina, Fiji and Nepal for cooperation in the field of election management.

As the first event on VoICE.NET Knowledge Platform, the Seminar Proceedings witnessed an impressive launch of the Inaugural Issue of the VoICE International, the quarterly e magazine on the VoICE.NET Platform. The Issue carried a special section dedicated to 'Strategies for Empowering Young and Future Voters' aimed at a yet larger knowledge dissemination and value addition to our knowledge resources for empowering young and future voters. We celebrate the value that was created and keep up the tradition for the cause of young people in democracies of the world.

I may say that the Conference Reader, Inaugural Issue of the VoICE International followed by this Volume on Proceedings of the International Seminar bring to the Readers, a rich experience and innovation from across the democracies of the world for guidance in engaging young people for electoral participation across the democracies of the world.

It gives me immense pleasure and satisfaction in presenting this Volume to the Readers through VoICE.NET Knowledge Platform for a larger dissemination and one stop availability of resources on the subject.



A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Umesh Sinha'.

**Umesh Sinha**

Deputy Election Commissioner,  
Election Commissioner of India

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Educating and engaging young people in ways that prepare them for electoral participation, is vital to the well-being of democratic polity, for present and the future. I am, therefore, delighted to present this Volume on Proceedings of the International Seminar on 'Strategies for Empowering Young and Future Voters'.

The Volume contains substantive international experience in addressing the issues and challenges on the subject in the light of Presentations made by the Heads of the EMB's, International Institutions and Experts during the Seminar. I am grateful to the Excellencies the Heads of the EMB's, International Institutions and the Experts for sharing their rich experience, expertise, innovation and strategic initiatives and making very valuable contribution.

I am extremely grateful to Dr. Nasim Zaidi, Hon'ble Chief Election Commissioner of India, Sh A K Joti and Sh O P Rawat, Hon'ble Election Commissioners for their valuable and expert guidance on the subject, encouragement and support to the International Seminar on 'Strategies for Empowering Young and Future Voters.' I am immensely thankful to Sh Umesh Sinha, Deputy Election Commissioner for all the valuable, innovative guidance and encouragement while developing this document. My thanks to Ms Padma Angmo, Director, SVEEP Division, ECI for valuable suggestions coming from her as an Expert on Voter Education. I thank Sh. Dharendra Ojha, Director and Sh. V K Sharma, Consultant (IC), ECI for their help in preparation of this document. My thanks to Dr. (Ms) Aarti Aggarwal, Consultant, ECI, for painstaking effort in making valuable contribution in designing the document, selection of photographs and above all for comparing the event. My thanks to the Staff of the ECI who provided all the assistance during my work on this study.

The Volume, read with the Conference Reader and the Section containing Featured Articles on 'Strategies for Empowering Young and Future Voters' in the Inaugural Issue of the VoICE International, present a holistic one stop reference resource on the subject. This entire knowledge resource will be made available on the VoICE.NET Platform for a larger sharing and dedication to the cause of 'Empowering Young and Future Voters'.



**S.D Sharma**

Senior Fellow,  
Election Commissioner of India



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# International Seminar on 'Strategies for Empowering Young and Future Voters'

International Seminar on 'Strategies for Empowering Young and Future Voters' was organized by the Election Commission of India on 24th January, 2017 in collaboration with UNDP as a part of the National Voter's Day Celebrations. The Chief Election Commissioner of India graced the occasion as the Chief Guest with august participation by Election Commissioners of India, Excellencies the Heads of Election Management Bodies, Commissioners, Members from different EMB's of the world, Heads of International Organizations or their Representatives, Senior Functionaries of VoICE.NET, VoICE International besides the other senior officials of the Election Commission of India. The Participating EMB's and the International Organizations presented Papers on the theme of the Seminar. The Seminar was marked by signing of MOU's of cooperation with the EMB's of Australia, Bosnia Herzegovina, Fiji and Nepal besides Inaugural Launch of the VoICE International, the quarterly e Magazine on VoICE.NET Platform. A Brief record of interaction follows.

## SPEAKER PROFILE



### **Dr Nasim Zaidi**

**Chief Election Commissioner, Election Commission of India**

Master's degree in Public Administration, Mason Fellow for Public Policy, Post Graduate Diploma in Business Finance, Doctorate in Bio-Chemistry.

Dr. Nasim Zaidi, assumed charge as 20th Chief Election Commissioner of India in 2015. He worked in regulatory framework both at national & international levels. Before joining the Commission, he served as Secretary to the Government of India in Ministry of Civil Aviation. During his long career as an officer of the Indian Administrative Service, he has served in increasingly responsible positions at both the provincial and federal government levels. Dr. Zaidi has published several papers in scientific and administrative journals.



### **Achal Kumar Joti**

Election Commissioner, Election Commission of India  
Graduated in Science, Masters in Chemistry.

Mr Joti assumed charge as Election Commissioner of India in 2015. He is an officer of the Indian Administrative Service with 40 years of experience of Public Administration. He has served as District Magistrate and Collector, Secretary in Industries, Revenue and Water Supply in the State of Gujarat. He also worked in the Ministry of Shipping, Govt. of India before becoming the Chief Secretary of Gujarat. He served as Vigilance Commissioner before joining Election Commission. He has experience of elections having worked as Returning Officer and District Election Officer.



### **Om Prakash Rawat**

Election Commissioner, Election Commission of India  
MSc. in Physics, MSc. in Social Development Planning

Mr Rawat assumed charge as Election Commissioner of India in 2015 prior to which he retired as Secretary to the Govt. of India, Ministry of Heavy Industries and Public Enterprises, Department of Public Enterprises. During his long career as an officer of the Indian Administrative Service, he served at various important portfolios at Centre and state level. As Director/Jt. Secretary in the Defence Ministry he was deputed to South Africa in 1994 as United Nations election observer to oversee first post-apartheid elections in that country. He received Prime Minister's Award in 2010 for excellence in Public Administration for innovative group initiative "Recognition of Forest Rights".



### **Umesh Sinha**

Deputy Election Commissioner, Election Commission of India  
Masters in Business Administration

Mr Sinha belongs to the Indian Administrative Service and has more than three decades of experience in administration and governance. He has held several important positions like Collector, Chief Development Officer, Commissioner and Secretary in various Departments. As the Deputy Election





Commissioner with over 7 years of electoral experience, Mr. Sinha is responsible for the Functional Division and the conduct of Elections throughout the country. He has initiated innovative programmes in the Election Commission of India, and won awards for the same.



**S.D. Sharma**

**IAS (Retd.) Senior Fellow, Election Commission of India.**

Former State Election Commissioner who conducted the first Local Governments elections in the State of Jharkhand in India, Mr. Sharma is actively engaged in research work in Electoral Reforms. He has done extensive research work in Electoral Reforms, Governance Reforms, Constitutional Policy Planning, Federalism, Local Governments, and strategic Management.

He joined the Indian Administrative Service in 1972 and held high positions of responsibility under both, the Central and the State Governments and retired at the level of Secretary to Government of India in 2008.



**Tom Rogers**

**Electoral Commissioner, Australian Electoral Commission  
Graduate from the Royal Military College**

Mr. Rogers graduated as an officer from the Royal Military College (RMC) Duntroon in 1983 and served in a variety of military postings, including the Australian Defence Force Academy, Senior Instructor in Leadership at RMC Duntroon, and Commander of a United Nations observer mission on the

Golan Heights. After he left the Australian Army in 2000, Mr. Rogers worked for Raytheon Australia, where he was a senior project manager and led the team that delivered the Sydney Olympics' major preparedness and readiness activity.

He also spent a number of years as the Director of Programs and then Executive Director at the Australian Institute of Police Management (AIPM). The AIPM is administered by the Australian Federal Police to deliver highly respected executive development programs for leaders and future leaders of Australasian police and other public safety organisations.

He was appointed the Australian Electoral Commissioner in December 2014, having acted as the Electoral Commissioner from December 2013, and previously filled roles as the Deputy Electoral Commissioner and the Australian Electoral Commission's state manager (and Australian Electoral Officer) for NSW.





### **Dawa Tenzin**

**Secretary, Election Commission of Bhutan**  
**Graduate from Sherubtse College, Bhutan**

Mr. Dawa Tenzin has been associated with the Election Commission of Bhutan since its inception. He had worked as the Chief Administrative Officer and was the Director in 2011. He took charge as the Secretary in 2013. Previously, he had held various posts in the Royal Audit Authority between 1987 and 2005, and has served one year in National Service before joining the Civil Services. He enjoys travelling.



### **Dr. Ahmet Santic**

**Member, Central Election Commission of Bosnia-Herzegovina**  
**Ph. D. University Džemal Bijedic of Mostar**

Dr. Santic has been involved with the elections in BiH from as early as 1996 as a Member of polling station committee and as the President of polling station committee. He was elected as the Member of the Municipal Election Commission Mostar Old Town, and during the period from 2004 to Feb. 2012, he was the Member of the City Election Commission of Mostar City. He was also the appointed President of BiH CEC from 31 Mar., 2015 to 31 Dec. 2016.

Last fifteen years of his career he has actively dedicated to the implementation of elections not neglecting theoretical aspect of this significant area of constitutional system. He has authored a book 'Electoral right – experience of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the European countries' adapted to all who are interested in election process and has published extremely informative articles in the magazine 'Legal thought'.



### **Dr. Suad Arnautovic**

**Member, Central Election Commission of Bosnia-Herzegovina**  
**Ph. D**

Dr. Suad Arnautovic has a vast experience as a faculty as well as a member of the BiH Central Election Commission. He has published more than 20 scientific and expert papers in various scientific and professional magazines in BiH and abroad, as





well as several author articles, reviews, comments in dailies and weekly printed media.

During the period between 1995 and 2000, he was guest lecturer at the Faculty of Medicine and the High School of Health Care in Sarajevo. During 1994 and 1995 he was Editor-in-Chief (freelance) of the independent political journal for promotion of civic society and democratic culture 'STYLE'. In 1996 he launched and edited the special 'Elections' service of the independent news agency 'ONASA' in Sarajevo.

In June 2004, the House of Representatives of BiH Parliamentary Assembly appointed Dr. Arnautovic as member of the BiH Central Election Commission. After expiry of the seven years' mandate, he was re-appointed as the member of the BiH CEC on September 22, 2011. In the period January 2008- May 2009, Dr. Arnautovic was President of the BiH Central Election Commission.

Prof. Dr. Arnautovic also works as Faculty Associate at Faculty of political sciences of the Sarajevo University.



### **Mohammed Saneem**

**Supervisor of Elections, Fijian Elections Office**  
**Professional Diploma in Legal Practice and Bachelor of Law**  
**from the University of the South Pacific**

Mr. Mohammed Saneem has extensive experience in various aspects related to elections and he is currently the Supervisor of Elections for the Fijian Elections Office. Prior to his appointment as Supervisor of Elections, Mr. Saneem has previously served as the acting Permanent Secretary responsible for Elections and Registrar of Political Parties, the Acting Permanent Secretary for Justice, Anti- Corruption and Communications, the Chairperson of the Land Transport Industry Review Committee, and acting Chief Registrar for the High Court of Fiji, a Magistrate and a Commissioner for Legal Aid Commission. He is also currently the Chairperson of the National Anti- Money Laundering Council.

He also serves as a representative to the Steering Committee of the Commonwealth Electoral Network and the Melanesian Rep to the PIANZEA Advisory Group. Following the 2014 General Election, Mr. Saneem has led the Fijian Elections Office to become a regional leader in advocating electoral best practices.





### **Samar Haj Hasan**

**Commissioner, Independent Election Commission of Jordan  
Bachelor in International Business Administration and Marketing  
from American University Switzerland.**

Samar Hasan contest for the Parliament Elections in 2007 and while she didn't procure the seat, she won the highest number of votes a woman gets in the Amman Governorate and the third highest amongst all the women in Jordan during that particular election. Additionally, she was recognized for conducting the most professional election campaign. In 2008, Hasan was elected as a board member at the Young Entrepreneurs Association where she monitored the programs for young entrepreneurs and volunteered with a regional NGO to empower youth. In 2011, she was appointed by His Majesty the King (Iran) for a two year term as a member of the senate in the Jordanian Parliament. In 2014, she was appointed by the king as a Commissioner in the Independent Election Commission and her appointment was renewed in April 2016.

Hasan is the founder and manager of 'Mahara'- a professional consultancy in development which was the first consultancy that provides comprehensive services in the field of social and human development. She has also worked as a senior consultant for several national and international organizations such as the United Nations Development Fund for Women, The Office of Her Majesty- the Queen, UNICEF, UNFPA, and the World Bank to name a few.



### **Ahmed Sulaiman**

**Chairman, Elections Commission of Maldives**

Ahmed Sulaiman is the Chairman of the Elections Commission of Maldives, where he has devoted his time since his appointment as a Member of the Elections Commission of Maldives on 03rd December 2014.

He completed his higher education from Al Azhar University of Egypt. Then he went on to complete his Bachelor's Degree in Dhivehi Language from the Faculty of Management and Computing at the National University of Maldives. He recently completed his Master's Degree in Islamic Shariya from Villa College Maldives.



He began his career in the early days as a Director at the Maldives College for Higher Education. Then he moved on to serve as a member of the Extra-ordinary Parliament assembled to overhaul the constitution of the Maldives to introduce democracy to the Maldives between 2006 and 2008. After that, he became the Chair of the Atoll Council for the Meemu Atoll Council. Since his term ended at the atoll council, he began his current undertakings as the Chairman of the Elections Commission of Maldives.

At his current position, he has attended several trainings and seminars. Naming a few; Seminar for the improvement of electoral laws and system at Korea 2015, 6th forum of elections management bodies of South Asia at Sri Lanka 2015, South Asia conference on the use of money in politics and effects on peoples representation in 2015 and also was an observer at the Sri Lankan Elections primary in 2015.



**Dr. Ayodhee Prasad Yadav**

**Chief Election Commissioner of Nepal**

**Masters in Economics (Gold Medalist) and PhD degree.**

Dr. Ayodhee Prasad is the Chief Election Commissioner of Nepal since 2007 with various experiences in Election Observations in countries like Cambodia (2007), Bangladesh (2008), USA (2012) and the Philippines (2016). He has also participated in various study tours in countries like Lesotho (2008), Indonesia (2009), South Korea (2011), Kenya (2012), Ethiopia (2015) and even Pakistan (2015).

He is a retired Associate Professor of Economics at Tribhuvan University and served as the Executive Director of Rural Studies Centre in Nepal from 2001 to 2006. He has specifically authored some books on Elections such as 'Voter Registration System in Nepal' (2012), 'Election Cost in Nepal' (2010), 'A Brief Account of Electoral System' (2014) and the 'Constituent Assembly Election 2008: At a Glance (2012).

Dr. Prasad has also received various honours and awards such as the Siksha Purskar (1995), Ambassador for Peace by Interreligious and International Federation for World Peace (IIFWP) (2004) and the Prasadha Prabal Janeswari 2071 by the Honourable President of Nepal.





### **Wagude Warunasiri Mahinda Deshapriya**

**Chairman, Election Commission Sri Lanka**

**Post-Graduation Diploma from IMI, New Delhi, India  
in collaboration with IMI, Geneva, Switzerland & McGill  
University, Montreal, Canada.**

Mahinda Deshapriya entered the Sri Lanka Administrative Services in 1982 after he was placed second in the island ranking at the recruitment examination for the Sri Lanka Administrative Service held in 1981/ 1982. He began by serving as the Assistant Commissioner of Elections to the Department of Elections. In 1998, he served as the District Returning Officer of the Local Authorities Elections of Jaffna District in 1998. He was appointed as the Deputy Commissioner of Elections in 2006 and then to the Additional Commissioner of Elections in 2010. In March, 2011, Deshapriya retired from service.

With teaching experiences in Chemistry and Mathematics at his alma mater university- University of Peradeniya, and having served as a United Nations Volunteer in the Popular Consultation (UNAMET) in East Timor in 1999, Deshapriya serves as the first Chairman of the Election Commission established under the 19th Amendment to the Constitution. He was also the Chairman of the Forum of Election Management Bodies of South Asia for 2015-2016 and has been the head of delegation of conferences and workshops conducted by the Association of Asian Election Authorities (AAEA), Association of World Election Bodies (A- Web), Forum of Election Management Bodies of South Asia (FEM-BoSA) et al.

Mahinda Deshapriya was awarded the 'Sri Lanken of the Year' by Lanka Market Digest in 2015 and the 'Public Servant of the Year' in 2016 by Derana- a TV channel for his unstinted commitment to public services.



### **Dr. Mohamed Chafik Sarsar**

**President, Independent High Authority for Elections**

**Ph.D. in Public Law**

Dr. Mohamed Chafik SARSAR is a law expert and has extensive knowledge on electoral systems. Prior to his appointment as President of Independent High Authority for Elections he has held many positions of high importance like Professor of Public Law at the Faculty of Law and Political



Sciences of Tunis (Tunis El Manar University), Director of the Department of Political Science at the Faculty of Law of Tunis (2011-2014), Member of the Committee of Experts in the High Commission for the Achievement of the Revolution, Political Reform and Democratic Transition (2011), member of the Commission of Inquiry into the events Place Mohamed Ali (December 2012), Secretary General of the Association of Research on Democratic Transition (ARTD 2013), founding member of the Arab Association of Constitutional Law.

He was a lecturer at the Faculty of Law and Political Sciences of Tunis, Higher Judicial Institute. He has published several publications and contributions in constitutional law, and electoral systems. He also participated as an expert in meetings of the Venice Commission, UNDP, IDEA, the Arab Institute for Human Rights, Arab Foundation for Democracy, and the Independent High Authority for the Elections.



**Kim, Yong-Hi**

**Secretary General, Association of World Election Bodies (A-WEB) Master's Degree in Public Administration, Bachelor's Degree in Public Administration**

Mr. Kim Yong-Hi is the Director General of Elections at the National Election Commission of the Republic of Korea since 2005. He has extensive management experience in many roles including Task Force Head of Electronic Voting Systems, Director General of the Political Party Bureau, Chief Election Officer, Deputy Secretary General (Vice Minister), Executive Secretary of AAEA (Association of Asian Election Authorities), Secretary General (Minister) and Secretary General of Association of World Election Bodies (A-WEB). He is currently also a member of the International Advisory Council of the International Republican Institute (IRI).



**William (Bill) Sweeney**

**President/ CEO, International Foundation for Electoral Systems Bachelor in Political Science from American University, USA.**

William Sweeney is the current President and CEO of International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES), with decadal experiences in election assistance and democracy support. Prior to his appointment as President at IFES in June 2009, he served on



the IFES Board of Directors from 1993 to 2001. Sweeny was the Vice President for Global Government Affairs for EDS from 2000 to 2009 and managed relations with governments and policy organizations across the globe. He has also served as an Official Elections Observer with the Philippines (1986), Russia (1994), Nicaragua (1996) and Jamaica (1997).

Sweeny is the founding president of Washington Resources and Strategy Inc.- a public affairs management company. He is also the founder and director of the Campaign Management Institute (his alma mater) where he received awards for service and teaching. Awarded an honorary order of the British Empire for his service to the British Embassy in 2009, he also serves on the board of directors of the National Foreign Trade Council Foundation.

Currently, William Sweeny serves as a member of the Board of Directors for the Centre for Congressional and Presidential Studies.



**Karamjit Singh**

**Trustee, Malaysian Commonwealth Studies Centre CBE**

Karamjit Singh is a Trustee of the Malaysian Commonwealth Studies Centre and has been involved with the Electoral Democracy programme since its inception in 2001. He was an Electoral Commissioner with the UK Electoral Commission for almost 10 years (2001-2010) and is currently the chairman of a large NHS hospital trust employing 14,500 staff and annual budget of £900 million. Previously, he has been appointed to cover investigation of complaints against the police, suspected miscarriages of justice, the appointment of senior civil servants, appointments of senior lawyers as Queens Counsel (QC), Ombudsman for judicial appointments and the regulation of financial services. He was awarded the CBE in 2000 by the Queen for his services to the administration of justice.



# International Seminar on 'Strategies for Empowering Young and Future Voters'

## INAUGURAL SESSION



**In Chair:** Dr Nasim Zaidi, Hon'ble Chief Election Commissioner of India,  
Mr A K Joti, Hon'ble Election Commissioner of India,  
Mr O P Rawat, Hon'ble Election Commissioner of India,  
Mr Umesh Sinha, Deputy Election Commissioner, ECI,  
Ms Marina Walter, Deputy Country Director, UNDP,





**Welcome address:** Mr. Umesh Sinha, Deputy Election Commissioner  
Election Commission of India



Mr Umesh Sinha welcomed the Chief Election Commissioner of India, the Election Commissioners, Excellencies the Heads of all the Participating Election Management Bodies, The Commissioners, Members of the EMB's, Heads and the Senior Functionaries of International Organizations, delegates and other Participants to the Seminar.

Introducing the theme of the Seminar, he spoke on importance of subject 'Strategies for Empowering Young and Future Voters' and emphasized the significance of sharing and learning from experiences of different countries and different Electoral Management Bodies (EMBs). He said that VoICE.NET, an Initiative launched at the International Conference on 'Voter Education for Inclusive, Informed and Ethical Participation' in October 2016 at New Delhi, is fast emerging as a Global Knowledge Exchange Portal for Voter Education. He said that today's seminar has additional significance as this happens to be the first event on the VoICE.NET followed by launching of the Inaugural Issue of the quarterly magazine VoICE International on VoICE.NET Portal.

He said that after the Inaugural Session MoU's between India and Australia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Fiji and Nepal will be signed and followed by the Technical sessions of the Seminar where presentations will be made by visiting Dignitaries.



## Ms. Marina Walter, Deputy Country Director, UNDP India



Ms Marina Walter, Deputy Country Director of the UNDP, India welcomed all the Guests and delegates and expressed happiness that the issues relating to 'Young and Future Voters' are going to be discussed at this International Seminar. She said that a huge global population of 1.8 billion falls in this category. Therefore, democratization process for the young voters is necessary in democracies of the world. She emphasized the need to find ways to reach out to them.

In this context she said that India, almost a subcontinent by itself has a vast population in this age group with increasing use of Social Media, Internet and the online connect. She said that the UNDP has a long standing Partnership with India and hoped to continue this Partnership especially with the Democratic Systems coming together for this cause. She said that UNDP has been privileged to partner with the ECI in promoting exchange of knowledge, experience and expertise in the field of electoral management, administration and assistance in capacity building of Election Management Bodies from several countries with a focus on strengthening electoral systems. She said that the ECI has done a commendable work in organising regular elections and supporting electoral processes and Voter Education. This seminar has been planned as a part of the National Voters' Day celebrations, when every year Election Commission formally inducts youth reaching voting age as new voters. The Seminar assumes significance and comes at a time when as much as 1.8 billion of the world population constitutes adolescents and young people aged between 10 and 24, more than at any other time in history of mankind.





The youth need to be brought within the fold of electoral processes through democratization process. There is demand and the country is witnessing a rise in political participation. We need to find ways of how to reach out to the youth. Different countries have devised their own ways in how to reach out to the youth. In this context she said that VoICE.NET is an excellent Initiative which effectively connects materials online as also equally effective in reaching out to the youth.

She said that the potential of young people as 'critical agents of change' has been well acknowledged in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and across the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), in which the international community has committed to enhance their empowerment, participation and well-being. Realization of this goal will require strong partnerships involving young people, national governments, and the private sector, civil society, the UN System and all other relevant stakeholders.

In response to the worldwide phenomenon of young men and women calling for meaningful civic, economic and social and political participation, UNDP's Youth Strategy recommends engagement of a broad range of partners, including young people themselves in addressing youth empowerment.

She said UNDP's support in this area has been ongoing for a long time. UNDP has a central role to play to support democratic systems; learning amongst countries is excellent and should happen. VoICE.NET will allow taking this dialogue forward. She hoped for a valuable exchange of knowledge and experience in this conference. And she added that they are ready to support further outreach in this area.

#### **Sh. O P Rawat, Election Commissioner of India**





Mr Rawat extended a warm welcome to all on behalf of the ECI. Emphasizing the significance the Election Commission of India attaches to the subject, he stated that this year's central theme for the National Voters' Day is empowering Young and Future Voters and as such it is an important subject for us. He said that disconnect with Young and Future voters has been witnessed by many countries. Empowering young and future voters is extremely important today because the disconnect between young people and those who represent them seems to be growing the entire world over. He cited the example of recent EU referendum vote in UK wherein fewer people aged between 18 and 24 turned out to vote than those aged over 65 despite the fact that 'Brexit' decision would impact young people's future for decades to come. Across the democracies of the world whether it was the US or South Africa, dissatisfaction with political parties leading to political disengagement and voter apathy amongst youth is a matter of concern despite the fact that today's youth are most connected through use of Social Media.

To address this issue of young voter apathy, he welcomed UNDP's support and the initiatives taken by UNDP, IFES, International IDEA and many other International Organizations to involve young people in political process which in turn would strengthen democracy. However, progress achieved so far is dismal because of the significant barriers to youth political participation. He said that the barriers may be at individual level, e.g., lack of technical skills, motivation, especially to participate in formal adult-led process, economic resources, knowledge and awareness. On the organizational level, youth led groups frequently face hindrances to economic and other resources with limited organizational know-how. And on the environmental level, structural constraints may include a high eligibility age to contest elections besides cultural or social norms that inhibit them from participating. He said that empowering them at the age of 18 years is necessary through socio political engagement. He suggested that it was necessary to address the challenge through well designed strategies. In this context, he suggested that some of the strategies to enhance youth political participation could be:-

- Avoid tokenistic and pseudo participation activities.
- Follow a rights-based approach.
- Include capacity development on the individual and the organizational level.
- Foster enabling environment.
- Be well grounded in an accurate understanding of the current state of youth voice in a given country-context.

He concluded that the deliberations and sharing of good practices on the subject in the seminar would prove useful and wished all success to these deliberations.



## A.K. Joti, Election Commissioner of India



Welcoming all the Participants to the Seminar, Sh. A K Joti, Election commissioner of India stated that in a democracy, the government derives its legitimacy through regular and periodic elections. Free, fair and effective voter participation is essential at elections for representative governments. He said that voter education is necessary for strengthening democracy and civil society organizations need to be involved in this. Free and fair elections with transparency have to be essential elements in electoral process to ensure public confidence in the system. Visiting the role of the ECI, he said that during the last 66 years of democracy in India, the role of the ECI has gradually evolved from that of a regulator to an enabler and a facilitator for all the stakeholders. With the underlying belief of 'No Voter should be left behind', the ECI's engagement process has helped in empowerment of citizens and all the stakeholders over the years.

He said that the young and future voters form a sizeable part of our population and the young voices must be heard. He added that according to the Census 2011, India has a demographic dividend with 65% of its population below 40 years of age. Therefore, the topic of the seminar is very relevant to our approach.

ECI has voter education as an integral part of its responsibilities. SVEEP, the Flagship Voter Education Programme of the ECI, starting from 2009, has paid rich dividends in the form of higher voter's turnout and improved gender voting ratio. He cited the increase voter turnout increase from 58.19% in 2009 to 66.44% in 2014 Lok Sabha Elections. Similarly, the gender gap has reduced from 4.56% in 2009 to 1.55% in 2014 Lok Sabha Elections.

In this context he added that over the last few years, ECI has effectively supported use of Social Media in connecting with the voters especially the young voters. He mentioned





the commendable initiatives of some of the Chief Electoral Officers such as use innovative use of social media, electoral registration, readiness, and voter connect in states such as Tamil Nadu and Punjab. Some of the tools used for voter outreach included jingles, movie references, celebrity endorsements, info graphics. Twitter and YouTube have helped in establishing contact with larger voter populations.

He lauded the VoICE.NET initiative and said that learning from experience sharing through seminars like this should help us in enriching our knowledge in enhancing voter participation especially among the young and Future Voters.

**Inaugural Address: Dr. Nasim Zaidi, Hon'ble Chief Election Commissioner of India**



Dr Nasim Zaidi Hon'ble Chief Election Commissioner of India started his inaugural address by extending a hearty welcome to the Participants and delegates in the seminar and expressed his thanks to the Excellencies the Heads of the EMB's, International Organizations and other Participants for having made it convenient to attend the seminar. He said that he was happy to see familiar faces with whom he had been interacting over the past years. There are 11 EMBs and 5 participating International Organizations present in the Seminar.

He mentioned that the UNDP's Partnership with the ECI has been very fruitful and hoped the Partnership to continue in future. He said that it is important and essential to share experiences on empowering young and future voters. In this context, he said that today's interaction on the subject is both significant and relevant. Significant, as this seminar is



the first event on VoICE.NET Platform. And relevant because this seminar is a part of this year's National Voters' Day Celebrations where the central theme relates to 'Empowering Young and Future Voters.'

Referring to the First Global Conference on 'Voter Education for Inclusive, Informed and Ethical Participation' organised at New Delhi by the ECI in October, 2016, he said that 30 EMB's and International Organizations deliberated on the emerging challenges in voter education. The deliberations developed into a consensus leading to adoption of New Delhi Declaration on Voter Education. It was noted that the voter is the central figure in an electoral democracy and participation is integral to successful running of democracy. Different EMB's have approached the subject as per their own requirements.

In this context he drew attention of the august gathering to Para 12 of the Declaration which states that the experiences and knowledge resources in voter education should be shared with each other through the global knowledge network namely VoICE.NET. This Initiative was launched in the concluding session of the October, 2016 Conference and within a short time the ECI has promptly made it fully operational with today's event, a Conference Reader on the subject and proposed launch of VoICE International, a quarterly e Magazine on voter education in during the seminar today besides rich voter education resources on the VoICE.NET Portal. 18 countries and International Organizations have already joined the VoICE.NET and many more have evinced interest. This initiative is administered by the ECI with its own resources. We are managing the Initiative as the first Host and will be happy to circulate the Initiative to other willing members as we progress.

He added that India is young according to demographics. Of the 600 million young people in the world under the age group 15-19 years, 120 million are in India. About 20 million young people attain the age of 18 years every year. We are working on their registration. Every year 20 million persons become eligible to vote. 62 million persons are in the age group of 15-17 years, as future voters. This number is expected to increase over time. The new or the first time voters and future voters are two sections of the population we need to focus on as important segment for citizenship development and electoral participation. He said, we need to identify the barriers as also address the issue of why young voters show apathy towards participation. We must find new ways of investment in young voters. Technological advancement today has enabled the youth to be most connected through social media. We need to harness this potential to connect with them better.

In this background, he said the flagship voter education programme of the ECI i.e. SVEEP includes thrust areas linked with young and future voters. He said that the SVEEP





Division of the ECI division has carried out lot of research work to support a number of strategic initiatives that have been developed to reach out to the young people; the recent being the launch of 'Interactive School Engagement Programme.' The ECI has also set up a Working Group for developing Co curriculum for the school children. He said that a lot of good work has been done, yet all of us have to do a lot more collectively and collaboratively. Addressing the issues through VoICE.NET initiative is important for educating the voters of all categories.

He also congratulated the SVEEP team for developing and coming out with this useful Conference Reader to support interaction during the Seminar.

Look forward to signing important MOU—that is how we will work collaboratively and collectively. He concluded by welcoming the signing of MoUs, an important step to work collaboratively and collectively.



## SIGNING OF MoUs

MoUs were signed between  
Election Commission of India &  
(1) Australian Electoral Commission  
(2) Central Election Commission of Bosnia Herzegovina  
(3) Fijian Elections Office  
(4) Election Commission of Nepal

in the area of development of institutional framework for their ongoing cooperation in the field of election management. The main aim of these MoU's include promotion of exchange of knowledge and experience in the field of organizational and technical development with a view to strengthen the administration of electoral process, exchange of information, material, expertise and technical know how relating to electoral processes and systems, training of personnel and development of human resources and organizational development and capacity building.







MoUs signed between ECI and Australian Electoral Commission

MoUs signed between ECI and Central Election Commission of Bosnia Herzegovina







MoUs signed between ECI and Fijian Elections Office

MoUs signed between ECI and Election Commission of Nepal





## SESSION - I

### **PRESENTATIONS BY AUSTRALIA, A-WEB, BHUTAN, BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA**

**Co-Chairs:** H.E. Mahinda Deshapriya, Chairman, Election Commission of Sri Lanka

H.E. Mrs. Samar Haj Hasan, Commissioner, Independent Election Commission of Jordan

Mr. A.K. Joti, Hon'ble Election Commissioner, India

Mr. William Sweeney, Hon'ble President and CEO, IFES.



**Australia:** H.E. Mr Tom Rogers, Electoral Commissioner of Australia

H E Mr Tom Rogers began the discussion with complementing the Chief Election Commissioner of India for selecting the topic of the Seminar, the topic which is very important in the present day context. He said that a key feature of the Australian Electoral system is compulsory voting and their focus area of interest is enrolment. Youth and indigenous Australians are the least represented segments of Australian society on the electoral rolls. Despite a system of compulsory voting, the rate of youth participation in federal elections remains a challenge.

He said that improvements have been made in registration in the recent years. By the 2016 federal election, eligible voting population had grown by nearly half a million from the previous election. Overall enrolment increased from 92% to 95% with an upswing in young voters. The age group of 18-24 year olds missing from the electoral rolls decreased in 2016 to 2 50,000 as compared to 400,000 missing names in the year



2013.

He said that electoral participation by young people once they reach the age of 18 years in their first and second election is very significant. Studies have shown that if they vote in their first and second elections they are likely to vote throughout their lifetime.

If they miss voting in their first elections, then the chances are higher that they will not be regular voters throughout their lifetime. First election is important and they must vote.

Therefore, the AEC has brought in place well defined strategies and programmes to address the issues relating to young peoples' disengagement from electoral participation. These include (1) Identification of young people for enrolment and sustained efforts for their participation especially among the indigenous youth. (2) Effective legislation (3) A comprehensive election communication campaign for last minute registration and (4) Involve teaching institutions for educating and engaging young people in electoral participation including well-considered electoral education programmes, school education resources for teachers and students.

He said that AEC's electoral education programme and resources comprise of Direct Electoral education training for teachers, electoral education resources and products such as Mock Vote at school level, Get Voting etc and the National Electoral Education Centre, Canberra.

Briefly describing the programmes he mentioned that every year nearly a 100,000 school students from across the country visit National Electoral Education Centre, Canberra. The AEC resources include a programme in schools called 'Get Voting'. This programme has had a huge impact. AEC conducts direct teacher training to help understand electoral process and run education campaign for them. The programme helps develop knowledge and skills needed to teach electoral education at both, the primary and secondary school levels.

Australian Electoral legislation provides a comprehensive support to the strategic initiatives inter alia for young and future voters.





At election time the AEC runs a range of activities. These include a comprehensive communication campaign in an effort to provide final participation reminders to the Australian electorate. A range of campaign strategies are adopted keeping in mind several key audience groups. The strategies include:

- Traditional media such as television and radio
- Online television
- Digital display
- Social media
- Mobile applications
- Electronic direct messages
- Search engines

Specific youth targeted communications included:

- Celebrity endorsement
- Youth media outreach
- Youth media editorial
- Intermediary outreach such as sporting clubs, retail employers and tertiary education institutions

The AEC operates a dedicated indigenous Electoral Participation Program that is delivered across Australia by Community Engagement Officers, majority of whom are indigenous. To provide hands-on knowledge and experience of the parliament and electoral processes the AEC conducted National Indigenous Youth Parliament in 2012, 2014 and scheduled to be held in 2017 again. This week-long leadership programme bring 50 young indigenous Australian leaders aged 16 to 25 years to capital city, Canberra to meet Australia's leaders, learn about democracy and attend a two-day simulated parliament to debate issues important to themselves and their communities.

### **A-WEB: Mr. Yong Hi Kim, Secretary General, Association of World Election Bodies**

Mr Kim, in his presentation brought out that there is a perceived sense of inefficacy in exercising voting rights by the youth globally which translates into low turnout. According to OECD Social Indicators statistics for the year 2016, voter turnout among 18-24 year olds across the globe is 16% lower than that of those in the age group of 25-50 years.

He said that the 3 main reasons for low turnout are:

- Growing indifference towards elections or political fatigue.
- Feeling of inadequacy or the disenchantment with the overestimated probability of casting a decisive ballot or even a positive stability in institutions
- High opportunity cost of voting





These reasons become even more pronounced among young voters due to their tendency to pay more attention to individual benefit than collective benefit.

He said that according to OECD statistics, 25% of young voters, on an average, report to be not at all interested in politics compared to 20% for the total population in OECD.

Among young people aged 15-29, disinterest in politics is especially high in the Czech Republic, Lithuania and Hungary.

He said that empowering young voters is an important international agenda. How can we increase turnout rate for young voters needs to be dwelt upon. New methodological approaches and active engagement in discussions can turn around current voter apathy. They must realise that various socio-economic issues are related to political life. Civic education on universal and equal suffrage as one's inalienable right and duty should continue to take place in public sectors to alleviate the problem. Helping prospective voters to gain hand-on experience on casting a ballot also proves to be effective in familiarizing them with the electoral processes that could otherwise appear vague. Among those with a weak sense of civic duty, however, appealing to their calculation of cost and benefit will induce the best outcome. Instead of invoking a sense of obligation from young voters, a more effective approach would be increasing the perceived benefits of voting while, at the same time, lowering the costs of voting in terms of time and energy. EMBs must be able to adapt with changing times and provide with new methods of voting such as postal voting, mobile voting and early voting. In addition, political parties and candidates must identify young voters' needs and come up with effective policies that address to those issues. Internet voting and mobile voting can be considered as complimentary methods of voting to make the voting experience more convenient for young voters. Making voting accessible to the young voters will remove the psychological barriers to voting.





Therefore it is necessarily to promote the following:

- Facilitating platform—It is the EMBs' job to help voters make an informed choice by developing and making accessible a platform for election information using media familiar to young generation.
- Fostering a culture of knowledge sharing—social media democratizes information sharing and helps individuals with very narrow interests quickly and easily connect with others who share their beliefs, diversifying the society's opinion pool and bring attention to more voices.
- Increasing voter education

He concluded by saying that the future of our democracy depends on young voters. When EMBs and society successfully persuade young voters of efficacy and convenience of voting, we shall see the meaningful increase in young voters' political participation.

**Bhutan: Mr. Dawa Tenzin, Secretary, Election Commission of Bhutan**

Mr Tezin started his address by thanking the Election Commission of India for organizing the Seminar on Strategies for Empowering Young and Future Voters.' He said while believing that the future of nations lies in the hands of the youth, it is important to remind them of the rights and responsibilities as a part of the electorate. Participation of citizens is an important element of the democratic process to strengthen and sustain a vibrant democracy.

He said that almost half of the population is less than 25 years old in Bhutan and this segment of the population is increasing every year. Their participation is decreasing



over the years—presently less than 30% of total voting population is made up of young voters and this is decreasing with every election. Often the youth today are apathetic to the political process, be it voting during elections or engaging in discourses that are of national importance. It is therefore necessary to create favourable conditions through establishment of platforms from all stakeholders responsible for strengthening democracy in improving young voters' participation in elections and the democratic process in general.

He added that Bhutan has been a democratic constitutional monarchy since 2008 and the first elections were held in the same year. Apart from conducting free and fair elections and referendums, the Election Commission of Bhutan also believes that it has the duty to prepare the future generations in civic and voter responsibilities.

He said that in order to carry out this duty, the ECB has come up with various activities to disseminate information on elections and democracy, organize programme to create voter awareness especially among young voters. Some of the major initiatives of the ECB include the introduction of Democracy Clubs in schools and other educational institutions in Bhutan in 2012, the Volunteer for Voter Information, Communication and Education (Volunteer-VOICE) adopted in 2013 and the adoption of the Constitution of the Bhutan Children's Parliament in 2015.

He said that the introduction of Democracy Clubs has provided an opportunity for students to strive in active civic learning and skills development by initiating and implementing activities by schools that promote good democratic values among the youth and to achieve knowledge for essential informed choices from a very young age.

He added that the Volunteer-VOICE initiative gave interested young voters to serve as volunteers in carrying out public awareness on electoral democracy and civic duties enhancing the sense of social responsibility through participation in the democratic process.

The adoption of the Constitution of the Bhutan Children's Parliament on 2<sup>nd</sup> June 2015 saw another historic moment in the part of democracy, to better prepare our children as future leaders to understand their roles as citizens of the country.

Since 2013, the ECB has designated 15 September to be observed as the National Voters' Day and the theme for the first NVD was 'Youth in Democracy' focusing on the young people who form the foundation of the Bhutanese democracy. All youth on this day takes the NVD pledge to exercise their franchise in every election conducted to elect the most capable representative to serve the nation.





## Bosnia & Herzegovina: Dr Suad Arnautovic, Member BiH Central Election Commission



Dr Arnautovic expressed a note of happiness on the growing cooperation between ECI and BiH Central Election Commission. He said that personal connection between EMBs is crucial for support and cooperation in taking forward electoral reforms.

He said that the young voters have an important role in improving democratic processes, since they represent the future of any society. Every citizen of BiH, who has attained 18 years of age at time the first identification document is issued, becomes automatically registered in the Central Voters' Register through the passive registration system. He said that the category 'young voters' means the voters under the records of the BiH Central Commission between 18 and 30 years of age. Such voters accounted for almost one-fifth (20.1%) of the entire electorate in BiH. During the last local elections in 2016, only 54.72% voters cast their ballot, however, the turnout of the young voters was much lower. The turnout of the young voters was 21.73 at the 2010 elections, 52.46% at the 2012 elections and it went up to 51.24% at the 2014 elections. The BiH Central Election Commission does not conduct continuous activity for empowering and motivating young voters, because such activities are neither mandatory nor are there funds allocated for this purpose. However, awareness raising activities that focus on young people are conducted in every election through projects that are funded by donors and development agencies.

Educational and motivational campaigns during 2010 and 2016 especially for the



young voters included preparation of the TV and radio jingles and broadcasting by all public TV station and a vast number of private stations. Motivational spot and radio jingles were broadcast during September, including the Election Day. Educational-informational material was also published on the website of the BiH Central Election Commission in order to timely disseminate information to the voters and to all other participants in the elections.

The Global Elections Day is being observed by the BiH Central Election Commission from the year 2005. He said that in the year 2014 this celebration was dedicated to promoting and increasing the participation of youth and women and in particular the turnout of the first time voters. An appropriate leaflet was prepared for the promotion of this event.

He added further that BiH Central Election Commission collaborates with a renowned non-governmental organization in BiH, the Association of Election Officials in BiH (AEOBiH) and together they conducted the first project for youth entitled 'Democracy and Elections' in 6 high schools and 6 elementary schools as part of a special extracurricular programme on elections in the BiH. A second project called 'winter and summer Camps' focused on education of senior high school students of different ethnic backgrounds. Since the year 2010 AEOBiH has, with the financial help of the donors, trained 9,500 students in electoral system and electoral policies. The initiative is intended to encourage them for active participation in the election process and political life in the country while promoting their engagement in the work of polling station committees and as the election observers.

He said that many of the political parties have youth forums which promote participation of youth in public and political life in line with their strategies.

The BiH Central Election Commission is in the process of establishing an Education Centre which will have multifunctional conference room and resource centre that will accommodate educational courses, symposia and roundtable discussions for the political parties, election administration, non-government organizations and the media. The plan for the year 2017 is networking with the similar education centres in Georgia and Moldova, as well as to develop a special curriculum for young people and to set up a permanent budget for education programmes intended for young people, especially first time voters.





## SUMMING UP



Mr A K Joti, Election Commissioner, summed up the salient points of Session I as below:

- Electoral roll is in the best state in Australia at present
- Everybody turning 18 must vote in elections—compulsory voting system
- School education for voter awareness is very important
- Last minute enrolment of voters
- Direct teachers training and mock poll events in schools
- Concerns arose about lower voter turnout from the youth. General public, especially the youth are growing indifferent towards electoral processes.
- Necessary to empower young voters for national democracies. Use of media for reaching out to youth.
- Reduce the opportunity cost for voting—reduce the transaction time for various processes for casting one's vote.
- Discussed student parliaments and democracy clubs. The Co-Chairs raised the question about can election commissions go directly to schools without the support from education authority.
- Bhutan democratic clubs, youth in democracy and volunteer groups are innovations which other countries can adopt.





- BiH Central Election Commission is working with NGOs for inclusion of youth and strategic collaborations for empowering young and future voters.
- General theme that runs through these presentations is about fostering partnership with education institutions. Challenge, however, is how do we engage people who are not in the classroom—those who do not attend school or have dropped out of school. While we have to develop partnerships in education institutions, we need to also devise strategies and policies that will enable EMBs to reach out to those who dropout or are not serviced well by the education system.

## QUESTION & ANSWER SESSION:

**Question:** in India we engage students from primary schools as well. Electoral education system is targeted at primary school students. Is there anything similar being done in Australia?



**Response: from Australia:** We target primary school students too but that is part of our long term strategy of sensitizing future voters into the electoral system.

**Question:** Foster sense of responsibility among the youth about the electoral process and their rights as voters. Therefore distribution of voter ID cards among senior school students can give them a sense of importance and responsibility about the electoral rights.

**Response: from BiH:** Students are encouraged to participate in mock voting which resembles actual elections. Therefore students get a chance to be part of near real election scenarios and that encourages them to look upon elections seriously and develop a sense of responsibility.





**Question:** Australia has done commendable work on youth education programmes. Youth Educational Studies—what exactly are their suggestions? How can we set up something similar? How do you regulate the benefits of social media?

**Response: from Australia:** Research is critical for us to inform our policies. Therefore suggestion would be to focus on developing robust research studies on youth voter characteristics to develop new and innovative strategies and policies.

Countries all over the world face similar challenges from use of social media. I do not think there are specific ways to control the harmful effects of social media although some degree of monitoring can be included. However the benefit of using social media to reach out to the youth electorate is enormous and we should focus on how to harness this potential.

**Question:** It is important to talk about youth not just in terms of how to engage them as voters but as agents of political change. It would be interesting to know what initiatives EMBs are taking to include them in electoral reform discussions etc.



**Remark:** It is important to talk about youth not just in terms of how to engage them as voters but as agents of political change. It would be interesting to know what initiatives EMBs are taking to include them in electoral reform discussions etc.





## SESSION - II

### **PRESENTATIONS BY FIJI, INDIA, IFES**

**Co-Chairs:** H.E. Ayodhee Prasad Yadav,  
H.E. Dr. Suad Arnautovic,  
H.E. Mr. O.P. Rawat,  
H.E. Mr. Arvind Venkataramana

**Fiji:** H E Mr. Mohammad Saneem, Supervisor of Elections, Fijian Elections Office

H E Mr Saneem observed that it is an honour to come to India and sign MOU with ECI. He said that Fiji is a small nation in the south Pacific. There are more than 332 small islands and 2 major islands. Total population is 900,000. In Fiji they have had military government before 2014.



Voter registration started since 2012. In 2014 General Elections, the voter count below the age of 30 years was 32%. Following the declaration of results, there was need for focussing on registering those who would become eligible after the General Election.

Since the education is free and compulsory up to the age of 13, the FEO decided to design a comprehensive annual registration drive in secondary schools and vocational training facilities. The FEO began its National School Registration and Information Drive in the years 2015 and 2016. FEO organised 10 Voter Registration Teams which were trained in addition for a 15 minute Voter Education and Awareness session. Face to face voter education sessions and distribution of leaflets for electoral awareness were helpful components of the programme. The result of the efforts was seen in 2016 voter turnout which improved to 82%.





The school registration and awareness programme received strong media coverage. FEO used social media platforms also for reaching out especially the young voters. The Supervisor of Elections, at the time of launch of 2016 Voter Registration Drive, encouraged the students to become advocates of electoral participation and invited them to learn about Fiji's electoral system.

He said that they had carried out the SWOT analysis of the entire system for continued improvements. The main challenges included time constraint for completion of the registration drive leading to the problem of 'left overs' in terms of students who are yet to turn 18, post school movement of students for employment or higher educational purposes and resultant difficulty in tracing them down for electoral participation.

He added that the National School Voter Registration drive allows the FEO to engage with the newly eligible voters in schools and the FEO is able to fulfil its core function of maintaining and updating the National Register of Voters. The drive has guaranteed the FEO to keep an updated record of the National Register of Voters.

He said that in Fiji they run a bridge programme for aspiring politicians. They have started with youth parliament and other initiatives. By end of last year the FEO registered 26,000 voters. They have managed through this national registration drive to reach out to voters to find information about the electoral process. The Voter Registration Card has become universally acceptable everywhere.

He concluded with a note a note of congratulations for the National voter's day celebration in India and said that it is an inspiration for a young EMB like Fiji.

**India: Mr. Umesh Sinha, Deputy Election Commissioner, Election Commission of India**



Mr Sinha, in his presentation stated that the Systematic Voter Education and Electoral Participation (SVEEP), the flagship voter education programme of the ECI, is a massive programme which addresses well over 850 million voters spread over 9,30,000 polling



stations across the country. Elections in India are one of the most challenging processes given the scale, size and diversity of the country. The motto of the Election Commission of India is not just to hold free, fair and participatory elections but also to make it inclusive and festive. It is the biggest festival of democracy.

Started in the year 2009, Mr Sinha explained that SVEEP dwells upon proactive engagement for voter education to convey to inculcate amongst the voters a conviction to the effect 'I have the power, voice, right and responsibility towards the nation and the country.' He said that the ECI believes in an approach of educating every voter to wipe out any malaise in the electoral process. He said that the main challenges have been muscle and money power. Use of muscle power has been obviated though the influence of money continue to be a challenge but we are working towards eradicating this problem. SVEEP

Mr Sinha said that we consider young and future voters as the critical mass of the electorate with 120 million people falling in the age group of 15-19 years. The voter education initiatives cover the entire range of electoral process starting from enrolment process, voter apathy amongst urban youth and covers pre-election, during the election and post-election period. It addresses the issues like low participation by youth, urban and women voters. National Voters Day is the most pioneering initiative of the ECI with significant positive impact on voters. The impact of the voter education initiatives is visible in the voter turnout during last elections in India both for the Lok Sabha and the State Legislatures. The national elections in India held in 2014 witnessed historic voter turnout of 66.44%. Around 554 million voted in 2014 out of the 834 million who were registered as electors.

Mr Sinha explained that the National Voters' Day is celebrated at more than 9, 30,000 polling stations across the country down to the village level. A pledge is taken by millions of voters and a voter must feel 'Proud to Vote, Ready to Vote.' On that day, the ECI and its officials also distribute electoral photo identity cards (EPIC) to newly registered voters. This ECI outreach especially addresses those who are not a part of the regular education institutions. NVD Programmes are held at National, State, District down to the Polling Station level and awards are distributed for best practices.

Mr Sinha added that the entire SVEEP programme is very well structured. It consists of three stages, Pre-election, during election and after election stage. Knowledge, attitude and behaviours survey at pre-election stage is conducted. Outreach and education programmes are developed based on information base emanating from the voter survey. ECI engages through all forms of information communication and dissemination platforms for maximising the impact in terms of campaigns and the dissemination. Mr Sinha added that the civil society organizations are major active partners of the ECI in voter education besides engaging with PwD's and senior citizens to understand their challenges.





Mr Sinha explained that for effective communication, the electorate is segmented based on their varied needs and selections of different mediums of communication. Social media; Facebook and SMS provide big communicational channels. Female voters, young voters, urban and rural voters, voters living in remote areas, the ECI has different targeted strategy for all of them. Based on needs assessment of different sections of the electorate, ECI prepares a comprehensive action plan to educate and motivate voters. Information Technology is a very great strength for India and the ECI is using it in a big way. Entire country's data vote is available online now. We are also integrating it with mobile services.

Our basic motive is 100% registration of eligible voters and 100% ethical voting. We are mapping each and every voter regarding their needs from each and every polling station. The ECI comprehensively monitors this process. In the last elections, the ECI introduced and programme for voters to pledge ethical voting.

Media partnership in voter education is very significant and effective instrument. The ECI uses cinema slides, TV spots, hoardings widely to appeal to the 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 widely used by election managers to engage the youth with the electoral process.

Mr Sinha concluded that voter education is critical and very important for the electoral process in India.

### **IFES: Mr. William Sweeney, President and CEO, IFES**



Mr Sweeney, in his presentation, stated that recent survey findings suggest that that today's youth are less engaged in political process than previous generations and are beginning to opt out of democratic systems. He said that IFES is celebrating 30 years



of engaging with several countries and their electoral processes marked by increased professionalism. The experience reflects that a culture of democracy flourishes only when citizens are well informed about democratic principles and are able to translate that knowledge into action by engaging with institutions and other public structures; performing community service, and exercising leadership. He said a major change that has been seen in the recent years is the age for registration which stands reduced from 21 years to 18 years. He said there has been a slight increase in youth participation during the years 2008, 2012 and 2016. It was necessary to focus on new generation in a continuous manner and look at good programmes and practices. Good practices should be identified and developed for marketing. He cited the examples of Tunisia and Thailand in this regard. He said that it was imperative to inspire the young voters and remove all barriers for educating them for electoral participation. It was necessary to bring young people to interaction, listen to their voices, engage them and encourage them to political dialogue with a focus on young and future voters.

He said that 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 especially for the young future voters 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 forums 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. He said that we cannot stop all too often because of funding. We do some successful programmes and then we need to develop it and sell it. Otherwise it leads to enormous gaps in voter education.

What motivates youth to participate is a fundamental challenge. We have to look for motivation and inspiration and ways to approach young voters right from the age of 14-15 years of age. We need the young people to bring into our profession. We can provide a cause and calling to young professionals in this profession. He cited the examples of Sri Lanka, Kenya, Burundi, Syria etc where IFES has provided guidance and help for engaging youth in a professional manner for civic and electoral participation.

## QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION:

**Question:** What motivated Fijians to turnout for voting in such large numbers (82%)?

**Response: from Fiji:** We need to set it in context. We did not have democratically elected government for 8 years; therefore the enthusiasm to exercise their right to vote was high. Second, the FEO undertook systematic and comprehensive advocacy and made tremendous efforts at awareness raising so that no Fijian citizen was left out of the electoral process.





## SESSION - III

### **PRESENTATIONS BY INTERNATIONAL IDEA, JORDAN, MALDIVES, MALAYSIA COMMONWEALTH STUDIES CENTRE**

**Co-Chairs:** H.E. Dr. Nasim Zaidi,  
H.E. Mr. Mohammad Chafik Sarsar,  
H.E. Mr. Mr. Tom Rogers,  
H.E. Mr. Yong Hi Kim



**International IDEA:** Ms. Shana Kaiser, Program Manager, International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance.

Speaking on Educating Youth for Democracy's Future Ms Kaiser said that around the world young people are fighting to be represented within their democratic institutions and processes. However, youth remain marginalized in decision making as governmental institutions and democratic processes around the world include relatively few youth within their ranks. She said that the young people can play an important role in bringing forth their voice and ensuring that their interests are reflected in policies that affect them. Early involvement of young people in democratic institutions and processes has a great potential to utilize their potential to effectively contribute to a country's democratic future. She said International IDEA believes that by not tapping this enormous potential, governments and citizens are losing an enormous creative force, new approaches, and a solid cadre of future leaders.

Ms Kaiser added that keeping in view the number of young people in the world, their representation and their potential in strengthening of the democracy International IDEA has embarked upon 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 plus 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.



Voter registration started since 2012. In 2014 General Elections, the voter count below the age of 30 years was 32%. Following the declaration of results, there was need for focussing on registering those who would become eligible after the General Election.

Since the education is free and compulsory up to the age of 13, the FEO decided to design a comprehensive annual registration drive in secondary schools and vocational training facilities. The FEO began its National School Reg-

istration and Information Drive in the years 2015 and 2016. FEO organised 10 Voter Registration Teams which were trained in addition for a 15 minute Voter Education and Awareness session. Face to face voter education sessions and distribution of leaflets for electoral awareness were helpful components of the programme. The result of the efforts was seen in 2016 voter turnout which improved to 82%.

The curriculum employs highly skilled facilitators and uses a two-pronged approach of building both the knowledge and skills of young people. 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. It is anticipated that through the combination of increased knowledge and active skills building, young people will be able to more effectively participate in their democratic institutions and processes. 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. 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.





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.

Another project where International IDEA is working relates to development of a guide on social media and how EMBs can engage with social media to reach out to youth voters and future voters.

**Jordan: H.E. Mrs. Samar Haj Hasan, Commissioners, Independent Election Commission of Jordan**



Mrs Haj Hasan, in her address, stated that youth voting is very important. All countries have legal framework in place to protect the rights of their citizens to participate in the civic and political life. However, she said that the college students have not been participating enough. When youth vote, all voices are included in voting. Politics discourages youth from participating: youth hold a complicated, sometimes negative view and perception of politics dominated by negative images of inter-party disagreements on national issues, corruption, lying, and a sense that politics is boring and confusing.

She said that research studies indicate that college-aged students think that there is not enough information for them about voting. Traditional methods of campaigning and traditional parties are failing as they do not engage them. It is important to make awareness raising and campaigning meaningful for the youth.

The Independent Election Commission of Jordan was set up in 2011. Second elections were organised by the IEC in 2016. And the biggest challenge in these elections was that the youth did not enjoy the trust in the political system.

The IEC realized the importance of reaching out to the youth to convince them to engage and hopefully vote. New and innovative techniques needed to be adopted. Therefore the IEC brought in an innovative young group (specialized in social media) called the





'Crazy Group' to develop a communications strategy to reach out to the youth. Apart from the use of social media, mobile applications and Google forms, info graphics, drawing and symbols were used to simplify voting process.

In this strategy, transparency was very important. IEC used 360 degrees videos of its official meetings. Every single major decision was posted on YouTube and social media. She said that the social media was effectively used under well-defined communication strategy. The 'Crazy Group' created games for voting process. Mobile application was used to facilitate information about voting process. 6000 young volunteers registered to help out in the election process.

As a result of all these efforts and innovative mediums of reaching out, the IEC could respond to 97% of questions with average 6 minute response time. Followers of Facebook and other social media increased. The trend of the youth engagement shifted from 'we do not want to vote' at the beginning of the campaign to 'where I can go to vote'. The IEC in effect was able to engage youth in planning their strategy for youth awareness and education, creation of innovative tools and space for expressing themselves freely and respond to their information needs besides transparency and clarity in communication.

She concluded by saying that we need to educate young people on their rights and responsibilities about voting and the electoral processes. We need to engage them in the planning through effective involvement. The idea is to listen to them, what they say, what they perceive. The IEC attaches great importance to teaching students democratic education.

### **Maldives: H.E. Mr. Ahmed Sulaiman, Chairman, Election Commission of Maldives**



HE Mr Sulaiman stated in his address that for countries like Maldives who are young democracies, they need support from countries like India. Initiatives, such as this international seminar, are highly useful and appreciated.



He said that Maldives is a small island nation. Youth and new voters are among the highest segments of the total voter population. Through the Ministry of Education, schools seek support and guidance from the Election Commission. Youth participation and activeness with regard to voting is very high. Women voters are large in numbers.

After completing A-level exams lot of youth join politics. The ECM therefore, through its civic education programmes, has been active in reaching out to the youth population to orient them in the electoral process and the democratic institutions. The interest of youth in politics and voting is amazing. Every political party has a youth wing.

### **Malaysian Commonwealth Studies Centre**

#### **Mr. Karamjit Singh, Trustee, Malaysian Commonwealth Studies Centre**

Mr Singh stated in his address that we all live in plural societies and part of the pluralism is young people and future voters. Studies have shown that the younger you are less



likely you are to vote. This is not a positive scenario for democracy. Social change has to be taken cognisance of. It is necessary to engage with young people on their terms. The Malaysian Commonwealth Studies Centre is studying as to how EMBs have made an effective contribution to this process.

Electoral leaders in Malaysia recognize the strategic importance of the youth issue. The Indian experience shows that a lot of thought has gone into how to make an impact.

Nigeria in 2011 had a new structure for an independent election commission. The Chief Election Commission enrolled a large number of ad hoc staff from youth population who helped in enrolling a majority of the voters.

Chief Election Commissioner of South Africa in 2014 had a whole generation of voters who were experiencing electoral process for the first time. They focussed on social media platform and phone applications for wider outreach.

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Election Commission enrolled a large number of ad hoc staff from youth population who helped in enrolling a majority of the voters.

Chief Election Commissioner of South Africa in 2014 had a whole generation of voters who were experiencing electoral process for the first time. They focussed on social media platform and phone applications for wider outreach.

The UK established in 2001 a statutory responsibility of registering young voters. Social issues could be addressed through political participation but political parties took exception to this.

It is important to focus on electoral activities but also focus on impact and outcomes of the activities. How do we actually ensure EMBs continue to have forward looking approach?

The New Delhi Declaration following on from the conference on Inclusive Participation, combined with the current leadership of the VoICE.NET initiative by the Indian Election Commission and the launch of the Indian International Institute of Democracy and Election Management (IIIDEM) affords an opportunity for supporting a sustained global emphasis on enhancing institutional capacity in and sharing information about innovative strategies to empower young and future voters within democracies.

### **Closing Remarks:**

The most important highlight of this session is the realization that while general principles are great, focuses on customizing needs for local youths is important.





## SESSION - IV

### **PRESENTATIONS BY NEPAL, SRI LANKA, TUNISIA**

**Co-Chairs:** H.E. Mr. Ahmed Sulaiman,  
H.E. Dr. Ahmet Santic,  
Mr. Karamjit Singh

**Nepal:** H.E. Mr. Ayodhee Prasad Yadav, Chief Election Commissioner of Nepal



HE Mr Yadav stated in his address that Nepal and India enjoy excellent bilateral relations. In essence, Nepal-India relations are much more than the sum of treaties MOU or agreements concluded between the two countries.

With regard to the relationship between ECN and ECI at organizational and official level, ECI has significantly supported ECN during several elections in Nepal. Support ranges from capacity development of election officials to logistic support. Different level visits have taken place between the two EMBs. ECN is invited to most of the training and capacity development events organized by IIIDEM and several electoral officials of ECN have benefitted from these knowledge sharing forums.

The relation is further enriched and systematized with a Memorandum of Understanding



signed in 2011. We work together as per the MOU during the period of five years. Now Nepal has signed a fresh MOU to strengthen our mutual cooperation and trust which will be instrumental to enhance mutual relationships for coming years.

The Election Commission of Nepal has been conducting different activities for the promotion of the engagement of youth and future voters as guided by the national level policies of Nepal. The Constitution of Nepal states that 'the state makes efforts for the empowerment and development of the youth and provides them with appropriate opportunities for the overall development of the State'.

Further, the Youth Policy, 2015 has one the objective of preparing the youths committed and accountable to the state and the democratic system. The policy has recognized the empowerment and leadership development of the youth for national development, besides their participation and mobilization in different development and welfare activities.

The Election Commission of Nepal has started its practical strategic initiatives to engage youth and future voters through electoral education, capacity building, dialogue, interaction, participation and mobilization. Active participation and engagement of informed youth voters not only paves the way for well cultured democratic electoral practices but also contributes to make them aware of the governance system as a whole. Considering these realities, ECN has taken several initiatives in encouraging voter education in Nepal.

There are more than 35% youth voters out of 14 million voters and 0.4 million citizens are expected to turn over into eligible voters every year, it is important to encourage and engage them in electoral process.

The Electoral Education and Information Centre (EEIC) provides ample opportunity for school students to learn about election and democracy in an interactive pedagogy. Mobile EEIC has been in operation for those who have not been able to visit EEIC.

Likewise, youths of political parties have been trained in electoral affairs including their role in election and electoral code. Young and future voters, marginalized communities and People with Disabilities (PwDs) are also given due consideration in educating themselves about electoral practices. An integrated manual consisting of different topics including electoral management, democracy, electoral process, code of conduct, EDR and role of stakeholders among others has been prepared for the youth focused training.

Training of youths is being conducted in cascade method at the centre, region and local level. Similarly bridge and non bridge trainings have been conducted inviting youths of different sections of society in several modules. Additionally ECN also uses social media to reach out to the youth.

Consequently there has been a significant increase in youth participation in election (voting) as observed in the CA election in 2013.





### **Sri Lanka: H.E. Mr. Mahinda Deshapriya, Chairman, Election Commission of Sri Lanka**

HE Mr Deshapriya stated in his address that Sri Lanka has achieved a special historical landmark in the democratic process to be the first to implement universal franchise amongst Asian countries.

The attitudes and behaviour of young people aged 16-24 years towards participation in democratic process generally including electoral registration and voting in elections is very poor. Many young people are negative about politics and were frustrated as they felt that politicians ignored them. The overriding view was that politics was boring and complicated which did not act as an incentive to become involved. Many felt that politics focused more on religion and difference than real issues such as health and education. There is a drastic drop of youth representation in the Parliament where out of the 225 members, only 14 are below 35 years while only 3 individuals hail from families with no political backgrounds.



Sri Lanka is grateful to the Election Commission of India for its novel concepts in Voter Education under SVEEP. They have identified and drawn special attention on the Voters' Day to a few categories in the society and in this context empowering 'Young and Future Voters' is a key area.

The Election Commission of Sri Lanka has also taken measures to enlighten the schooling children on democracy and universal franchise in collaboration with the Ministry of Education in propagating the Student Parliament at school levels throughout the island. They must be informed that they must exercise their voting rights as in true sense they are the "Guardians of Democracy".





To celebrate the International Youth Day in Sri Lanka on the 12 of August 2016, the Election Commission, together with the International Foundation for Election Systems (IFES) under the recommendations of a Youth Led Steering Committee, carried out a programme termed 'Kites for Rights'. The primary objective of this campaign is to encourage all national youth led organizations, networks and societies to engage in creating public awareness through creative and innovative ways about the importance of youth civic engagement. The Election Commission of Sri Lanka believes that a significant weight must be directed at the national level to encourage youth civic engagement, and to reduce significant gap in youth participation which still exists necessitating strengthening engagement of youth in voter education in a systematic manner.

The Election Commission of Sri Lanka has also organized successful social media campaigns. He said that #YouthVoteSL was a highly successful social media campaign.

The Election Commission of Sri Lanka in its Participatory Strategic Plan has emphasized the importance of engagement of youth and empowering future voters, as the Commission believes the ballot is more powerful than the bullet.

**Tunisia: H.E. Mr. Mohammed Chafik Sarsar, President, High Independent Election Authority of Tunisia.**

HE Mr Sarsar stated in his address that the Tunisian population is relatively young, with 57% of the population under the age of 35 years. The question of inclusion of young people is therefore a fundamental question for the future of democracy.



He said that in the revolution process, they have noticed a paradox: they have, on one hand, the events of the revolution which have shown that young people are an important instrument in the advent of social and political transformation; and on the other hand, they notice that they were not very present at the ballot box.





ISIE has tried to develop a multidimensional strategy based on 5 pillars to encourage active participation of youth people:

- Review the reasons for the demobilization of youth: The problem of young people vary according to country, social background and intellectual level, so it is necessary to study closely the real problems through focus groups, specialized studies and opinion polls to refine the diagnosis of abstentionism.
- Opening up channels for discussion with young people: The ISIE has tried to act through youth associations, which organize youth cafes, workshops, seminars, voter education campaigns and organize visits to the electoral commission offices for youth groups belonging to Citizenship clubs.
- Innovate methods of action: The use of new modes of communication such as songs and spots that convey language and images appealing to young voters. Also use of social media—Tunisia is the second African country to have access in terms of coverage of networks and uses.
- Encourage the participation of young people in the electoral administration: the recruitment of young people for awareness-raising campaigns, registration of voters and the management of voting centres, has allowed young people to join the electoral process. The election administration sets an example to demonstrate that elections are not an old affair.
- Encourage candidacy of young people for elections: The Tunisian constitution has fixed the electoral majority at 18 years. It also inter alia stipulates in its article 133, that the electoral law must guarantee the representativeness of the young people in the local councils.

He concluded that these actions need time and monitoring to produce results and that the emergence of a young political elite could be a beginning of the expected change.



## CLOSING SESSION

**In Chair:** Dr Nasim Zaidi, Hon'ble Chief Election Commissioner of India,  
Mr A K Joti, Hon'ble Election Commissioner of India,  
Mr O P Rawat, Hon'ble Election Commissioner of India,  
Mr Umesh Sinha, Deputy Election Commissioner, ECI,  
Ms Marina Walter, Deputy Country Director, UNDP,  
Mr S D Sharma, Senior Fellow, Election Commission of India

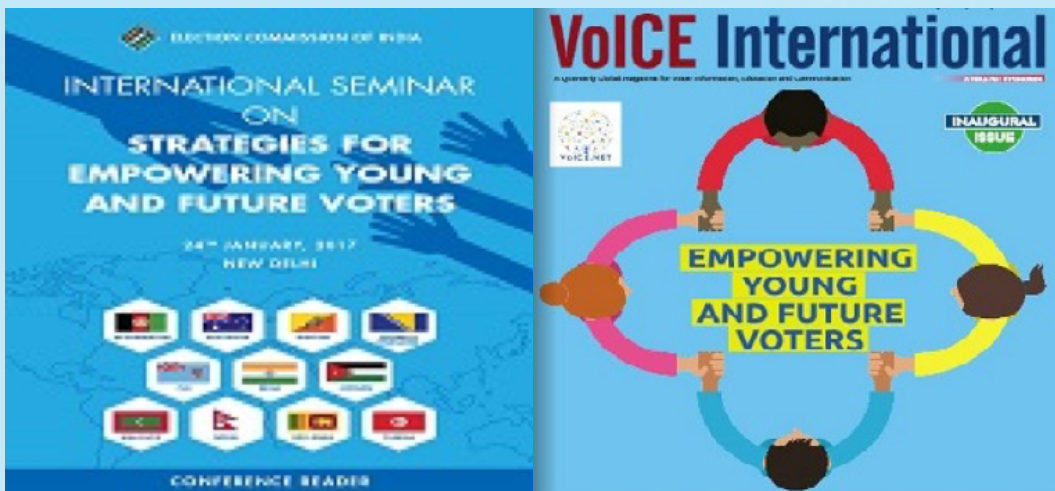
### Launching of Conference Reader and the Inaugural Issue of VolCE International on VolCE.NET Portal



Dr Nasim Zaidi, Hon'ble Chief Election Commissioner of India released the Conference Reader on 'Strategies for Empowering Young and Future Voters' in the august presence of the Participating Dignitaries. The Reader has been developed by the ECI team led by Sh Umesh Sinha, Deputy Election Commissioner and Mr S D Sharma, Senior Fellow, ECI. The Reader carries papers from Participants and papers contributed by the ECI team on the subject for supporting the interaction in the Seminar.

Dr Zaidi also launched the Inaugural issue of the quarterly magazine 'VolCE International' in august presence of the Participating Dignitaries on the VolCE.NET Platform. The e magazine carries valuable articles from various participating nations and will be published





every quarter on the VoICE.NET Platform for sharing voter education initiatives of Participating Nations. He congratulated the VoICE International team led by Mr Umesh Sinha Deputy Election Commissioner, and Mr S D Sharma, Senior Fellow, ECI for the innovation and a valuable voter education resource for times to come.

### **Highlights of Presentations: S.D. Sharma, Senior Fellow, Election Commission of India**

Mr S D Sharma, Senior Fellow, Election Commission of India spoke on highlights of the Presentations as brought out by each dignitary (for details see Annexure)





## CONCLUDING REMARKS

### Dr. Nasim Zaidi, Hon'ble Chief Election Commissioner of India

He thanked all participants for the rich content in the Presentations. He also welcomed all the EMB's to join VolCE.NET. He said that seventeen countries have already joined and more countries have evinced interest. Dr. Zaidi also mentioned that any EMB who wishes to host the VolCE.NET was welcome and the structure can be transferred while ECI continues to participate and support. Dr Zaidi also once again extended invitation to all the visiting Dignitaries to join the ECI for the NVD celebrations on 25th January.

### Vote of Thanks: Mr. Dharendra Ojha, Director, ECI

A thank you note on behalf of Election Commission of India was delivered by Mr. Dharendra Ojha, Director, ECI.





## LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

### COUNTRIES

#### Afghanistan

1. H.E. Mr. Najibullah Ahmadzai  
Chairman, Independent Election Commission of Afghanistan
2. Mr. Ahmad Murtaza Habibyar  
Executive Officer, Independent Election Commission of Afghanistan

#### Australia

H.E. Mr. Tom Rogers  
Electoral Commissioner of Australia

#### Bhutan

1. Mr. Dawa Tenzin  
Secretary, Election Commission of Bhutan
2. Mr. Tsering Penjor  
Training Coordinator, Election Commission of Bhutan

#### Bosnia-Herzegovina

1. H.E. Dr. Ahmet Santic  
Member-Commissioner and past President,  
Central Election Commission of Bosnia-Herzegovina
2. H.E. Dr. Suad Arnautovic  
Member-Commissioner and past President  
Central Election Commission of Bosnia-Herzegovina

#### Fiji

Mr. Mohammad Saneem  
Supervisor of Elections, Fijian Elections Office

#### India

Mr. Umesh Sinha  
Dy. Election Commissioner, Election Commission of India

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



## **Jordan**

H.E. Mrs. Samar Haj Hasan  
Commissioner, Independent Election Commission of Jordan

## **Maldives**

1. H.E. Mr. Ahmed Sulaiman  
Chairman, Election Commission of Maldives
2. Ms. Fathmath Shaba Sagir  
Officer, Election Commission of Maldives

## **Nepal**

1. H.E. Dr. Ayodhee Prasad Yadav  
Election Commissioner of Nepal
2. Mr. Navraj Dhakal  
Joint Secretary, Election Commission of Nepal

## **Sri Lanka**

1. H.E. Mr. Mahinda Deshapriya  
Chairman, Election Commission of Sri Lanka
2. Mr. Rizan M. A. Hameed  
Asstt. Director (Intl. Relations), Election Commission of Sri Lanka

## **Tunisia**

H.E. Mr. Mohammed Chafik Sarsar  
President, High Independent Election Authority of Tunisia

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### **A-WEB**

1. Mr. Yong Hi Kim  
Secretary General, Association of World Election Bodies (A-WEB)
2. Mr. Gwang Il Seo  
Program Officer, A-WEB
3. Ms. Jueun Moon  
Researcher, A-WEB

### **ICPS**

Mr. Arvind Venkataramana  
Director, International Centre for Parliamentary Studies





## IFES

1. Mr. William Sweeney  
President & CEO, International Foundation of Electoral Systems
2. Mr. Vasu Mohan  
Regional Director (Asia-Pacific), International Foundation of Electoral Systems

## Intl. IDEA

Ms. Shana Kaiser  
Program Manager, International Institute for Democracy & Electoral Assistance

## MCSC

Mr. Karamjit Singh  
Trustee, Malaysian Commonwealth Studies Centre



## ANNEXURE

### Highlights of Presentations

Mr. S D Sharma, Senior Fellow, Election Commission of India spoke on highlights of the Presentations made during the Seminar. He mentioned that each of the Presentations has very valuable points for sharing and guidance for evolving 'Strategies for Empowering Young and Future Voters'. The highlights of the Presentations made by the Dignitaries are summed up as follows:

#### **Ms Marina Walter, Deputy Country Head, UNDP, India**

- There are 1.8 Bn Young and Future voters in the world. Democratization process for the young and future voters is necessary around the world. India, with a vast population in this age group, has connected with them through Social media and the internet.
- UNDP has a long standing partnership with India and will be happy to continue this partnership in future especially when democratic systems are coming together for this cause.

#### **Mr O P Rawat, Hon'ble Election Commissioner of India**

- India attaches special importance to Young and Future Voters. Central theme for this year's National Voter's Day celebrations is empowering young and future voters.
- The disconnect with 'Young and Future' voters has been witnessed in many countries.
- Challenges of participation by young voters need to be taken note of. Lack of technical skills, motivation, awareness, structural constraints, cultural process results in barriers to participation. Empowering at young age through socio political engagement is necessary.
- Avoid tokenistic, pseudo participating activities, follow a rights based approach, capacity development, faster enabling environment and accurate understanding of state of youth in a given country context should help.

#### **Mr A K Joti, Hon'ble Election Commissioner of India**

- In a democracy, government derives its legitimacy through regular and periodic elections. Free, fair and effective voter participation is essential at elections for representative governments.





- Voter education is necessary for strengthening democracy and civil society organizations need to be involved.
- Role of the ECI has gradually evolved from a regulator to an enabler and a facilitator.
- Young and Future voters form a sizeable part of our population and the young voices must be heard. ECI supports the use of Social Media in connecting with young voters
- Voter education is an integral part of ECI's responsibilities and SVEEP has paid rich dividends as higher voter's turnout and gender voting ratio.
- VolCE.NET initiative is laudable and learning from experience sharing enriches our knowledge in enhancing electoral participation among the young and Future Voters.

#### **Dr Nasim Zaidi, Hon'ble Chief Election Commissioner of India**

- UNDP's long standing Partnership with the ECI has been fruitful and hoped it to continue in future.
- Sharing experiences on empowering young and future voters is important.
- This seminar is significant as it is the first event on VolCE.NET Platform and relevant as it is a part of this year's National Voters' Day Celebrations where the central theme relates to 'Empowering Young and Future Voters.'
- Voter is the central figure in an electoral democracy and participation is integral to successful running of democracy.
- 30 EMB's and International institutions deliberated upon emerging challenges in First Global Conference on 'Voter Education for Inclusive, Informed and Ethical Participation' in Oct 2016 leading to the New Delhi Declaration and launching of the VolCE.NET.
- ECI has promptly made VolCE.NET fully operational rich with resources. 18 countries and International Organizations have already joined. ECI is the first Host and will be happy to circulate the Initiative to other willing members.
- India is young as per demographics with 120 million young. 20 million young attain the eligibility age of 18 annually. 62 million persons are in the age of 15-17 years as future voters. Need for focus on these two segments. Identify barriers including voter apathy among youth and find new ways of investment in young voters. Technological advancement



today has enabled the youth to be most connected through social media. We need to harness this potential to connect with them better.

- SVEEP includes thrust areas for young and future voters. Research work in SVEEP Division has helped development of strategic initiatives to reach out to the young people; 'Interactive School Engagement Programme.'
- ECI has also set up a Working Group for developing Co curriculum for the school children.
- Addressing the issues through VoICE.NET initiative is important for educating the voters of all categories.
- He congratulated the SVEEP team for developing and coming out with this useful Conference Reader to support interaction during the Seminar.

### **Signing of MOU**

MoU's were signed between ECI and (1) Australian Electoral Commission, (2) Central Election Commission of Bosnia Herzegovina, (3) Fijian Elections Office. (4) Election Commission of Nepal in the area of development of institutional framework for their ongoing cooperation in the field of election management.

### **H.E. Mr Tom Rogers, Electoral Commissioner of Australia**

- The topic of the seminar is very important in the present day context.
- A key feature of the Australian Electoral system is compulsory voting besides focus on enrolment. Youth and indigenous Australians are the least represented on the electoral rolls. Despite compulsory voting, the rate of youth participation remains a challenge.
- Substantive improvements have been made in registration in the recent years.
- Electoral participation by young people in their first and second election is very significant.
- AEC's strategies include (1) Identification of young people for enrolment and sustained efforts for their participation. (2) Effective legislation (3) Campaign for last minute registration and (4) Involving teaching institutions for educating and engaging young people in electoral participation; electoral education programmes, school education resources for teachers and students such as Mock Vote, Get Voting and National Electoral Education Centre, Canberra besides direct training of teachers.(5) Legislative support.





- A range of campaign strategies at the election time keeping in mind the key audience groups.
- Youth targeted communications viz: Celebrity endorsement, Youth media outreach, Youth media editorial, Intermediary outreach such as sporting clubs, retail employers and tertiary education institutions.
- Indigenous Youth Parliament.

#### **A-WEB: Mr Yong Hi Kim, Secretary General**

- A perceived sense of inefficacy in exercising voting rights by the youth: globally low turnout. Voter turnout among 18-24 year olds is 16% lower than those in the age group of 25-50 years in 2016.
- Three main reasons for low turnout are: Growing indifference towards elections or political fatigue; feeling of inadequacy or the disenchantment with the overestimated probability of casting a decisive ballot; high opportunity cost of voting.
- These reasons become even more pronounced among young voters. 25% of young voters, on average, not interested in politics compared to 20% for the total population in OECD.
- Empowering young voters is an important international agenda.
- Civic education on universal and equal suffrage as one's inalienable right and duty should continue to alleviate the problem.
- Hands-on experience on casting a ballot is effective in familiarizing young people with the electoral processes that otherwise appear vague.
- An effective approach would be increasing the perceived benefits of voting while, at the same time, lowering the costs of voting in terms of time and energy.
- EMBs must adapt with changing times and provide with new methods of voting such as postal voting, mobile voting and early voting.
- In addition, political parties and candidates must identify young voters' needs and come up with effective policies that address to those issues.
- Internet voting and mobile voting can be considered as options for alternate and accessible convenient methods for voting.



Promote the following:

- EMBs' should provide accessible and a facilitating platform for election information using media familiar to young generation.
- Fostering a culture of knowledge sharing by use of social media.
- Future of democracy depends on young voters. EMBs and society may persuade young voters of efficacy and convenience of voting; meaningful increase in young voters' political participation would follow.

### **Bhutan: Mr. Dawa Tenzin, Secretary, Election Commission of Bhutan**

- Future of nations lies in the hands of the youth, it is important to remind them of the rights and responsibilities.
- Participation is an important element of the democratic process to strengthen and sustain a vibrant democracy.
- Almost half of the population is less than 25 years age in Bhutan; this segment is increasing every year. Less than 30% of the voting population comprises young voters and it is decreasing in every election.
- The youth today are apathetic to participation. It is necessary to create favourable conditions through establishment of platforms by stakeholders for improving young voters' participation and thereby strengthening democracy
- ECB has the duty to prepare future generations for civic and voter responsibilities.
- ECB has initiated activities to disseminate information on elections and democracy; voter awareness especially among young voters. ECB initiatives include introduction of Democracy Clubs in schools and other educational institutions in Bhutan, the Volunteers for Voter Information, Communication and Education (Volunteer-VOICE) and adoption of Constitution of Bhutan Children's Parliament.
- Democracy Clubs provide an opportunity to the students to engage in active civic learning and skills development through activities by schools that promote good democratic values among the youth and to achieve knowledge for essential informed choices from a very young age. In Volunteer-VOICE Initiative, young voters serve as volunteers for public awareness on electoral democracy and civic duties enhancing the sense of social responsibility through participation in the democratic process.





- ECB has designated 15 September as the National Voters' Day and the theme for the first NVD was 'Youth in Democracy'. Youth on this day takes the NVD pledge to exercise their franchise in every election.

### **Bosnia & Herzegovina: Dr Suad Arnautovic, Member BiH Central Election Commission**

- Happy on the growing cooperation between ECI and BiH Central Election Commission. Personal connect between EMBs is crucial for support and cooperation in taking forward electoral reforms.
- Young voters have an important role in improving democratic processes; they represent the future of any society.
- Every citizen of BiH, on attaining 18 years of age becomes automatically registered in the Central Voters' Register through the passive registration system.
- 'Young voters' account for almost one-fifth of the entire electorate in BiH. Turnout of the young voters was low at 21.73 in 2010 and 52.46% at the 2012 and 51.24% in 2014 elections.
- Media based awareness campaigns and educational resources at the CEC website, focused on young people are conducted in every election.
- The Global Elections Day is being observed by the BiH CEC. In 2014 this celebration was dedicated to promoting and increasing the participation of youth and women.
- BiH CEC has taken up extracurricular programmes in Electoral Literacy namely 'Democracy and Elections' for elementary and primary schools and 'winter and summer Camps' for senior high school students in collaboration with Association of Election Officials in BiH (AEOBiH). The initiative is intended to encourage the participants for participation in the election process and political life in the country besides promoting their engagement in the work of polling station committees and as the election observers.
- Many of the political parties have youth forums which promote participation of youth in public and political life in line with their strategies.
- The BiH CEC is in the process of establishing a well equipped Education Centre with specific focus on young and future voters. The Centre is networking with the similar education centres in Georgia and Moldova.



## **India: Mr A K Joti, Hon'ble Election Commissioner.**

Abstract of the points made in Session 1

- Electoral roll is in the best state in Australia at present
- Everybody turning 18 must vote in elections—compulsory voting system
- School education for voter awareness is very important
- Last minute enrolment of voters
- Direct teachers training and mock poll events in schools.
- Concerns arose about lower voter turnout from the youth. General public, especially the youth are growing indifferent towards electoral processes.
- Necessary to empower young voters for national democracies. Use of media for reaching out to youth.
- Reduce the opportunity cost for voting—reduce the transaction time for various processes for casting one's vote.
- Discussed student parliaments and democracy clubs. The Co-Chairs raised the question about can election commissions go directly to schools without the support from education authority.
- Bhutan democratic clubs, youth in democracy and volunteer groups are innovations which other countries can adopt.
- BiH Central Election Commission is working with NGOs for inclusion of youth and strategic collaborations for empowering young and future voters.
- General theme that runs through these presentations is about fostering partnership with education institutions. Challenge, however, is how do we engage people who are not in the classroom—those who do not attend school or have dropped out of school. While we have to develop partnerships in education institutions, we need to also devise strategies and policies that will enable EMBs to reach out to those who dropout or are not serviced well by the education system.

## **Fiji: H E Mr. Mohammad Saneem, Supervisor of Elections, Fijian Elections Office**

- In 2014 General Elections, the voter count below the age of 30 years was 32%.





- Comprehensive annual registration drive in secondary schools and vocational training facilities was taken up in 2015 and 2016 with short Voter Education and Awareness session. Face to face voter education sessions and distribution of leaflets for electoral awareness were helpful components of the programme. The result of the efforts was seen in 2016 voter turnout improved to 82%.
- The school registration and awareness programme received strong media coverage. Social media platforms were used for reaching out the young voters who were encouraged to become advocates of electoral participation and invited them to learn about Fiji's electoral system.
- SWOT analysis of the entire system was done for continued improvements. The main challenges included time constraint for completion of the registration drive.
- The National School Voter Registration drive allows the FEO to engage with the newly eligible voters in schools and the FEO is able to fulfil its core function of maintaining and updating the National Register of Voters. The drive has guaranteed the FEO to keep an updated record of the National Register of Voters.
- Fiji runs a bridge programme for aspiring politicians. He concluded with a note a note of congratulations for the National voter's day celebration in India and said that it is an inspiration for a young EMB like Fiji.

#### **India: Mr. Umesh Sinha, Deputy Election Commissioner, Election Commission of India**

- Systematic Voter Education and Electoral Participation (SVEEP), the flagship VE programme of the ECI addresses over 850 million voters spread over 9,30,000 polling stations across the country.
- Elections in India are one of the most challenging processes given the scale, size and diversity. It is the biggest festival of democracy.
- SVEEP dwells upon proactive engagement for voter education to inculcate the conviction 'I have the power, voice, right and responsibility towards the nation and the country.'
- Young and future voters constitute a critical mass with 120 million people in the age group 15-19 years.
- The voter education initiatives include the entire range of electoral process besides issues like low participation by youth, urban and women voters



etc. National Voters Day is the most pioneering initiative of the ECI with significant positive impact on voters.

- N V D is celebrated at over 9, 30,000 polling stations across the country down to the village level. A pledge is taken by millions of voters 'Proud to Vote, Ready to Vote' and electoral photo identity cards (EPIC) are distributed to newly registered voters.
- SVEEP comprise of Pre-election, during election and post election stage. Knowledge, attitude and behaviours survey at pre-election stage is conducted. Outreach and education programmes are developed based on voter survey. All forms of information communication and dissemination platforms for maximising the impact in terms of campaigns and the dissemination are used. CSO's are major active partners.
- For effective communication, electorate is segmented based on the basis of needs and medium of communication. Social media, Facebook and SMS provide communicational channels. Targeted strategies for Female voters, young voters, urban and rural voters, voters living in remote areas are used based. Comprehensive action plans are prepared to educate and motivate voters. Information Technology is used in a big way.
- Media partnership in voter education is very significant and effective.

#### **IFES: Mr. William Sweeney, President and CEO**

- Recent surveys suggest that today's youth are less engaged in political process than previous generations and are beginning to opt out of democratic systems.
- IFES is celebrating 30 years of engaging with several countries and their electoral processes marked by increased professionalism. A culture of democracy flourishes when citizens are well informed about democratic principles and are able to translate that knowledge into action by engaging with institutions and other public structures; performing community service, and exercising leadership.
- Reduction of registration age from 21 years to 18 in recent years is a major change. Marginal increase in youth participation is noticed in 2008, 2012 and 2016. It is necessary to focus on new generation in a sustained manner. Good practices should be identified and developed for marketing as in Tunisia and Thailand.
- It is imperative to inspire young voters and remove all barriers for educating





them for electoral participation. It is necessary to bring young people to interaction, listen to their voices, engage them and encourage them to political dialogue with a focus on young and future voters.

- 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 especially for the young and future voters in their communities.
- IFES 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 forums 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.
- Develop good programmes and sell them to avoid enormous gaps in voter education

#### **International IDEA: Ms. Shana Kaiser, Program Manager**

- Young people of the world are fighting for representation within their democratic institutions and processes. They are marginalized in decision making as governmental institutions and democratic processes include relatively few youth.
- Young people can play an important role in bringing forth their voice and ensuring that their interests are reflected in policies that affect them. Early involvement of young people in democratic institutions and processes has a great potential to utilize their potential to effectively contribute to a country's democratic future.
- International IDEA believes that by not tapping this potential, governments and citizens are losing an enormous creative force, new approaches, and a solid cadre of future leaders.
- International IDEA, with its rich experience, has embarked upon 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 uses a two-pronged approach of building both the knowledge and skills of young people. It is anticipated that through combination of increased knowledge and active skills building, young people will be able to effectively participate in their democratic institutions and processes.



- An important phase of the curriculum's implementation is its customization to the concerned country.
- International IDEA is using its wide network of national partners, including election management bodies, international organizations etc working in the field of democracy building to provide paid internship programmes.
- 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.
- International IDEA is also working on a guide on social media and how EMBs can engage with social media to reach out to youth voters and future voters.

**Jordan: H.E. Mrs. Samar Haj Hasan, Commissioner, Independent Election Commission**

- Youth voting is very important. Jordan has legal framework in place to protect the rights of its citizens to participate in the civic and political life. However, the college students have not been participating enough. When youth vote, all voices are included in voting.
- Politics discourages youth from participation. Youth hold a complicated, sometimes negative view and perception of politics dominated by negative images of inter-party disagreements on national issues, corruption, lying, and a sense that politics is boring and confusing.
- Research indicates that college-aged students think that there is not enough information for them about voting. Traditional methods of campaigning and traditional parties are failing to engage them. Awareness raising and campaigning has to be meaningful for the youth.
- The biggest challenge in 2016 elections was that the youth did not enjoy the trust in the political system.
- The IEC realized the importance of reaching out to the youth to convince them to engage and hopefully vote. IEC brought in an innovative young group (specialized in social media) called the 'Crazy Group' to develop a communications strategy to reach out to the youth. Apart from the use of social media, mobile applications and Google forms, info graphics, drawing and symbols were used to simplify voting process.
- IEC used 360 degrees videos of its official meetings. Every single major decision was posted on YouTube and social media.





- The 'Crazy Group' created games for voting process. Mobile application was used to facilitate information about voting process. 6000 young volunteers registered to help out in the election process.
- As a result of, the IEC could respond to 97% of questions with average 6 minute response time. Followers of Facebook and other social media increased. The trend of the youth engagement shifted from 'we do not want to vote' at the beginning of the campaign to 'where I can go to vote.'
- IEC engaged youth in planning their strategy for awareness and education, creation of innovative tools and space for expressing themselves freely and respond to their information needs besides transparency and clarity in communication.
- Young people have to be educated on their rights and responsibilities about voting and the electoral processes. They need to be engaged in the planning through effective involvement. The idea is to listen to them, what they say, what they perceive. The IEC attaches great importance to teaching students democratic education.

#### **Maldives: H.E. Mr. Ahmed Sulaiman, Chairman, Election Commission of Maldives**

- Countries like Maldives who are young democracies, need support from countries like India. Initiatives, such as this international seminar, are highly useful and appreciated.
- Youth and new voters are important segments of voter population. Schools seek support and guidance from the Election Commission through the Ministry of Education. Youth participation and activeness with regard to voting is very high. Women voters are large in numbers.
- After completing A-level exams lot of youth join politics. The ECM has been active in reaching out to the youth population to orient them in the electoral process and the democratic institutions. The interest of youth in politics and voting is amazing. Every political party has a youth wing.

#### **Malaysian Commonwealth Studies Centre: Mr. Karamjit Singh, Trustee**

- We all live in plural societies and part of the pluralism is young people and future voters. Studies show that the younger you are less likely you are to vote. This is not a positive scenario for democracy. It is necessary to engage with young people on their terms. The MCSC is studying as to how EMBs have made an effective contribution to this process.



- Electoral leaders in Malaysia recognize the strategic importance of the youth issue. The Indian experience shows that a lot of thought has gone into how to make an impact.
- Nigeria in 2011 enrolled a large number of ad hoc staff from youth population who helped in enrolling young voters.
- Chief Election Commissioner of South Africa in 2014 had a whole generation of voters who were experiencing electoral process for first time. They focussed on social media platform and phone applications for wider outreach.
- The UK established in 2001 a statutory responsibility of registering young voters.
- It is important to focus on electoral activities but also focus on impact and outcomes of the activities. How do we actually ensure EMBs continue to have forward looking approach?
- The New Delhi Declaration following on from the conference on Inclusive Participation, combined with the current leadership of the VolCE.NET initiative by the Indian Election Commission and the launch of the Indian International Institute of Democracy and Election Management (IIIDEM) affords an opportunity for supporting a sustained global emphasis on enhancing institutional capacity in and sharing information about innovative strategies to empower young and future voters within democracies.

**Nepal: H.E. Mr. Ayodhee Prasad Yadav, Chief Election Commissioner**

- Nepal and India enjoy excellent bilateral relations. Nepal-India relations are much more than the sum of treaties MOU's or agreements between the two countries. ECI's support ranges from capacity development of election officials to logistic support besides interactive visits between the two EMBs. ECN is invited to most of the training and capacity development events organized by IIIDEM and several electoral officials of ECN have benefitted from these knowledge sharing forums. The relation is further enriched and systematized with fresh MOU to strengthen our mutual cooperation and trust even in the years to come.
- The ECN been conducting different activities for the promotion of the engagement of youth and future voters as guided by the national level policies of Nepal especially the Youth Policy, 2015 with the objective of preparing the youth committed and accountable to the state and the democratic system.





- The Election Commission of Nepal has started its practical strategic initiatives to engage youth and future voters through electoral education, capacity building, dialogue, interaction, participation and mobilization.
- ECN has taken several initiatives in encouraging voter education in Nepal. About 35% youth are expected to turn over into eligible voters every year, it is important to encourage and engage them in electoral process.
- EEIC provides ample opportunity for school students to learn about election and democracy in an interactive pedagogy. Mobile EEIC has been in operation for those who have not been able to visit EEIC.
- Youth of political parties have been trained in electoral affairs including their role in election and electoral code.
- An integrated manual consisting of different topics including electoral management, democracy, electoral process, code of conduct, EDR and role of stakeholders among others has been prepared for the youth focused training.
- Training of youths is conducted in cascade method at the centre, region and local level. Bridge and non bridge trainings have been conducted inviting youths of different sections of society in several modules.
- ECN also uses social media to reach out to the youth. Efforts have resulted in significant increase in youth participation.

#### **Sri Lanka: H.E. Mr. Mahinda Deshapriya, Chairman, Election Commission of Sri Lanka**

- Sri Lanka has achieved a landmark in the democratic process to be the first to implement universal franchise amongst Asian countries.
- The attitudes and behaviour of young people towards participation is very poor. Many young people are negative about politics and frustrated as they felt that politicians ignored them. The overriding view was that politics was boring and complicated which did not act as an incentive to become involved. Many felt that politics focused more on religion and difference than real issues such as health and education.
- Youth representation in the Parliament is very low at less than 7% young people only.
- Sri Lanka is grateful to the Election Commission of India for its novel concepts in Voter Education under SVEEP. They have identified and drawn special attention on the Voters' Day to a few categories in the society and in this context empowering 'Young and Future Voters' is a key area.



- The ECSL has also taken measures to enlighten the school children on democracy and universal franchise in propagating the Student Parliament at school levels throughout the island. They must be informed that they must exercise their voting rights as in true sense they are the “Guardians of Democracy”.
- To celebrate the International Youth Day in Sri Lanka on the 12 of August 2016, ECSL together IFES under the recommendations of a Youth Led Steering Committee, celebrated programme termed ‘Kites for Rights’.
- The ECSL organized successful social media campaigns. The programme #YouthVoteSL was a highly successful social media campaign.

**Tunisia: H.E. Mr. Mohammed Chafik Sarsar, President, High Independent Election Authority**

- Tunisian population is relatively young, with 57% of the population under the age of 35 years. The question of inclusion of young people is therefore, a fundamental question for the future of democracy. Though the youth were important in the revolution, their participation in electoral democracy is low.
- ISIE has tried to develop a multidimensional strategy based on 5 pillars to encourage active participation of youth people:
- Review the reasons for the demobilization of youth;
- Opening up channels for discussion with young people: The ISIE has tried to act through youth associations, which organize youth cafes, workshops, seminars, voter education campaigns and organize visits to the electoral commission offices for youth groups belonging to Citizenship clubs;
- Innovative methods of action: The use of new modes of communication such as songs and spots that convey language and images appealing to young voters. Use of social media—Tunisia is the second African country to have access in terms of coverage of networks and uses;
- Encourage the participation of young people in the electoral administration through recruitment of young people for electoral processes;
- Encourage candidacy of young people for elections; Constitution supports as per Article 133, that the electoral law must guarantee the representation to the young people in the local councils.
- The emergence of young political elite could be a beginning of the expected change.





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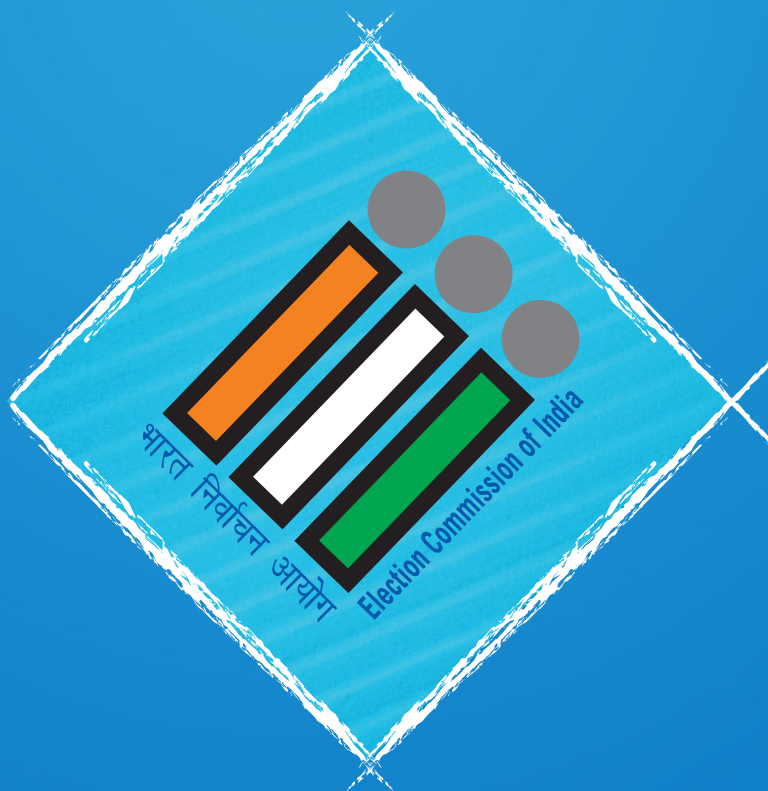
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