



# CROSSING THE BARRIERS

## ACCESSIBILITY INITIATIVES 2021

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### ELECTION COMMISSION OF INDIA

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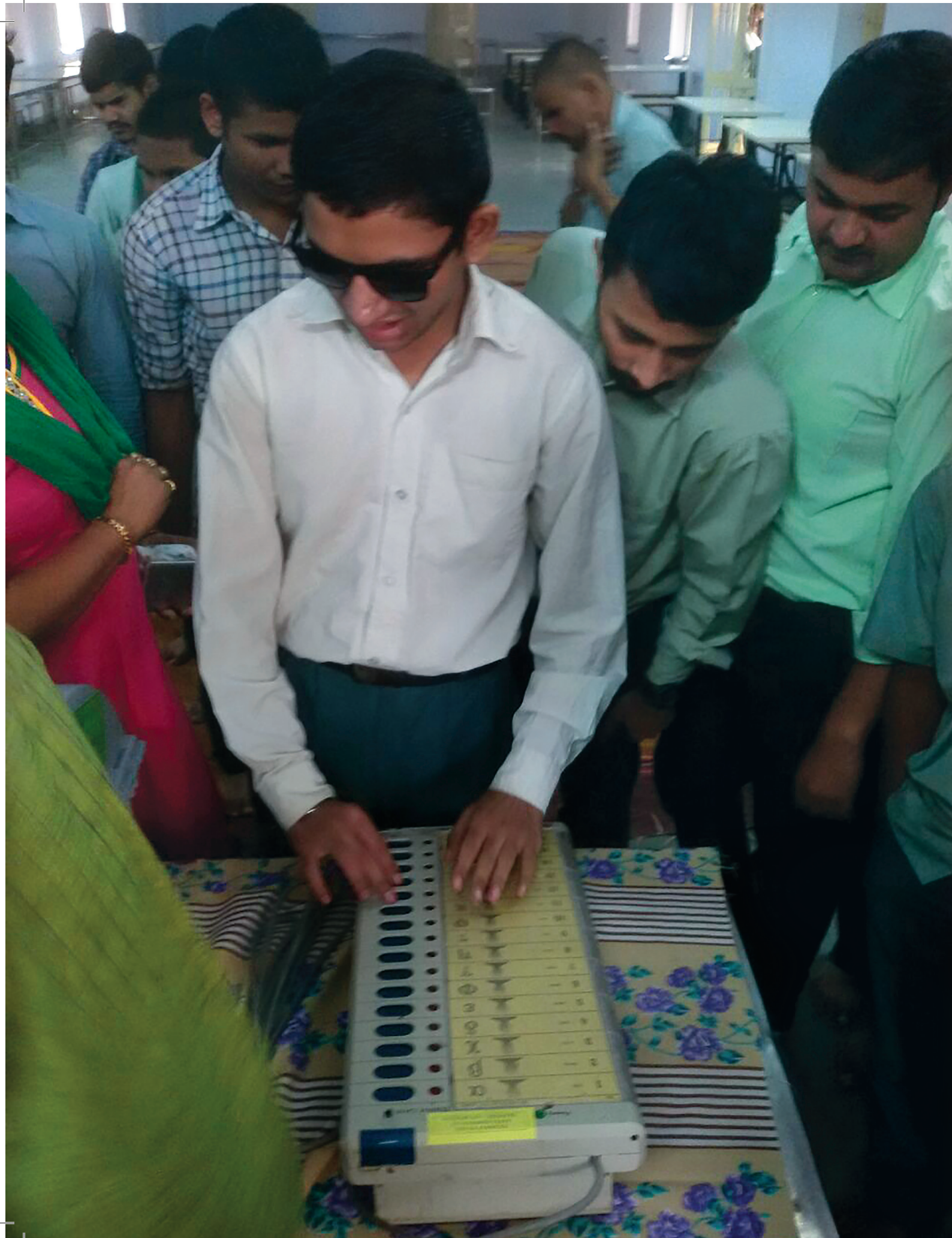
# CROSSING THE BARRIERS

## ACCESSIBILITY INITIATIVES 2021

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### ELECTION COMMISSION OF INDIA







## From the Chief Election Commissioner of India



**A**ccessibility or the 'Ability to Access' for people with disabilities in the electoral scenario has been the fulcrum of Election Commission of India. Commission has made consistent efforts to ensure a truly inclusive and participative elections for all and moved that extra mile to empower and facilitate electoral participation of Persons with Disabilities (PwDs).

'Accessible Elections' was declared as the theme for year 2018. The journey of making elections accessible has been arduous yet extremely meaningful. Inspiration and innovation made it possible to ensure a much larger participation of PwDs in elections.

Over the years, Election Commission of India has undertaken various initiatives like postal ballot facility, braille EPIC, transport to and from the polling station, exhaustive mapping of PwD voters, assured minimum facilities as well as a comprehensive nation-wide multi media campaign to ensure that the mandate of Election Commission, viz, 'No Voter to be Left Behind' is fulfilled in letter and in spirit.

Technology has been a game changer in election management and has had a significant impact upon the electoral landscape vis-a-vis accessibility. Various technical interventions have ensured a much more seamless access to electoral services for PwDs. More than 77.2 lakh PwD voters have been mapped so far, a remarkable increase of 15.28 per cent increase from the Lok Sabha Election 2019. We are constantly striving towards achieving 100 percent mapping of all PwD voters.

ECI is committed to enhance participation, extend facilitation and reorient public perception about the potential of PwDs. Electoral practices must be inclusive and should ensure that their voices are heard as equal citizens. Disability inclusion is not only a fundamental human right but also 'central to the promise' of the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development to 'Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all'.

However, we cannot rest on our laurels until all barriers to the wholesome participation of PwDs are removed. A renewed emphasis is required in order to sensitise election machinery and public in general towards the rights of Persons with Disabilities. Training and sensitization of election officials would be further taken up across the country, incorporating suggestions from the Civil society Organisations (CSOs), and encouraging more and more PwDs to come forward and register themselves.

'Crossing the Barriers: Accessibility Initiatives', is a compilation of innovative practices and accessibility initiatives for empowering PwDs and also charts the way forward. All election officials from the grassroots to the headquarters have been working in tandem to make elections truly inclusive' and I appreciate them for their wonderful efforts.

I would also like to congratulate Mr. Umesh Sinha and his entire team for bringing out this document which depicts the journey we have traversed and the road that lies ahead.

**Sushil Chandra**  
Chief Election Commissioner, ECI









## From the Election Commissioner of India



**I**n the true essence of democracy, each vote is important and every voter counts. Against that backdrop, Accessible Elections have been the bedrock of Commissions' commitment towards building an inclusive and vibrant democracy. Persons with Disabilities (PwDs) are an integral part of the entire electoral ecosystem. Ensuring a comfortable, barrier free access for them to be able to exercise their franchise is one of the deep rooted commitment of the ECI.

To ensure participation of PwDs at all levels, Committees to ensure Accessible elections were set up at National, State as well as District level namely National Advisory Committee of Accessible Elections, State Advisory Committee of Accessible Elections and District Monitoring Committee Accessible Elections. Disability Coordinators are appointed for every district. They work in coordination with the stakeholders to analyze the challenges and chalk out the strategies to ensure better facilitation of PwD voters in registration and casting their vote.

Committed towards inclusion and equal access, among a plethora of initiatives, focus has been on registration, voting process and voter education/facilitation of the PwDs. Postal ballot facility has also been extended to Persons with Disability and senior citizens since 2019. It was first introduced as a pilot in seven constituencies in Jharkhand assembly elections 2019 and has been extended to voters with disabilities and senior citizens thereof.

Election Commission of India has also assured minimum facilities at each polling station like signage, help desk with volunteers, ramps, toilets, drinking water, separate entry and exit, wheelchairs, transport facility to and from the polling station as well as priority entry (separate queue) to polling booth for the PwD voters to encourage them to participate in the festival of democracy. With further initiatives and constant monitoring Commission strives to ensure accessibility at every level of the electoral process.

Crossing the Barriers: Accessibility Initiatives 2021 showcases the collective efforts of election officials from the headquarters and all the states/ UTs, Civil Society Organisations and the stakeholders. I congratulate ECI team for compiling pan-India information and statistics on participation of PwDs. I am sure this report would be useful to election officials and all our stakeholders throughout the country.

**Rajiv Kumar**  
Election Commissioner, ECI

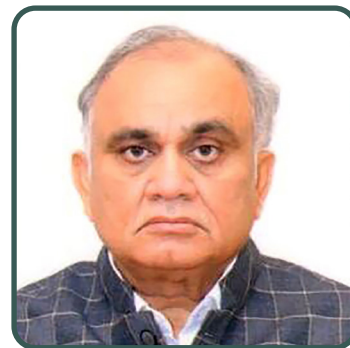








## From the Election Commissioner of India



**T**he Commission's diktat of 'No Voter to be Left Behind' brought with it a collective responsibility to ensure that elections are truly accessible and participative for all categories of voters.

Numerous initiatives have been adopted by the Election Commission of India over the years to make elections more accessible and hassle-free for Persons with Disabilities (PwDs) and senior citizens. Special care was taken to ensure Assured Minimum Facilities (AMFs) were provided to Persons with Disabilities and they easily exercise their right to vote.

During Lok Sabha 2019, a National Multi Media Campaign on Accessible Elections was launched to motivate Persons with Disabilities and sensitize the general public towards their electoral rights. In addition to this, numerous wheelchair rallies, Cricket matches, signature campaigns, Music shows were organized specifically for the PwDs, by the PwDs and state governments.

Remarkable as it may sound, in numerous states, PwDs managed Polling stations were set up. Accessibility reached a different benchmark when the entire polling booth was managed independently by Persons with Disabilities (PwDs). This greatly boosted the morale of the PwDs.

The efforts to ensure Accessible Elections continues. PwD icons are enrolled for the SVEEP outreach campaigns. Special SVEEP camps are also organised to educate the voters with disability about braille-embossed Electronic Voting Machines, braille EPIC cards and voter slips.

These are a few initiatives- just the tip of the iceberg. Crossing the Barriers: Accessibility Report 2021 is a compilation of accessible initiatives taken pan-India. It takes into account feedback received from Committees on accessible elections, stakeholders and Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) as well as includes the Human angle stories.

I congratulate Mr Umesh Sinha and his team for this compilation showcasing the accessible electoral process, E2E i.e. Enrolment to Elections. I am sure it would benefit all our stakeholders.

**Anup Chandra Pandey**  
Election Commissioner, ECI



## Foreword



Accessibility lent a tangible flavour to the festival of democracy and the cover picture says it all. Across the country, set in the idiosyncratic milieu, the pictures just donned their provincial zest. But festival it was, when electors and voters with disabilities were made to feel inclusive on an equal basis with others by the Election Commission!

Following the maxim 'No Voter to be Left Behind', over the years, the Election Commission of India has taken numerous steps to make elections accessible to all. The motto of 'Accessible Elections' was one among the many initiatives of Commission to make the world's largest democratic exercise inclusive and participative for all with a special focus on participation of Persons with Disabilities. A total of 62,63,701 PwDs were registered within an electorate of 910 million.

In tune with the time, the Commission rolled out a new mobile application, 'PwD App' that complied with international standards, for better facilitation measures to Persons with Disabilities. The ECI also updated a few features in the existing apps, i.e., cVIGIL, Voter Helpline App and Voter Turnout App, with the intention to make the elections more transparent and accountable.

Accessible Elections have been the foundation of Commissions' commitment while conducting elections. The list of initiatives that were inclusive in every sense of the term were numerous. But just to take a leaf out of the book, the Commission took initiatives like braille EPIC, EVM with braille, transport to and from the polling station, Assured Minimum Facilities as well as a comprehensive nationwide multimedia campaign to ensure that the mandate of Election Commission, viz., 'No Voter to be Left Behind' is fulfilled in letter and in spirit.

And this was besides the routine ramps, wheelchairs, accessible toilets, tactile signage, sign language interpreters, volunteers and transport facility, accessible communication awareness materials, appointment of Disability Coordinators at AC, District and State Level, cascaded training on Accessibility to Poll officials, Auxiliary Polling Stations, sign Language usage in all audio-visual content as well as trainings etc being ensured.

'Crossing the Barrier: Accessibility Initiatives 2021' enfolds accessibility initiatives across the nation. Beginning with the electoral accessibility, 'Journey so Far' it looks into the constitutional 'Guiding Principles' reinforced by the 'Legislative Framework', followed by 'Accessibility Initiatives' taken up by each state; each one catering to their unique ethos.

If States in the mountainous and hilly terrains of Uttarakhand, Himachal and J&K rolled out the initiative of Divyang Sarathi and Divyang Dolis to facilitate the PwDs, P.S. No.15 in Wokha Assembly constituency Nagaland, was totally managed by a team of PwD officials.

Bihar publicised widely with Matdata Jagrukta Rath and traditional ways of publicity like Door-to-Door campaign, using Community Radio etc. for ensuring active participation of PwD voters. 81 types of posters, 22 awareness audio clips, 16 awareness video clips in Hindi as well as in local languages/dialects were introduced for awareness generation with special focus on PwD voters.



CEO Tamilnadu engaged sign language interpreter for his public announcements which was well appreciated by the Deaf Community within the state. The entire press briefing made by CEO TN along with sign language interpretation was telecasted by different news channels.

The South 24 Parganas District Administration, West Bengal went hammer and tong with the 'Ability Express', an initiative to connect with the PwD Electors of the district, through five specially designed vehicles.

Kudos to the election machinery that left no stone unturned to ensure maximum turnout of the electorate in their respective states. Else who could imagine reaching out to Massar the silent village in Meghalaya about 35 Km from the State Capital Shillong inhabited by 87 households all partially or completely hearing Impaired. Nestled amidst extremely unfriendly mountainous terrain, the village electorate are all identified not with their names, but through various musical whistles and sounds.

I thank all the election officials and CSOs at the national level and each state for commendable efforts. CSOs have been involved in State Steering Committee for Accessible Elections and their suggestions have been incorporated during the General Elections, 2019.

For instance, in Rajasthan 130 CSOs/NGOs working in the field of disability are permanent SVEEP partners of the Election Department, Rajasthan. The inputs of the CSOs have been instrumental in continuous refinement of AMF facilitation at the more than 50,000 polling stations in the State.

At most locations, the CSOs organised campaigns, workshops, prepared Audio-Visual Campaign Material, Radio & TV spot, State level Quiz Competitions District Level Convention - involving key stakeholders. These initiatives created a positive environment and culture for equal access, empathy, and dignity of the PwDs voters leading to their enhanced participation in the electoral process.

At last but not the least, the Commission would like to thank the National and State icons with disability who despite their busy schedule contribute immensely in creating awareness and enhancing electoral participation.

Hope 'Crossing the Barrier: Accessibility Initiatives 2021' makes for an interesting read and also leads by example of all the best practices followed by states to create an ecosystem of empathy and inclusion of the PwD!



**Umesh Sinha**  
Secretary General, ECI



## Introduction



Inclusion begins with access. And literally the tenet, 'No Voter to be Left Behind' would mean creating a barrier free environment sans any impediments. The Election Commission's inclusion strategy ensured inclusion for the Persons with Disabilities both in physical and technological terms. If physical facilitation was ensured on numerous fronts, technological support was a game changer.

A wide range of apps introduced by the Election Commission of India (ECI) went a long way in ensuring a smooth management of the elections for the Persons with Disabilities. PwD App was launched by the Commission during Lok Sabha Elections 2019. Numerous facilities such as voters slip in Braille, pickup and drop facility from home to polling station as well as ramps, wheelchairs and sign language interpreters at polling booths were ensured. Moreover, an optional postal ballot facility for Persons with Disabilities and model polling stations by Persons with Disabilities have further ensured inclusive elections.

The focus of Election Commission of India has been to enhance participation, strengthen facilitation, mould public perceptions about the potential of PwDs and include their voice as equal citizens that set the stage for their social and economic integration. Crossing the Barriers: Accessibility Initiatives 2021 takes the reader through the 'Journey of Accessible Elections' followed by 'Ensuring COVID safe and inclusive elections' through Postal Ballot. The chapters on 'Guiding Principles' and 'Legislative Initiatives', as also the "Lok Sabha Elections 2019: Good Practices" highlight multiple layers within the genre of Accessibility, that were explored by the ECI and the stakeholders for a participative and inclusive election. The book also showcases the 'Accessibility initiatives taken up by states/UTs.. Moreover, the suggestions and recommendations by the Disability Sector and Civil Service Organizations (CSOs)/ NGOs all over India, on making the elections more accessible provide a comprehensive view, The last chapter on 'way forward' chalks out the strategy on accessible elections for future.

I hope the document would inspire all the election officials, CSOs/ NGOs and our stakeholders to work towards absolute inclusion of the Persons with Disabilities!

**Santosh Ajmera**  
Director SVEEP, ECI



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# Journey so Far

**READY TO VOTE IN THE LOK SABHA ELECTION 2019?**

**WHEN OUR COURAGE  
IS BORN OUT OF CONVICTION  
THEN YES, ANYTHING IS POSSIBLE**

**Devender Jhajharia**  
Khel Ratna, Gold Medal, Paralympic Games

**NO VOTER  
TO BE LEFT  
BEHIND**

**Election Commission of India**  
Helpline **1950** | <https://eci.gov.in/> | [www.nvsp.in](http://www.nvsp.in)

**My Vote Matters**

Ramp & Wheel chair	EVM with Braille	Sign Language	Special Volunteers	Transport Facility	Voter Helpline



Since its inception, Election Commission of India has been making sustained effort to register all eligible citizens as voters and facilitate them to vote at the time of election. The Commission has also taken several special initiatives to facilitate inclusion of those voters who face difficulties in registration or voting. From 2009 onwards, the Commission has set up a full-fledged SVEEP division to give further impetus to this process and facilitate voters

**Election Commission of India tested Braille signages in Electronic voting machines at an Assembly Bye Elections in Andhra Pradesh State in 2004, which was further tried out in 2005, 2006 and 2008 in different constituencies of the country & finally introduced to all constituencies during the Lok Sabha General Elections in 2009.**

in the categories of targeted intervention, namely gender, youth, people living in slums and remote locations and Persons with Disability(PwD).

The Commission always paid special attention to the inclusion of persons with disability and instructed for many provisions such as ramps at the polling stations, out of turn voting and need based companion for PwDs, engraving braille font on EVMs, braille ballot paper, and so on. Improvement in general infrastructure and introduction of information and communication technologies opened more vistas for providing amenities to voters with disabilities. In the SVEEP Plan and Strategic Plan, the Commission laid greater emphasis on further facilitation of Persons with Disabilities. The Election Commission of India, declared 'Accessible Elections' as the theme for this year on the National Voters' Day, i.e. 25th January 2018. Emphasis has been laid on enhancing participation, strengthening facilitation, moulding public perceptions about the potential of PwDs, including their voice as equal citizens and set the stage for their social and economic integration.

A lot has already been done, and more is being envisaged. A well designed framework of guidelines has been put in place under the directions of the Commission for facilitating PwDs at every step in the electoral process. Many States and UTs have also done exemplary work by overcoming the barriers and creating accessible and friendly environment for PwDs.

The initiatives to ensure accessible elections taken up by Election Commission of India over the years are mentioned in brief herewith.

## >> SPECIAL FACILITIES FOR THE PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

In a petition filed by the Disabled Rights Group, Hon'ble Supreme Court directed the Commission to provide special facilities for the physically disabled electorate at all polling stations.

This was to be done well-in-advance, with sufficient publicity in print and electronic media, so that persons with disabilities were made aware of the facilities beforehand and encouraged to exercise their franchise.

Election Commission of India issued periodic instructions to all States & UTs to improve the facilities for voters with disabilities at polling booths in 2004, 2005 & 2007. Ramps were to be provided and a companion was allowed along with voters with certain disabilities. Besides, priority entry for voters with disabilities, sensitization of polling officers on the facilities to be provided, allowing a voter to navigate the voting compartment in his/her personal wheelchair, and special assistance for voters with speech & hearing impairment, were introduced.

## >> BRAILLE ON EVMS

- In a first, the Commission directed CEO Andhra Pradesh in 2004 to introduce Braille Signage features on the Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs) for the visually impaired electors, in 213- Asif Nagar Assembly Constituency Bye-Election. 'Numeric Stickers' in Braille denoting the serial numbers of the candidates to the right of the blue button, were added.

Visually impaired were also allowed the facility of a companion to the voting compartment, if they desired, besides providing him/her with the dummy ballot paper printed in Braille in regional language.

- In 2005 the Commission directed CEOs of Bihar, Haryana and Jharkhand to implement the above instructions of Braille on EVMs for one constituency each in the State viz. Patna in Bihar, Gurgaon in Haryana and Jamshedpur in Jharkhand.
- Braille signages in Electronic voting machines was tried out in different constituencies during 2006 and 2008 coming into force nationwide. The Commission directed CEOs of all States and UTs to comply and facilitate the visually challenged voters cast their vote, without the help of an attendant. This came into force in every constituency in each state, since the 2009 General Election to Lok Sabha and simultaneous Assembly Elections in some States.

Braille Voter Slip, Machilipatnam, Andhra Pradesh





## Basic Minimum Facilities (BMF) at polling stations for Persons with Disabilities in 2014 included:

- Provision of ramps
- Provision of help desk
- Provision of drinking voter
- Adequate furniture
- Proper lightning
- Proper Signage
- Toilets

## >> RAMPS FOR PHYSICALLY CHALLENGED

CEOs of all States and UTs were instructed by the ECI in 2007 to implement the direction of Hon'ble Supreme Court to provide facilities for electors with disabilities, such as permanent ramps in public buildings.

## >> DIRECTIONS ON WIDE PUBLICITY

In 2009, the need for wide publicity with regard to the facilities provided for voters with disabilities and senior citizens was recognized and directions were issued, so that the information reached maximum number of persons with disabilities and senior citizens across the country.

## >> AUXILIARY POLLING STATIONS

CEOs of all States and UTs were asked to take a survey w.r.t implementation of the





above Braille Signage features in Electronic Voting Machines (EVM). Based on a report by National Institute for the Visually Impaired, ECI directed the states to set up Auxiliary Polling Station for the Visually Impaired, persons in 2009.

## » BASIC MINIMUM FACILITIES INTRODUCED

In another milestone Commission directed states to provide 'Basic Minimum Facilities' (BMF) at polling stations for Persons with Disabilities in 2014 which included provision of ramps, help desk and drinking voter, adequate furniture, proper lightning and signage and Toilets.

## » EASY REGISTRATION AND EASY CORRECTION

ECI launched National Voter Service Portal (NVSP). With the launch of NVSP it was ECI's endeavor to provide all possible support services to electors with the help of IT tools. NVSP was one of them.

## » TECHNICAL COMMITTEE FOR INCLUSION OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

In 2015, the Commission constituted a Technical Committee for the inclusion of persons with disabilities and engaged with members from the disability sector, most of them being persons with disabilities, to further enhance the facilities for voters with disabilities.

## » SIGNING FEMBOSA RESOLUTION

It was in 2015 September, that ECI signed the FEMBOSA (Forum for Election Management Bodies of South Asia) Colombo resolution along with the Election Commissioners of other SAARC Countries, committing to enable complete inclusion and participation of persons with disabilities

in the entire electoral process.

## » ENROLMENT MEASURES

### Mapping persons with disabilities

The states were directed to map persons with disabilities, sensitize system, train and set up auxiliary polling stations and enhance voter facilitation. Stakeholder's involvement was augmented, specific SVEEP activities and comprehensive activities regarding ease of registration and voting for persons with disabilities, were set in motion.

### Accommodating PwDs

In 2016 the Commission issued a specific instruction to accommodate the needs of women voters and voters with leprosy along with voters with disabilities, senior citizens and other special categories of voters.

## » MEASURES AT POLLING STATIONS

### Instructions released for accessible polling booths

The Commission further considered suggestions from members of the disability sector and released two detailed sets of instructions dated March 12, 2016 and September 07, 2016. This included appointing nodal officers to deal with accessible elections in every State/UT, accessibility/specific SVEEP activities, mapping of persons with disabilities in every polling booth and special/accessible arrangements to enroll electors with disabilities. Polling booths had to be made accessible as per 'Universal Accessibility Norms' w.r.t an accessible election websites, information and access to polling infrastructure.

## » ACCESSIBILITY CONSULTANT

Accessibility consultant was appointed in 2017 by Election Commission of India.



International Conference on Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities (PwDs) in Electoral Processes, held to consolidate the gains from the international experience

## » THEME FOR YEAR 2018: ACCESSIBLE ELECTIONS

Election Commission of India announced the National Voters Day's theme for the year 2018 as 'Accessible Elections' and various initiatives were undertaken by the commission on the said theme, round the year, throughout the country.

## » INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

An international conference on 'Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities (PwDs) in Electoral Processes', was held in January 24, 2018.

International Conference on 'Inclusion of the Persons with Disabilities (PwDs) in the Electoral Processes' was held on Jan 24, 2018 at New Delhi as a part of the National Voters' Day celebration. The Conference was organized under the aegis of VoICE. NET, with the purpose of sharing the experience of different EMBs, international institutions and experts with regard to analysis of barriers, policy interventions, strategies, programmes, good practices and technological innovation for inclusion of PwDs in electoral processes.

Delegates at the Conference included Chairpersons, Commissioners and Senior

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

## » DISTRICT AND STATE LEVEL CONSULTATIONS

A series of consultations with stakeholders on 'Inclusion of PwDs' in the Electoral Process were conducted in districts and states across the country in the month of May and June 2018. They were meant to identify the existing barriers and challenges, assess the implementation of directives given by the Commission on the subject and consolidate the gains from good practices (including innovations and technological support) for further engagement with the stakeholders.

## » NATIONAL CONSULTATION ON ACCESSIBLE ELECTIONS

- A two-day National Consultation on Accessible Elections was organized in New Delhi. It attracted participation of more than 50 Civil Society Organizations, all the Chief Electoral Officers of States/UTs, members of National Political



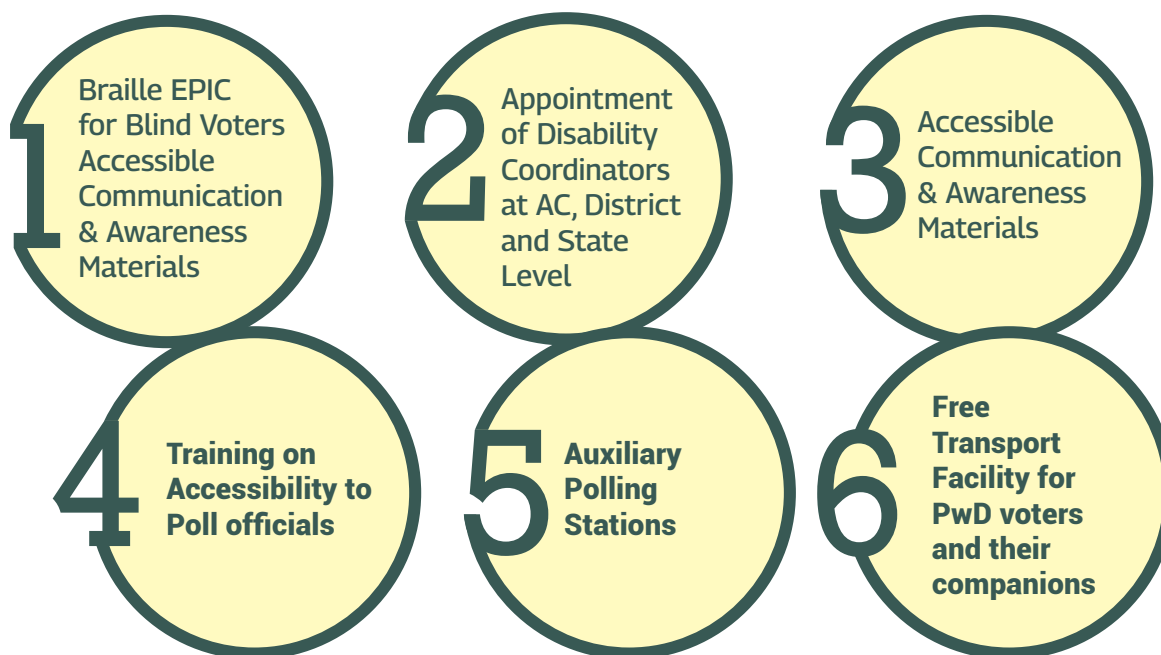
National Consultation on Accessible Elections in progress

Parties and Ministries besides the Government of India

- Besides CEO offices pan-India, organizations working in disability sector were engaged to review the state reports and put forth their recommendations to make the consultation successful.

Organizations included Association for Disabled People (ADP), NPRD, NCEPD, ALIMCO, Samarthyam, Action for Ability Development & Inclusion (AADI), Sense International India and Saksham Disability.

### Announcements during National Consultation on Accessible Elections







The release of Strategic Framework by the Commission and senior officers

## » STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

The Strategic Framework on Accessible Elections is built around sensitization through education and training, community involvement of different sections of society, effective partnership with institutions and organizations and creation of facilities to cater to the specific needs of Persons with Disabilities (PwDs) with a view to increase their participation. The Strategic Framework shall inter alia include the following components:

### 1. Barriers: Continuous Identification and Solutions

Identifying barriers and finding solutions to the same have to be a continuous process. A system of regular and periodic feedback shall be taken up. Well-designed approach with strategic interventions including technology integration can help in obliterating barriers.

### 2. Voter Registration & Polling

Database on PwDs, identified through mapping or initial voter registration shall be efficiently and effectively used for follow up steps in the electoral process and the monitoring system for feedback, evaluation and consolidation. Polling stations shall be made accessible to all

Persons with disabilities based on mapping of PwD electors and their specific needs

### 3. Inclusive Voter Education

Customised voter education to cater to the different requirements of PwDs shall be taken up to empower them for electoral participation. All voter education content shall be in accessible format. Focussed and need based interventions shall be taken up under ECI's flagship voter education programme SVEEP to engage PwDs and also to sensitise their friends, families, polling officials, security officials and all other stakeholders.

### 4. Leveraging Technology for Accessible Elections

This would essentially include

- (i) User friendly websites for PwDs of different categories.
- (ii) Accessible Technological Tools for facilitating PwDs of different categories to cast their votes
- (iii) Solutions for assisting voters with disabilities through technological innovation, research and integration.
- (iv) Accessible Media including Social Media Communications.

## 5. Research, Study and Knowledge sharing

A continuous search for best practices, of both international and domestic through detailed study and research on all areas of participation by PwDs and sharing of experiences to help formulate enabling policies and interventions, to aid, assist and facilitate the participation of PwDs.

## 6. Role of Partner Departments

To explore and build partnership and commitment with Ministries and Departments to evolve and carry forward the interventions to electoral participation of PwDs

## 7. Role of Educational Institutions

The Commission has already issued directions for setting up of Electoral Literacy Clubs (ELCs) in educational institutions etc. Setting up of ELCs in educational institutions dedicated to the PwDs shall be expedited and the ELC resources shall be customised to match disability requirements.

## 8. Role of CSOs

To assess the potential of CSO's and assign specific role in assisting equal access and capacity building through well designed partnerships. CSO's potential to build partnerships should be utilised subject to their non-partisan nature.

## 9. Role of Media

Utilise the potential of Media in taking forward voter's education and to engage PwD's for increasing their electoral participation. Media can actively contribute to an effective and successful integration of persons with disabilities in the electoral process.

## 10. Poll Volunteers

Poll volunteers from among future voters can organise from educational institutions, and Chunav Pathshala, (ELCs for Communities) and trained to assist PwDs, besides from among NCC/NSS/ NYKS and other non-partisan voluntary groups. The initiative will be subject to provisions of Rule 49N.

## 11. Training and Sensitization of Staff

Training and sensitization of the election are important so that they are empathetic to the needs of PwD voters. The training shall be factored into regular training of the staff as also for the registration and facilitation of the PwDs.

## 12. Alternative Voting methods

Alternative voting methods like advance voting or early voting, voting from home, Postal vote, transport assistance to PwDs or mobile polling station concept shall be looked at without compromising on the essential requirements of sanctity and secrecy of vote.

## 13. Legislative Initiative

The scope of assistance to PwDs for participation is wide and diverse. Need for legislation shall be examined for enhancing electoral participation of the PwDs.

## 14. Special 4 tiered Committees on Accessible Elections

Committees shall be formed at National, State, District and Assembly Constituency level with members from departments as well as stakeholders to review implementation of the directions of the Commission on 'Accessible Elections'.



Sensitisation Training of Election Officials

## >> CIRCULAR ISSUED ON SEPTEMBER 27, 2018

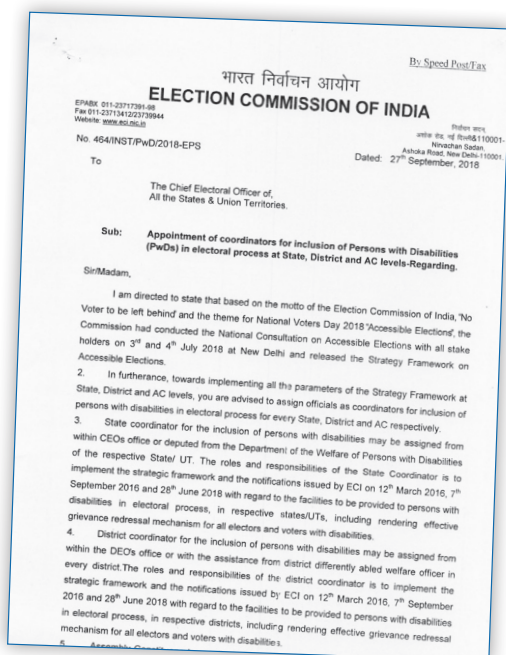
### Special 4-tiered Committees on Accessible Elections

- Committees were to be formed at National, State, District and Assembly Constituency level with members from departments as well as stakeholders to review implementation of the directions of the Commission on 'Accessible Elections' namely National Advisory Committee on Accessible Elections (NACAE), State Steering Committee on Accessible Elections (SSCAE) and District Monitoring Committee on Accessible Elections (DMCAE).



### Disability Coordinators

- Disability Coordinators were appointed at State, District and AC to ensure implementation of various directions of commission on Accessible Elections. Disabilities were covered under following four group: Visual impairment Speech & Hearing Disability and Locomotors disability and others.



## >> SIGN LANGUAGE WORKSHOP

The aim of the workshop was to sensitise election officials to the needs of persons with disabilities so as to be better able to respond to their needs & facilitate them during the election process. The training was conducted by experts from ISLRTC (Indian Sign Language Research and Training Centre) wherein the officers were acquainted with basic as well as election





Sign Language Workshop

## >> KNOWLEDGE SHARING PLATFORM

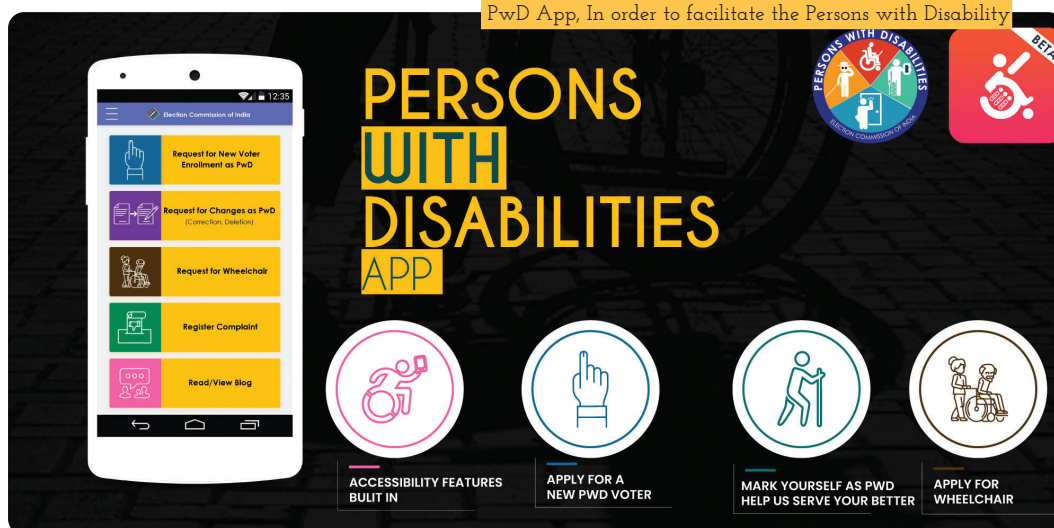
A special issue was launched on persons with disabilities in the VoICE International magazine, an ECI publication. The issue carried rich experience for knowledge sharing on inclusion of persons with disabilities across the world.

## >> PwD APP

In order to facilitate the Persons with Disability, the Election commission of India developed an android based mobile application, the PwD App. An eligible person with a disability or reduced mobility / physical functions can get enrolled in electoral roll by declaring themselves as a person with a disability. Upon receiving the request from Person with Disabilities electors/ voters, the election commission will ensure that the booth level officer will reach the doorstep delivery of electoral services.

related sign languages symbols such as election, identity Card, address and Polling Booth etc. besides, information related to basic etiquette while conversing with persons with disabilities was also shared with the Officials of the Commission and they were sensitised regarding the needs of Deaf persons. the session saw enthusiastic participation of the officials. A sensitisation activity was conducted through a live demonstration of a mock poll to understand the frequently asked questions/ issues of the deaf voters.

PwD App, In order to facilitate the Persons with Disability







The PwD app facilitates PwD Voters in verifying their names in the electoral roll, enrolling them, getting their name, address and photograph corrected. To do this, mobile accessibility features like voice-over prompts, high contrasting interface, and easy navigation features are developed in the app. The user interface has been kept very simple.

The PwD user enters the mobile number and address and the information travels down to Electoral Registration Officer (ERO) in minutes and ERO in-turn allocate the case to Booth Level Officer to visit the home of the PwD user to get the form filled up. During the whole process, PwD App user can use the reference number to track their application status.

## » LOK SABHA ELECTION 2019

Various measures undertaken by the Commission to ensure Accessible elections included the following:

### PwD Polling Stations

- Polling Stations managed by persons with disabilities were set up, which created an example of courage and determination.

### ■ Accessibility Observers

Accessibility Observers were appointed in the poll going states to facilitate field



authorities in ensuring free, fair and participative polling.

### ■ Media Campaign for Lok Sabha Elections

- Three Films were made to motivate Persons with Disabilities to come out and vote as well as to sensitize their families and general public towards their voting rights.

#### 1. Film with paralympians persons with disabilities artists:

- » Khel Ratna Devender Jhajharia (First Indian Gold Medallist in



Khel Ratna, Devender Jhajharia

Paralympic Games)

- » Anandan Gunasekaran Gold Medallist, National Para Athletics Championship 2018
- » Manpreet Kaur Bronze Medallist, World Para-Powerlifting Asia-Oceania Championship 2018
- » Suyash Jadhav Gold Medallist, Asian Para Games
- » Dr. Arunima Sinha Padma Shri Awardee, Everest Climber
- » Komal Kumari, Chess Player
- » Jagan Nath, Painter
- » Devanshi Joshi, Store Manager
- » Khizar Tariq, Actor

#### 2. Film with pWD Artists

- » Komal Kumari, Chess Player

## ON ELECTION DAY MAKE SURE NO ONE IS LEFT OUT



On election day every booth will have some special arrangements for people with special needs... so that voting is easy for all. So come forward... bring everyone along, and cast your vote. Helpline 1950



Outdoors and Advertisements

airports and other Properties with high foot-fall.

### » FROM THE FIELD

ECI directed district administration of Godda, Jharkhand to take disciplinary action upon a politician Mr. Nishkant Dubey, for his disrespectful remarks concerning persons with disabilities during his political campaign for the Jharkhand State Legislative Assembly Elections 2019.

### » ACCESSIBLE ELECTION AWARDS

Accessible Election Awards were announced. Several CSOs, CEOs, Police Officers & Government departments were awarded during NVD as an appreciation of their exemplary work in accessible elections.

- » Jagan Nath, Painter
  - » Devanshi Joshi, store Manager
  - » Khizar Tariq, actor
- 3. Films targeting Families
  - » The films were disseminated via Cinema, DD, Private Channels, Social Media and Chief Electoral Officers.
- Outdoors and Advertisements
 

Numerous half page/ quarter page print advertisements were published pan India. The ads were adapted to outdoors as well and displayed at Bus stands, airports, Digital Displays,



## » THE NATIONAL VOTERS' DAY - AWARDEES FOR ACCESSIBLE ELECTIONS (from 2011 to 2021)

### NVD-2021

**G. Syamala, Executive Director, Action for Ability Development and Inclusion (AADI), Delhi (National CSO Award for Accessible Election)** for her inputs as Provided important inputs & trainings for Accessible Election to Delhi Legislative Assembly 2020 as a member of National & State Steering Committees on Accessible Elections

**Dr. Satendra Singh, Associate Professor and Member of SSCAE, Delhi (Special Award for Accessible Election)** for his Contribution towards inclusive & accessible elections and volunteering in Set up the two successive PwD manned polling booth in Lok Sabha Elections 2019 and Delhi Legislative Elections 2020.

**Dr. Niru Kumar, National Icon, ECI (Special Award for Voter Awareness)** for her contribution towards inclusion of weaker & persons with disabilities of the Society, making every effort to help take forward the Commission's significant work in the direction of voter awareness and electoral participation.

### NVD-2020

**Bhushan Punani, Blind People's Association, Gujarat (National CSO Award for Accessible Election)** for his contribution in provision of accessible electoral process with Braille Ballots preparation, orientation of Electoral Officers about disabilities and Braille Marking on EVM machines.

### NVD-2018 (Theme: Accessible Elections)

**Aarushi Society, Madhya Pradesh (National CSO Award for Best Campaign on Accessibility)** Award for Best Campaign on Accessibility



Aarushi Society, Madhya Pradesh

for taking up measures for accessibility by organizing district level workshops, developing accessible voter awareness material and wide dissemination of these materials during the State Assembly Election 2018.



B Shailaja, Telangana

**B Shailaja, Director, Welfare of Persons with Disabilities and Senior Citizens, Telangana (Special Award for Accessible Elections)** for taking special drive towards making the election process accessible to all persons with disabilities as well as senior citizens in the States during the State assembly Election 2018.

**Aarti Dogra, DEO Ajmer, Rajasthan (Best electoral practices award for Inclusive Voter Education and Outreach)** Initiative: For taking innovative measures in voter education and outreach and ensuring accessibility for all and systematically working towards inclusive





Aarti Dogra, Rajasthan

election in the district during the State Assembly Election 2018.

### NVD-2017



Amrit Tripathi, DEO Sitapur, Uttar Pradesh

**Amrit Tripathi, DEO Sitapur, Uttar Pradesh (For Innovative Measures)** Divyang-Jyoti - Software developed to increase the participation of PWD Voters and to facilitate them during the Poll Day, leading to total PWD voter percentage recorded at 78.6%.

**Kaushal Raj Sharma, DEO, Kanpur Nagar, Uttar Pradesh (For Innovative Measures)** for Special focus on holistic involvement



Kaushal Raj Sharma, DEO, Kanpur Nagar, Uttar Pradesh

of Divyang voters, Door to door survey of Divyang people in city, 26,043 Divyang voters identified, a separate Divyang Voters control room leading to voting percentage of Disabled Voters recorded at 80.78 %.



Ritu Suhas, DDC Rajnandgaon, Azamgarh, Uttar Pradesh

**Ritu Suhas, DDC Rajnandgaon, Azamgarh, Uttar Pradesh for development of Booth Dost** -Developed a free, offline app to reach out to the PWDs, various other outcomes which lead to 70% turnout of voters.

### NVD-2016

**DR V Candavelou, CEO Puducherry (For Voter Education & Electoral Participation)**

### NVD-2014

**Kinjal Singh, DEO, Sitapur, Uttar Pradesh (Innovative Area: Inclusion of Women, Differently Aabled and Senior Citizens)** for her efforts to increase women, senior citizens and disabled persons participation also yielded good results

### NVD-2013

**Alarmelmangai D, DEO, Kanker, Chhattisgarh (Best Electoral practices: Inclusive and Participative Electoral Process)**

### NVD-2012

**Avantika Aulakh, DEO Bharuch & DEO Anand, Gujarat (Best Electoral Practices: Inclusive and Participative Electoral Process)**

Source: <https://ecisveep.nic.in/articles.html/national-awards/>





## >> FROM THE FIELD

5000 polling booths which were in upper floors were moved down to the ground level in Maharashtra State Legislative Assembly Elections (2019).

## >> ANALYSIS OF ACCESSIBLE MEASURES/INITIATIVES

Follow up on National Workshop was conducted in December 2019 to analyze the status of accessible electoral process in the country and the gaps therein.

## >> POSTAL BALLOT-PILOT PROJECT

Postal ballot facility was extended to persons with disabilities and senior citizens, who opted for the same. As a pilot project it was introduced in seven constituencies during Jharkhand State Legislative Assembly Elections 2019.

## >> ACCESSIBILITY DIVISION

Accessibility Division was set up in Election Commission of India on December 27, 2019. It is by now fully operative and functional.



## >> ACCESSIBILITY CHECKLIST

CEO offices were notified in 2021, in all states to get an Accessibility Checklist for polling booths.

## >> POSTAL BALLOT

Postal Ballot was introduced as a pilot project in seven constituencies during Jharkhand State Legislative Assembly Elections 2019 which was implemented in all constituencies during Delhi & Bihar State Legislative Assembly Elections in 2020.

The new facility of postal ballot received an overwhelming response from many voters with disabilities and senior citizens, who considered it a boon during the pandemic and opted for the same. Even amidst the COVID 19 pandemic in 2020 and 2021, the Commission's commitment towards enabling accessibility & safety of voters during the electoral process was unparalleled. This was evident from the specific notifications issued and intense training programs carried out on account of the General Elections to the State Legislative Assembly Elections held in Bihar in 2020 and in Assam, West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Puducherry in 2021.

## >> CONTINUOUS ASSESSMENT AND NEW INITIATIVES

In addition to all the above measures, the Commission continues to assess the provisions of accessible electoral process in every state in terms of the level of implementation of each provision - whether implemented fully, partially or not implemented at all. It analyzes the best practices on ground as well as the barriers faced by the election machinery on implementation. Besides, any other issue faced by voters with disabilities is taken care of in order to undo any hinderance for the especially abled.



# Ensuring COVID-safe and Inclusive Elections



लोकसभा चुनाव 2019 में मतदान के लिए तैयार

जब हौसला बुलंद हो,  
तब हम कुछ भी कर सकते हैं।

आनंदन गुणसेकरन

गोल्ड मेडलिस्ट, नेशनल पैरा एथलेटिक्स चैंपियनशिप

हर मत  
हो शामिल



भारत निर्वाचन आयोग

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

महत्वपूर्ण है वोट मेरा



रैंप एवं  
व्हीलचेयर



ब्रेल सहित  
ईवीएम



सांकेतिक  
भाषा



विशेष  
स्वयंसेवी



यातायात  
सुविधा



मतदाता  
हेल्पलाइन



The Election Commission of India has conducted several by-elections during the COVID-19 pandemic, striving to uphold our constitutional democracy. The facility of Postal Ballot was also extended by the Commission to safeguard the voting rights of one and all. Simply put, Postal Ballot is a method developed by the Commission which allows PwD voters and senior citizens who are above 80 years, the option to cast their vote from their home. Electoral officials reach the houses of these registered voters with the voting machines so voters can cast their vote. In order to utilize this facility, one has to inform their BLO beforehand and ensure they are on the list of Postal Ballot voters. Now, with the elections conducted amidst pandemic, the Commission decided to extend this facility of Postal Ballot to COVID affected/suspected persons as well. This step was initiated during the election to the Bihar Legislative Assembly in 2020 and has remained applicable in all the state and by-elections conducted during COVID-19 pandemic. With this measure, the Commission reiterated their motto of 'No Voter to be Left Behind'.

### » THE SUCCESS OF POSTAL BALLOT IN MARWAHI BY-ELECTION

Marwahi By-Elections 2020 in the state of Chhattisgarh was unique in all aspects; it gave a unique insights and a life long experience of conducting elections. In pursuance of letter issued by Election



Commission of India dated Sept 17, 2020, CEO Chhattisgarh office made a special arrangement for voting through postal ballot by absentee voters falling into the category of senior citizens, PwDs and COVID-19 suspected or affected persons during Marwahi By- Elections 2020. During by-elections, a special advertisement campaign was run to create awareness amongst the absentee voters of above mentioned category who lled & submitted form 12 D, opting for casting their vote through postal ballot. A total of 1104 postal ballots were issued out of which 1068 exercised this option. These included one COVID Patient, 505 Persons with Disabilities and 562 elderly citizens aged above 80 years. In order to maintain transparency and condence of the voters, DEO Marwahi ensured all security arrangements. Moreover videography and photography



of the entire process was also taken up. Further to maintain the confidentiality and sanctity of the voting right of the voters, a separate postal ballot booth was created within the house premises of the voter. After a successful conduct of Marwahi ByElections 2020 (77.89%), the initiative to understand the success ratio and to know the feedback of the above voters who availed this facility was taken in to account. SVEEP team was sent out to randomly select and visit the absentee voters who availed this facility. The team visited & interacted with the absentee voters and gathered the feedback. The gist of collected feedback is very encouraging and voters gave thumbs up to this facility and wished that this continues in future as well. All the senior citizen voters showered their blessings on ECI for such facility. Following is the account of the interaction with the senior voters, all of whom are residents of Marwahi constituency in Chhattisgarh.



**Q :** Can you please tell me when did you vote for the first time and what was your age at that time?

**A :** I can't recall precisely, however it was around 15-20 years ago when I had gone for casting my vote for the first time.

**Q :** You have been casting your vote at the polling station. This time you voted through postal ballot at your residence itself. Can you please share something with us about this

experience?

**A :** The facility of voting from my home is nice and convenient because it relived me from the burden of walking to the polling station as well as rescued me from standing in the queue.

**Q :** You are the senior most member of your family. Do you have any message for the youth of your home, family, village and society so that they could be motivated to participate in electoral process?

**A :** The entire youth should come forward and participate in the election process. All members of the family should get their names registered in the voter's list and must cast their votes.



**Q :** When did you vote for the first time and what was your age then?

**A :** I was around 28-29 years old.

**Q :** How was the experience of Postal ballot?

**A :** The voting from home process is better and much more convenient for elderly citizens like us.

**Q :** You are the elderly member of your family. Do you have any message for the youth of your home, family, village and society?

**A :** We used to vote regularly and so should they. They should cast their votes as per their understanding. They must not sell out their votes for the greed of money.



## >> FROM THE FIELD

### Postal Ballot for elderly in Rajasthan

Rajasthan witnessed peaceful polling in 1145 polling stations spread across the three Assembly Constituencies on April 19, 2021 in Sahara (Bhilwara), Rajsamand (Rajsamand) and Sujargarh (Churu). The facility of Postal Ballot was introduced in these by polls for voters above 80 years of age, the differently abled and the COVID suspected/affected voters. Chief Electoral Officer Praveen Gupta had said efforts were made by the ECI and election department to leave no voters behind. It was a challenging task to bring voters above 80 years and PwD voters to the booth. As per a report by a prominent daily, Gupta said a total of 29,180 voters in the three assemblies are either aged 80 or above, PwD or COVID affected.

## >> MADRAS HIGH COURT UPHOLDS POSTAL BALLOT

Postal ballot facility for voters with disabilities, senior citizens and COVID affected/suspected voters, announced by the Election Commission of India (ECI) was challenged by a political party from Tamil Nadu at the Madras High Court vide a writ petition in 2021, about a month before the General Elections to the State Legislative Assembly Elections 2021 in the States of Assam, West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, Kerala & the Union Territory of Puducherry. The writ petition challenged the constitutional validity of Section 60(c) of the Representation of the People Act of 1951, which empowers ECI to notify a class of voters such as those above 80 years of age, the physically challenged, those under quarantine due to COVID-19 and people involved in essential services who can choose to cast their votes through postal ballot instead of visiting the polling stations (Dravida Munnetara Kazhagam vs The Union of India, The Election Commission



Casting of vote by Postal Ballot



Availing Postal Ballot



of India & The Chief Electoral Officer, Tamil Nadu).

The Judges observed that the move of the Election Commission of India was nothing but to make the election process inclusive for Persons with Disabilities. If the process is made inclusive without compromising on either the secrecy of the ballot or the fairness in the conduct of elections, it would be a greater cause to celebrate and compliment the conducting body. The move of Election Commission of India is to afford Persons with Disabilities their basic right to participate in the democratic process. The honorable Court thereby dismissed the petition, declaring that it is well within the plenary powers of the Commission to issue guidelines to facilitate the elections for Persons with Disability through postal

ballot. This verdict was a great relief to many voters with high support needs while it was considered to be beneficial for all Persons with Disabilities during the current crisis of COVID-19 pandemic, as they experience extreme level of exclusion & vulnerability as emphasised by various international agencies such as the United Nations and WHO. Civil Society Groups also opined that postal ballot provides safeguard from environmental health hazards for voters having health disabilities specified in the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act 2016 such as hemophilia, thalassemia, sickle cell disorder, acid attack victims, multiple sclerosis, parkinson's disease, muscular dystrophy etc.

Most voters with disabilities who successfully voted through the postal





### Preethi Sreenivasan,

Founder, Soul Free,  
a person with  
spinal cord injury  
& Election Icon for  
Tiruvannamalai  
district, Tamil Nadu,  
sent the following  
message to the  
DEO Tiruvannamalai,  
appreciating the  
initiative of postal  
ballot after exercising  
the same:

"Namaste Sir, I wish to express my deepest gratitude to you, and the entire team of government officials who are working day and night for the election process to be completed successfully. Today, I was able to cast my vote with full dignity from within the comfort of my own home through the Postal Ballot method. I'm so grateful to the entire team that has worked to ensure that this could happen. Every safety and privacy consideration was provided to me and I'm thoroughly satisfied.

Thank you so much!"

ballot option in the recently held State Legislative Assembly Elections 2021 had just one thing to say, that the facility was very helpful and had been the best way by which they were included in the process of democracy. Murali Krishnan T M, a person with more than 90% disability due to multiple sclerosis expressed his happiness in exercising postal ballot, saying that only because of this facility, he was able to vote after many years. This lecturer of Electronics at Institute of Human Resource Development, Kasargod, Kerala, who had been unable to attend his work since 2008 June due to his degenerating health condition is overwhelmed to have exercised the secret ballot with dignity at his own residence.





# Guiding Principles

**कौन कहता है हमें  
नहीं है मंज़िलों का अंदाज़ ?**

डॉ. अरुणिमा सिन्हा (पद्मश्री, एवरेस्ट पर्वतारोही)

**हर मत हो शामिल**

इलेक्शन दिवस पर हर बूथ में होगा कुछ खास इंतज़ाम ताकि हर किसी के लिए मतदान करना हो आसान. मन बनाइए, आगे आइए, वोट कीजिए.

हैल्पलाइन 1950

रैंप एवं व्हीलचेयर  
ब्रेल सहित ईवीएम  
यातायात सुविधा  
सांकेतिक भाषा  
विशेष सव्यसेवी  
मतदाता हैल्पलाइन

1950



**T**he essence of democracy lies in inclusion of all the communities. Representation can be considered to be complete only if the voices of all the communities is heard and included.

The issue of inclusion in electoral participation is discussed in a number of specific human rights documents such as the 1965 UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD), the 1979 UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the 2006 UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) etc. The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities laid the initial guidelines.

**The main aim of voter education is to provide all the requisite information for effective and efficient electoral participation by all constituents to achieve the desired objectives of universal adult suffrage.**

While the CRPD is the primary benchmark for assessing the political rights of persons with disabilities, the right to participate in political public life is firmly instantiated in the foundational instruments comprising the human rights legal framework.

### **>> UN CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES, 2006 (CRPD)**

#### **Article 21: Freedom of expression and opinion, and access to information**

States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to ensure that persons with disabilities can exercise the right to freedom of expression and opinion, including the freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas on an equal basis with others and through all forms of communication of their choice, as defined in article 2 of the present Convention, including by:

- (a) Providing information intended for the general public to persons with disabilities in accessible formats and technologies appropriate to different kinds of disabilities in a timely manner and without additional cost;
- (b) Accepting and facilitating the use of sign languages, Braille, augmentative and alternative communication, and all other accessible means, modes and formats of communication of their choice by persons with disabilities in official interactions;



- (c) Urging private entities that provide services to the general public, including through the Internet, to provide information and services in accessible and usable formats for persons with disabilities;
- (d) Encouraging the mass media, including providers of information through the Internet, to make their services accessible to persons with disabilities;
- (e) Recognizing and promoting the use of sign languages.



A stakeholder casts her vote at a mock Polling Station during the National Consultation

### Article 29: Participation in political and public life

States Parties shall guarantee to persons with disabilities political rights and the opportunity to enjoy them on an equal basis with others, and shall undertake:

- (a) To ensure that persons with disabilities can effectively and fully participate in political and public life on an equal basis with others, directly or through freely chosen representatives, including the right and opportunity for persons with disabilities to vote and be elected, inter alia, by:
  - (i) Ensuring that voting procedures, facilities and materials are appropriate, accessible and easy to understand and use;
  - (ii) Protecting the right of persons with disabilities to vote by secret ballot in elections and public referendums without intimidation, and to stand for elections, to effectively hold office and perform all public functions at all levels of government, facilitating the use of assistive and new technologies where appropriate;
- (iii) Guaranteeing the free expression of the will of persons with disabilities as electors and to this end, where necessary, at their request, allowing assistance in voting by a person of their own choice;
- (b) To promote actively an environment in which persons with disabilities can effectively and fully participate in the conduct of public affairs, without discrimination and on equal basis with others, and encourage their participation in public affairs, including:
  - (i) Participation in non-governmental organizations and associations concerned with the public and political life of the country, and in the activities and administration of political parties;
  - (ii) Forming and joining organizations of persons with disabilities to represent persons with disabilities at international, national, regional and local levels.



The provisions contained in CRPD specify the mandate for inclusion and special attention to PwDs in terms of equal access. There are several other international treaties and agreements which support the inclusion of the PwDs.

### » WHO ON PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

The World Health Organization (WHO) has estimated that 15 percent of the world's population has a disability, with 80 percent of these persons living in developing countries. PwDs may also include various ethnic, religious, socio-economic and gender groups. Elections should provide them an

equal opportunity, with other citizens, to exercise their preferences and shape up the relevant political outcomes.

The mandate of the UN bodies coupled with the enabling country legislations and the support from the EMBs for participation in the electoral process has made a substantial impact in removal of barriers to inclusion. Pioneering work has been done by international organizations, such as UNDP, WHO, NDI, IFES etc., to support inclusion and equal access through targeted voter education programs in many countries. Technology can help improve access to the voting process as demonstrated by the practice followed by many countries.

### » VOTER EDUCATION FOR GREATER INCLUSION OF ALL CITIZENS

The main aim of voter education is to provide all the requisite information for effective and efficient electoral participation by all constituents to achieve the desired objectives of universal adult suffrage. While many categories of voters are covered under the general or formal voter education programs, there are

**Article 325 provides that no person shall be ineligible for inclusion in the electoral roll on the grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex or anyone of these.**

Release of braille voter guide by the Commission and senior officers





Ramp for Persons with Disabilities



EVM VVPAT sensitisation

special groups which need strategically well designed and a focused outreach and special campaigns to receive voter information, facilitation and motivation to participate. Efficacy and efficiency of any voter education program lies in effectively reaching out to such special groups also. Voter Education outreaches and campaigns should address and motivate inter alia the PwD voters for maximization of participation and voter turnouts. Media, Civil Society organizations may be involved as important stakeholders in voter education outreach for inclusion of such special groups.

### » SAFEGUARDS PROVIDED IN THE CONSTITUTION OF INDIA

Article 324 of the Constitution provides for the Election Commission, its powers and functions for maintenance of the Electoral Roll and conduct of elections in a free and fair manner. Article 325 provides that no person shall be ineligible for inclusion in the electoral roll on the grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex or anyone of these. Article 326 provides - Elections to the House of the People and to the Legislative Assembly of every State shall be on the basis of adult

**Media, Civil Society organizations may be involved as important stakeholders in voter education outreach for inclusion of such special groups.**

suffrage; Every citizen of India not less than eighteen years of age on such date as may be fixed in that behalf by law and is not otherwise disqualified and shall be entitled to be registered as a voter at any such election.

Provisions under Rule 49N of the Conduct of Election Rules, 1961, ECI guidelines, and Supreme Court orders directly address the issue of assistance to persons with disabilities. Under Rule 49N, if owing to blindness or other physical infirmities an elector is unable to recognise the symbol on the EVM or unable to record vote by





Pick and drop facility for Persons with Disabilities on Poll Day

Permanent ramps to be provided in all public buildings where polling stations are located. Full facility should be provided for such electors to take their wheelchair inside the polling station. Where permanent ramps have not been provided, temporary ramps have to be provided.

Sufficient publicity to be given well in advance in print and electronic media about the availability of facilities so that the persons with disabilities are aware of the facilities beforehand, and are thus encouraged going and exercising their franchise.

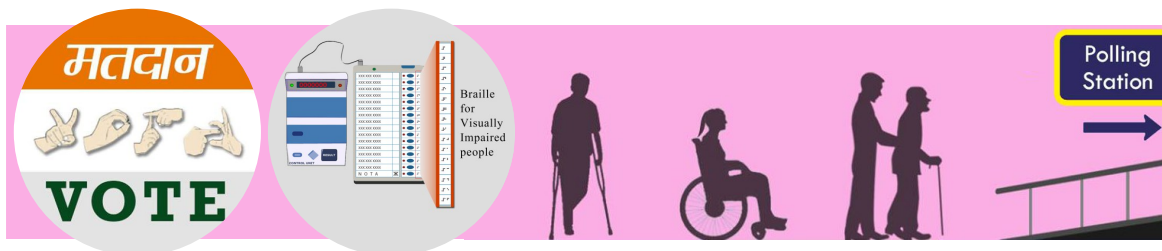
Observers should also ensure that such facilities are given; the absence of such facilities should be notified to the respective Government for remedial/future action.

## » THE RIGHTS OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES ACT, 2016

Section 11 of Chapter II of the Act (RIGHTS AND ENTITLEMENTS) talks about accessibility in voting stating that the Election Commission of India and the State Election Commissions shall ensure that all polling stations are accessible to persons with disabilities and all materials related to the electoral process are easily understandable by and accessible to them.

pressing the appropriate button thereon, the presiding officer shall permit the elector to take with him a companion of not less than eighteen years of age to the voting compartment for recording the vote on his behalf and in accordance with his wishes.

Polling personnel are to be given appropriate directions and sensitized through training classes about the special needs of the disabled and to be courteous and to provide necessary support to them at the polling station.





# Legislative Initiatives



**कौन कहता है हमारी  
आवाज़ किसी को सुनाइ नहीं देती ?**

खिज़र तारिक (अभिनेता)



रैप एवं  
कीलचेयर



ब्रेल सहित  
ईवीएम



यातायात  
सुविधा



सांकेतिक  
भाषा



विशेष  
सर्व्यसेवी



मतदाता  
हेल्पलाइन

इलेक्शन दिवस पर हर बूथ में होगा  
कुछ खास इंतज़ाम ताकि हर किसी के  
लिए मतदान करना हो आसान.  
मन बनाइए, आगे आइए, वोट कीजिए.

**हर मत  
हो शामिल**



हेल्पलाइन 1950



Inclusion and participation are the bedrock of a strong democracy. Hence, to uphold the spirit of free and fair elections, the Commission is committed to building equal access framework for Persons with Disabilities (PwDs), supported by the fundamentals of responsiveness, respect, and dignity to enhance their confidence. Initiatives for enhanced facilitation and improved services to augment their electoral participation, are consistently undertaken by the Commission.

**In a circular issued on March 12, 2016 and September 7, 2016, the commission directed mapping of PwDs, system sensitization & training, auxiliary polling stations with better facilitation, involvement of stakeholders and specific SVEEP activities regarding ease of registration and voting for PwDs.**

Over the years, the Commission issued various instructions from time to time to facilitate the entire electoral process (from enrollment to voting), accessible to all including persons with disabilities and senior citizens. In a circular issued on March 12, 2016 and September 7, 2016, the commission directed mapping of PwDs, system sensitization & training, auxiliary polling stations with better facilitation, involvement of stakeholders and specific SVEEP activities regarding ease of registration and voting for PwDs.

A two-day National Consultation on Accessible Elections was organized on July 03-04, 2018 in New Delhi with the participation of more than 50 Civil Society Organizations, Chief Electoral Officers of States/UTs besides members of National Political Parties, Ministries and Government of India. Subsequently, the Commission launched a Strategic Framework on July 4, 2018, concluding the National Consultation on Accessible elections.

## **>> ACCESSIBLE ELECTION GUIDELINES**

A dedicated section for Accessibility measures has been set up in the Commission to ensure that the measures for accessibility are monitored from time to time. Following are the major objectives of Accessible Elections:

### **A. Ease of Registration for Persons with Disabilities:**

Preliminary Data shall be collected by



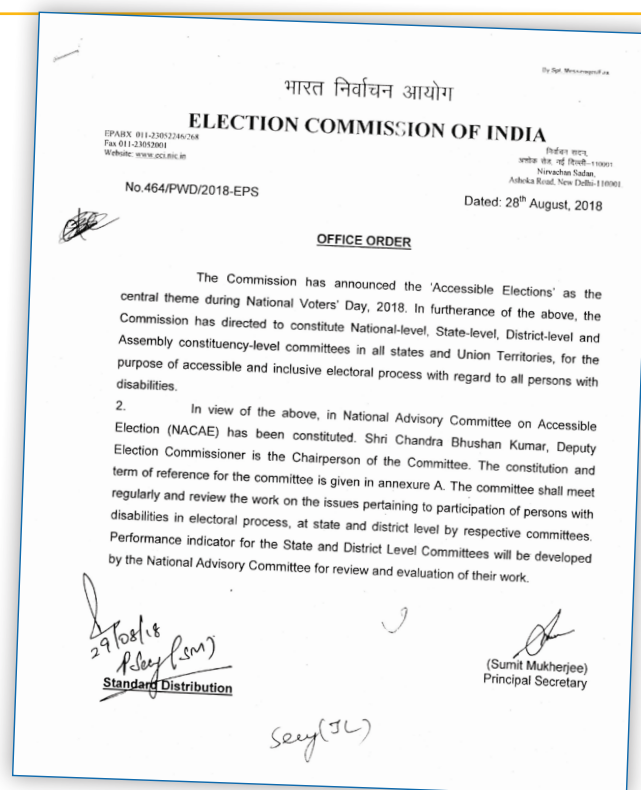
every state with the help of Census, Social Justice & Empowerment Department & Women and Child Development. A separate Polling wise list of Persons with Disabilities indicating the type of disability shall be prepared from the voter list. Database on PwDs, identified through mapping or initial voter registration, shall be efficiently and effectively used for follow-up steps in the electoral process and monitoring system, for feedback, evaluation and consolidation.

### B. Identification of Eligible PwD Citizens and Marking in E-Roll Database:

- i. Mapping of PwD electors to be done at Polling Station level as directed vide Commission Letter no 464/1NST/2016/EPS dated 12th March 2016 and 464/1NST/PwD/2016/EPS dated May 2018.
- ii. Ensure 'Disability Coordinators' are appointed at District and Assembly Constituency level as directed vide letter no 464/1NST/PwD/2018-EPS. BLO registers to be checked and tallied for field verification of available data.

### C. Facilitation to the Eligible PwD citizens

- i. The District Monitoring Committee on Accessible Election (DMCAE) and Assembly Constituency Committee on Accessible Election (ACCAE) should meet periodically to review and ensure implementation of ECI's instructions on accessibility.
- ii. Sensitization of polling and security personnel to be done based on the needs of PwD voters. (Letter No. 491/ECI/LET/FUNC/SVEEP-II/PwD/2018) MatdataSahayataKendras/Voter Facilitation Centres/Common



- Service Centers be equipped to cater to persons with disabilities.
- iii. Facility to seek wheelchair and other assistance by PwD voters be available in advance through Voter Helpline 1950, online system, or a mobile app.
- iv. Braille EPICs issued to Blind electors to facilitate them.
- v. Ensure arrangements are made for issue of Voter Slip in Braille and Voter Guide in Braille to blind electors.

### D. Dissemination of Information to Stakeholders, Political Parties, Election Machinery, Media & Electors.

- i. Ensure adequate voter awareness and education materials are available in accessible formats, down to the booth level. (Letter No. 491/ECI/LET/FUNC/SVEEP-II/PwD/2018)
- ii. Electoral Literacy Clubs are set up at identified institutes catering



to Persons with Disabilities. 'ChunavPathshala' established at all Polling Station level to be equipped to cater to requirements of persons with disabilities. (letter No. 491/ ELC/LET/FUNC/SVEEP-III/ EL/ChunavPathshala/2019)

#### **E. Environment building, SVEEP Activities for Registration**

- i. Awareness campaigns to be carried out targeting persons with disabilities. Disseminating information to them that having one's name in the Voter List is a pre-requisite for casting a vote.
- ii. National/Regional icons to be appointed from among persons with disabilities and used optimally for engagement purposes. (Letter No. 491/ECI/LET/FUNC/SVEEP-II/ PwD/2018).

#### **F. Ease of Voting for PwD electors**

- i. Dummy Ballot sheets to be printed in Braille in regional language and supplied to polling stations.

Presiding and Polling officers be adequately briefed on the use to facilitate a blind voter on poll day. The same as given vide (letter no 51/8/1NST/2018-EMS dated 28th June 2018).

- ii. **Ensure Volunteers are provided** at Polling Station to facilitate PwD voters as well as senior citizens.
- iii. **Assured Minimum Facilities at Polling Stations:** Ensure physical access and facilities at Polling station including permanent ramps with appropriate gradient and proper parking facility at the polling station as given vide letter no 464/ INST/ 2016/EPs dated March 12, 2016 and September 7, 2016. A detailed checklist for resuming accessibility at all Polling Stations was also created and shared with states.

A detailed checklist for resuming accessibility at all Polling Stations was also created and shared with states



## ACCESSIBILITY CHECKLIST FOR POLLING STATIONS

ACCESSIBILITY CHECKLIST FOR POLLING STATIONS				
	District:	AC:		
	Polling Station Information:	S.No:		
	PS Name:			
	Verifying Officer 1:	Name:	Designation:	Mob:
	Verifying Officer 2:	Name:	Designation:	Mob:
	BLO details:		Verification status:	Mob:
	Accompanying CSO Rep:		CSO name:	Mob:
S.no	INDICATOR	STATUS (pl tick)		DETAILS
	YES	NO	on process	
1	Dedicated parking for voters with disabilities			
2	Barricades not obstructing way to any polling booth			
3	Leveled pathway /ramp (1:10) at main entrance			
6	Clearance of debris, water, sand, etc., at poll location			
7	min 1.5 m wide pathway from gate to poll booth			
8	good lighting inside polling booth			
9	Height of voting table 700m - 850m			





S.no	INDICATOR YES	STATUS (pl tick)		DETAILS
		NO	on process	
10	1.5m wh.ch mobility space around voting compartment			
11	EVM stand available / deployed for slanting view			
12	leveled surface / approach to toilet			
14	low wash basin inside / outside toilet			
15	Drinking water at seat height			
16	Help desk for PwD			
17	Signages/Posters inside PS/PB			
18	Sign language interpreter@ control room			
19	Wheelchairs			
20	Braille candidate sheet & Braille labelled EVMs			
21	Total No. of Persons with disabilities identified:			
	Physical disability:                      Visual disability:                      HI/Deaf: Learning Disability:                      Others:			
22	No of Senior Citizens of age 80 and above:			
23	No of Women in age group 20 - 40 yrs:                      Creche facility:			
24	No of wheelchair requests received:                      No. of Wheelchairs arranged:			
25	No of transport requests received:                      Details of transport arranged:			
26.a	Details of Booth volunteers BV - Assigned numbers:                      institution details:			
26.b	Status of Volunteers training by CSOs:                      CSO details:			

- iv. **Free Transport Facility:** Transport facility is provided to PwDs and their assistants on poll day as given vide letter no 464/1NST/PwD/2018-EPS dated 27th September 2018.
- v. **Postal Ballot Facilities** for Absentee Voters of essential services, Senior Citizens of more than 80 years and marked PwD electors. (letter No ECI/PN/101/2019 dated 28.10.2019)
- vi. Priority Access shall be ensured for Persons with Disabilities.
- vii. Polling personnel briefed about the provisions of Rule 49 N of the Conduct of Election Rules, 1961, for permitting a companion to accompany a visually impaired / infirm elector;
- viii. Electors with speech & hearing impairment are given special care as in the case of other disabled persons;
- ix. Poll personnel are trained and sensitized regarding special need of PwDs; and
- x. Auxiliary Polling Stations to set up for Person with Disabilities.

## » APPOINTMENT OF DISABILITY COORDINATORS AT AC, DISTRICT AND STATE:

Disability Coordinators shall be appointed at State, District and AC to ensure implementation of various directions of the Commission on Accessible Elections.

### A. System Sensitization and Training

- i. Special Training to sensitize the Election Machinery and basic sign language training to be imparted to the Poll Officials.
- ii. All officers/Employees, police officials etc. involved in the election process need to be

clearly instructed on the facilities to be provided to Persons with Disabilities.

### B. Involvement with Stakeholders:

- i. Regular consultation to be conducted with stakeholder's partners at State Steering Committee on Accessible Elections (SSCAE), District Monitoring Committee on Accessible Elections (DMCAE) and AC level Committee on Accessible Elections (ACAE).
- ii. A National Advisory Committee on Accessible Elections constituted at the national level to review and evaluate the work of Committees at State, District and AC level.
- iii. Committee to advise the commission on measures to be taken for accessible and inclusive election process for persons with Disabilities.

### C. Accessible Voter Education and Electoral Participation:

- i. Customized voter education to cater to the different requirements of PwDs, to be undertaken to empower them for electoral participation.
- ii. Wide Publicity through various modes to motivate Persons with Disabilities and sensitize their family and friends, to be ensured. All communication materials used, should be easily accessible.
- iii. Communication materials to be prepared in consultation with the stakeholders. Special enrolment drives to be carried out to ease accessibility for Persons with Disabilities.
- iv. Special EVM & VVPAT sensitization camps to be organized to educate



and motivate Persons with Disabilities.

- v. Renowned and non-Partisan Person with Disabilities shall be engaged as District and State Icons and shall be included in the SVEEP Programs.
- vi. SVEEP Events and other activities shall be made accessible with Sign Language Interpreter, Ramp and Wheelchair facility etc., catering to the needs of Persons with Disabilities.
- vii. A single poster detailing facility for PwD voters may be provided at every PS on poll day for convenience of voters as well as for ready recall for Polling Officials.
- viii. Persons with Disabilities and students shall be motivated to take part in Electoral Literacy Clubs activities in Schools.

#### D. Special Provisions for PwDs in Electoral Literacy Clubs (ELCs)

ECI is committed in its efforts towards the inclusion of electoral literacy through the medium of Electoral Literacy Clubs (ELCs) in educational institutions which target students in the age group of 14-17 years, the future

voters of the country. ELCs have been also established in colleges targeting 'new voters' and rural communities to target school drop-outs.

Through ELCs, members learn about the what, where, when and how of the entire electoral process, understand and come to appreciate the value of their vote.

A core value of the ELCs is inclusivity, be in terms of gender, marginalized populations or Persons with Disabilities. Talking specifically about the latter, each ELC resource guide, which serves as a handbook for the convener, consists of the following guidelines which are to be necessarily followed in the clubs. The ELCs are thus be inclusive entities that must make every attempt to ensure the participation of students with disabilities –

- i. The Convener shall make efforts to promote inclusion and sensitize members about the same.
- ii. S/he must try to ensure that the venue for ELC activity is easily accessible.
- iii. If a student with hearing impairment is attending the meeting, a sign language interpreter shall be made available for their convenience (the interpreter can be a companion that the student already has).
- iv. Any activity conducted in the Club should not leave behind students with disabilities and must encourage them to participate.

The ELC activities are developed in a way to ensure inclusivity.

- i. Various floor games like Ludo on accessible voting and Snakes &

Person with Disabilities enjoying ELC games





# Breaking The Barriers: Making Elections Accessible

## ECI Initiatives



### Assured Minimum Facilities (AMF)

AMF constitutes Provision for ramp, drinking water, adequate furniture, proper lighting, proper signage, help-desk, and toilet. This effort was taken to ensure wholesome and constructive participation of Persons with Disabilities and their active engagement in the Electoral process.

Following are the specific guidelines:



SIGNAGE

Parking for Persons with Disabilities (PwDs) coming on wheelchairs or other vehicles (to be visible from the road)



HELP DESK

Tables of 4' x 2 1/2' with provision for 3 people to sit - one BLO with booth slips, two NSS / NSC Volunteers (1 male 1 female) to guide and assist the voters (especially the PwDs) entering the polling station



RAMP

Ramps should have an inclination ratio of 1:10 and not more than 1:14  
Firm hand rails to be provided which should not be of shaky material  
In case there are stairs to reach polling station, ramp should also be provided there



TOILETS

Whether separate toilets for Male and Female voters available  
Whether toilets are PwD-friendly.  
If running water facility is not there what arrangement has been done?



DRINKING WATER

Whether there is facility of drinking water



SEPARATE ENTRY AND EXIT

Whether separate entrance and exit is provided in the polling station



LIGHTING

Electricity connection with two plug points  
Minimum 1 fan  
2-3 tube lights



FURNITURE

Is adequate furniture available?  
Height of the table on which the Ballot Unit is kept should be disabled-friendly  
Sufficient moving space around the table for wheel chairs



Ladders on an enlightened voter convey messages on facilitations for PwD voters such as availability of wheel chairs, ramps, braille signage, volunteers etc. at the polling station.

- ii. The activity on Election Simulation introduces the concept of priority based entry to polling stations and preference given to disabled voters in the queue.
- iii. Another interactive game, Step Up, urges its participants to empathize with the character of a PwD woman and feel the barriers faced by the character during voting, sensitizing the players in the process.

All the activities also hold the element of motivation for every Indian citizen to exercise their right to vote.

In a recent PwD State consultation held in Gujarat, the participants, especially PwDs, were encouraged to play the games to get the feel of it. The State Level Master Trainer introduced the rules of two games - Snakes & Ladders and Maze Game - and volunteer participants played them with child-like enthusiasm. All other participants surrounded the panel and applauded the players. The participants enjoyed themselves and remarked that the games were indeed engaging methods of learning with fun.

### **>> USE OF TECHNOLOGY TO FACILITATE PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES: THIS ESSENTIALLY SHOULD INCLUDE:**

- i. User friendly websites for PwDs of different categories.
- ii. Accessible Technological Tools for facilitating PwDs of different categories

to cast their vote.

- iii. Solutions for assisting voters with disabilities through technological innovation, research and integration.
- iv. Accessible Media including Social Media Communications.
- v. Use of PwD App or any other regional application to be encouraged among Persons with Disabilities.

Co-operation of Political Parties: Political Parties to be motivated to display publicity material, manifesto, appeal etc. in audio-video, in Braille as well as sign language as per the requirement of Persons with Disabilities.

### **>> UTILIZING THE SERVICES OF VOLUNTEERS**

Voluntary and other organizations working for Persons with Disabilities like Non-Government organizations (NGOs), Community Based Organization (CSOs), Disabled Persons' Organizations (DPOs) and Resident Welfare Associations (RWAs) etc. shall be motivated to help in imparting information regarding election process to PwDs in a non-political, non-partisan manner. Assistance to be sought from this organization to provide various facilities to PwDs.

### **>> CONTENT FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES**

Specific accessible formats to be used like; Closed Caption, Sign Language Windows etc., for making the creative content accessible to Persons with different types of disabilities. Basic accessible formats to be defined and shared with the States for uniformity and consistency. Annexure may be referred to for different Accessibility formats, their creation and usage, and regarding the basic terminology to refer to persons with disabilities.

Media Type	Accessible For
Print	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Persons with Blindness and Low Vision</li> <li>• Persons with Intellectual Disability, Low Literacy Levels, Hearing Impairment</li> </ul>
Audio	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Persons with Hearing Impairment</li> </ul>
Video	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Persons with Hearing Impairment</li> <li>• Persons with Blindness and Low Vision</li> </ul>

### Formats for Accessible Communication

Accessible formats, sometimes called alternate formats, are ways of presenting printed, written, or audio or video material, to make them available to Persons with different types of disabilities.

#### Types of Accessible Formats

##### A. Print Media:

- i.. Braille: a tactile writing system used by people who are visually impaired. When preparing information to be converted to braille, keep the document layout as simple as possible for easier transcription. *Documents such as voter guides and PwD brochures to be printed in Braille text in appropriate numbers.*
- ii. Large Print: 18-point font or larger with suitable colour contrast.
- iii. Large-print copies of books, signs, and other media can be generated.
- iv. Simplified Language – Simple words, smaller sentences, helpful for people with a cognitive or intellectual disability or low English language literacy levels.

- v. Choose a design with a simple layout, with a clear contrast between the background color and the text.

##### B. Audio/ Video Formats:

- i. Audio – audio file, CD or podcast. This format is most useful if the information can be read from beginning to end without requiring referring to other parts of the document. Books, wherever possible can be converted into audio books, inputs may be sought from CSOs involved in SSCAE and DMCAE for same.
- ii. Sign Language: Sign Language interpretation window in all video spots. Placement of the sign language windows should also be suitable on the screen.
- iii. Closed Captions: Videos with subtitles as well as closed captions, also explaining the visual scene, besides the dialogues.
- iv. Audio description of the videos.

##### C. Computer Files and Accessible Web

**Content:** People can read digital text files and accessible web content using screen readers. Screen reader users can read information in Microsoft Word or HTML files (no scanned files to be uploaded), emails, text messages, and text on websites that comply with WCAG 2.0 guidelines.

##### D. Websites and social media content:

The Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG 2.1) are designed to make websites universally accessible. The minimum requirement for government content is Level AA.

- i. For example, there is an accessible colour palette that outlines the colours that are accessible for both





AA and AAA standards.

- ii. Social Media Content:
  - provide transcripts for videos (for example on YouTube)
  - link to accessible web content
  - keep the language simple
  - caption video and consider live captioning
  - describe the content of photographs
  - give alternative text descriptions of the key data in maps, charts or graphs.

**E. Accessibility Tag:** Addition of Accessibility Tag in the normal publications/ transcripts providing information to the stakeholders on accessible versions available. A 'tag' provides standard and consistent wording to inform people with a disability that accessible formats, support and aids are available upon request.

- i. Tags should be placed on all publications, event invitations and websites (if not already fully accessible).
- ii. Avoid naming an individual as a contact point, except for specific events. Instead, try to use websites, email addresses and phone numbers that will remain current for a reasonable period.
- iii. The exact text and format of the tag may be tailored to suit your communication. However the tag must be clear and easy to read.
- iv. Sample accessibility tag to replicate in your publication: Contact us if you need this information in an accessible format. For example, large print or audio. Phone (insert standard departmental telephone) or email (insert departmental email address). You can also get formats

on our website ([www.eci.gov.in](http://www.eci.gov.in)).

N.B: For targeted communication, States/ UTs should determine the particular needs of target audience and the most effective method to reach them.

#### F. Accessible Social Media Campaign

- i. Provide alternate text for photographs and images. Alternate texts are brief text descriptions of an image's content that is displayed when an image is not visible on the page. Persons using screen readers will be able to hear the (alt) tag in place of the image.
- ii. Label images with descriptions of image content (e.g. if a photo shows a woman casting a ballot, then the alt text should say "woman casting a ballot") so that website users who are not able to see the image clearly are able to read or hear the description.
- iii. Any video posted on the website should have captions. If this is not possible, a transcript could be used as a second choice. This is an example of alt-text for an image.
- iv. Keep your content simple. Avoid using abbreviations so that screen readers can easily read the text.
- v. Capitalize each word within a hashtag, for compound words, or when several words are joined (e.g. PersonsWithDisabilities, NothingAboutUsWithoutUs).
- vi. Avoid using abbreviations so that screen readers can easily read the text.

#### NOTE

**Persons with Disabilities/Voters with Disabilities should be standard term for addressing this category of voters.**



# Lok Sabha Elections 2019: Good Practices

## कौन कहता है हमें सही गलत दिखाई नहीं देता ?

कोमल कुमारी (शतरंज की खिलाड़ी)



रैप एवं  
कीलचेयर



ब्रेल सहित  
ईवीएम



यातायात  
सुविधा



सांकेतिक  
भाषा



विशेष  
सर्व्यसेवी



मतदाता  
हेल्पलाइन

इलेक्शन दिवस पर हर बूथ में होगा  
कुछ खास इंतज़ाम ताकि हर किसी के  
लिए मतदान करना हो आसान.  
मन बनाइए, आगे आइए, वोट कीजिए.

**हर मत  
हो शामिल**



हेल्पलाइन 1950



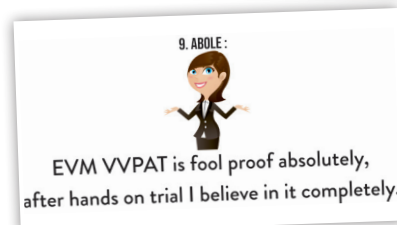
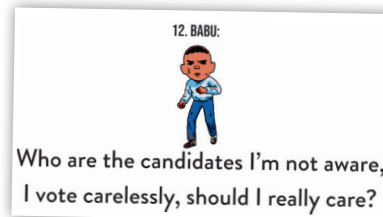
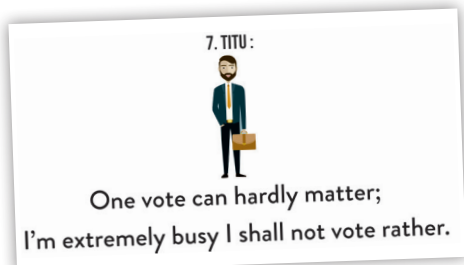


**L**ok Sabha Elections 2019 witnessed a wave of heightened awareness among the election machinery, the general public, persons with disabilities as well as the media about the need for accessible electoral process as well as specific facilitations enabled to ensure the same. Millions of officials and other stakeholders worked tirelessly and made Lok Sabha Election 2019 a monumental success. Approximately 63.8 lakh PwD voters were mapped in Lok Sabha Election 2019.

Good Practices for accessible elections adopted during Lok Sabha Elections 2019 to are enumerated herewith:

### 1 **Mat Disha, an educational game**

An educational game on ethical voting called *Mat Disha* (*Mat* means Vote & *Disha* means Direction) was developed by Goa. The game was designed in English, Hindi and Regional language apart from being made in an inclusive format for PwDs. A child friendly model of EVM was also designed with a cardboard dummy balloting unit to familiarise the ELC members with the functioning of EVMs.



### 2 **Taxi provides free pick & drop facility to PwDs**

In the state of Karnataka and Chandigarh, transportation was provided free of cost to Persons with Disabilities (PwDs) in collaboration with cab companies like Ola & Uber to ensure better facilitation.

### 3 **Special training sessions for election officials**

Sikkim organized special training sessions to sensitize all officials involved in the election process on the needs of Persons with Disabilities (PwDs) to ensure a hassle free experience for the voters.

### 4 **Sign Language App created**

Punjab developed a Sign Language App - to facilitate polling for people



with hearing disabilities. Essentially, the Voter Helpline App was re-created with video clips in sign language for better facilitation.

## 5 Sports event & Wheel Chair rallies for PwDs

In the state of Chandigarh, a cricket match was organised for Persons with Disabilities (PwDs) along with wheel chair rallies to boost the morale of voters with disabilities.



## 6 Awareness camps for PwDs

Multiple Voter Awareness camps were conducted in Telangana on important topics like Sign Language, Assured Minimum Facilities (AMF) at the polling booths etc. Moreover, campaign material developed in Braille language was distributed for the ease of visually challenged voters.

## 7 Training for the use of PwD App

In the state of Tripura, all District and AC level IT Nodal Officers were provided training on the PwD App in order to ensure effective use of the application.

## 8 Online Bookings of AMF at polling booths

In Tamil Nadu, the facility of online wheelchair booking & queue management was made available through a website to facilitate voters with disabilities.



## 9 Saksham Etawah-Logo

Uttar Pradesh created Saksham Etawah-a wheelchair logo using 35,000 thumb imprints of citizens! This was a great initiative to sensitise people towards the needs of PwDs.

## 10 BLO sensitisation workshop

In the state of Nagaland, a workshop by special educators was conducted to sensitize BLOs on all matters related to PwDs and further enhance their capabilities in identifying and facilitating PwDs.





## 11 Magnifying Sheets available at Polling Booths

To make elections accessible and hassle free, Delhi made Magnifying Sheets available at every polling booth for better facilitation of electors with low vision.

## 12 Mapping of PwDs in consultation with BLOs

A joint initiative was taken up with the social welfare department of Assam to conduct comprehensive mapping of PwDs in consultation with *Chandraprabha Baideus*, *Divyang Sarothis* and BLOs in order to facilitate the voters with disabilities for a barrier-free and inclusive Accessible Election. Mapping included moral boosting, counselling, ethical and informed voting and escort services during the poll day etc.

## 13 Sugamya app for PwDs

Madhya Pradesh created an app called Sugamya for encouraging PwD voters, which helped in the registration of 4.5 lakhs PwD voters, 4.2 lakhs pregnant women and 5.05 lakhs old age voters through its portal. Queue-Jump Passes were distributed to all who registered through the app.

## 14 International Day of PwDs celebrated

Maharashtra celebrated International Day of Persons with Disabilities (PwDs) with great enthusiasm in all districts. Various events, competitions and activities were organised and PwD voters came out in large numbers to celebrate.

## 15 Visually impaired music band as State Icons

'Light after Dark', Meghalaya's first visually impaired music band was identified and deployed as the State Icon, giving impetus to the participation of PwDs in the electoral process.



## 16 Dedicated Volunteers for PwDs

In the State of Delhi, volunteers for voter assistance were deployed in all polling stations. The volunteers comprised mainly of school children between the age group of 15 to 17 years.

## 17 Taxi coupons were provided to PwD voters

In the state of Mizoram, Government vehicles were assigned for

transportation of PwDs on Poll Day, and PwD voters were given the facility of Taxi Coupons for easier facilitation on Poll Day.

## 18 Sensitised Ethnic Community Leaders spread awareness

In its effort to spread voter awareness upto the grass root level, Sikkim organized a sensitization program for the leaders of ethnic communities of the State and the NGOs working for Persons with Disabilities (PwDs). The main objective of this was to disseminate correct information about election procedures and processes through community leaders so that there is no room for the spread of false information and rumours.

## 19 PwD kit distributed

A PwD Kit with Voter Assistance Guides (regular as well as in Braille), Posters in Braille and Voter Slips (in Braille/ normal - as required) were distributed to Voters with Disabilities well before the Polling Day in Maharashtra.

## 20 Adjustable furniture for accessible elections

With an aim to facilitate the PwD voters, Lok Sabha 2019 witnessed numerous new initiatives. In many states, adjustable Furniture was used in numerous polling stations to make a way for the wheelchair and also a specific table height was used to ensure accessibility to EVM for Dwarf voters.

## 21 Committee for Accessible Elections at National & State Level

To make elections accessible & hassle free has been a priority of Election Commission of India. Committees has been set up at National as well as State level to work with the stakeholders at various levels, analyse

the challenges and strategise on the way ahead to ensure due facilitation of PwD voters at the Polling Stations.

## 22 Door to Door Registration for PwDs

To facilitate Persons with Disabilities (PwDs) and motivate them to come out and participate in the electoral process, Booth Level Officer (BLO) conducted door-to-door registration. Until now, 68.28 lakh PwDs have been registered so far.



## 23 Assured Minimum Facilities at each Polling Station

Assured minimum facilities (AMF) constitutes provision for ramp, drinking water, adequate furniture, proper lighting, proper signage, helpdesk, and toilet. This effort was taken to ensure wholesome and constructive participation of each voter. These measures ensured active engagement in the Electoral process especially for the Persons with Disabilities (PwDs) and senior citizens.





## 24 Sensitisation Training of Election Officials

Sensitisation training of Election Officials regarding the special needs of Persons with Disabilities was conducted across the country in Election Offices. This included, basic sign Language Sensitisation, Etiquettes and manner training, how to make campaign material in accessible format were also discussed to ensure better facilitation of Voters with Disabilities.

## 25 Deployment of Sign Language Interpreters at PS

Sign Language Interpreters were deployed at Polling Stations to facilitate voters with a disability. A sign language poster has been distributed in offices and displayed at polling stations to aware people of the basic signs for communication.

## 26 Launch of Braille EPIC

During the National Consultation on Accessible Elections, Commission launched the facility of Braille EPIC (Electoral Photo Identity Card) for the blind voters. Ahead of Lok Sabha Elections 2019, Braille EPICs were distributed by the respective State Election Offices.



## 27 PwD Election Icons

## 28 National Campaign Films on Accessible Elections

## 29 Priority Access/ separate queue during polling

Persons with Disabilities and senior citizens were provided priority access/ separate queue at the polling station on the poll day. All possible steps were taken so as to ensure that PwDs/ senior citizens are not required to wait in the queue. Proper sitting arrangement too was provided.

## 30 PwD managed Polling Station

In many states, PwD managed Polling stations were set up. This meant that entire election personnel staff at the polling booth included Persons with Disabilities (PwDs). The aim is to empower PwD officials and encourage PwD electors to come out and participate in the electoral process in large numbers.

## 31 Divyang Sarathi and Divyang Dollis facilitate

Divyang Sarathi and Divyang Dollis were used to facilitate Persons with Disabilities (PwDs) and also senior citizens in the hilly areas of the country as the roads to the polling station are not accessible due to the mountainous terrain and other tough geographical conditions. Uttarakhand, Himachal, J& K among others facilitated PwDs and senior citizens through these.



# Accessible Initiatives by States/UTs

कौन कहता है हम  
छोड़ नहीं सकते हैं अपना निशान ?

जगन नाथ (पेंटर)



रैंप एवं  
व्हीलचेयर



ब्रेल सहित  
ईवीएम



यातायात  
सुविधा



सांकेतिक  
भाषा



विशेष  
सर्व्यसेवी



मतदाता  
हेल्पलाइन

इलेक्शन दिवस पर हर बूथ में होगा  
कुछ खास इंतज़ाम ताकि हर किसी के  
लिए मतदान करना हो आसान.  
मन बनाइए, आगे आइए, वोट कीजिए.

हर मत  
हो शामिल



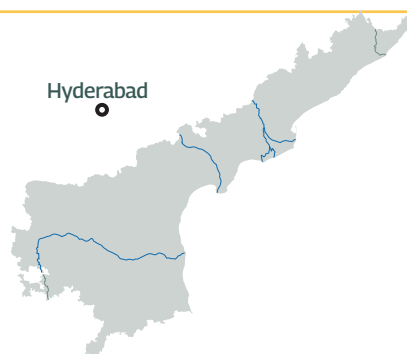
हेल्पलाइन 1950



STATE: **ANDHRA PRADESH**

REGISTERED ELECTORATE: **4,06,47,862**

REGISTERED PwDs: **5,31,730**



**L**ocated in the south-eastern coastal region of India, Andhra Pradesh is the seventh-largest state by area covering 162,975 km<sup>2</sup> and tenth-most populous state with 49,386,799 inhabitants. It is bordered by Telangana to the north-west, Chhattisgarh to the north, Odisha to the north-east, Tamil Nadu to the south, Karnataka to the west and the Bay of Bengal to the east.

### >> BACKGROUND

Several initiatives have been undertaken by the Election Commission of India in recent years to raise awareness about the importance of voting and participation in the election process by persons with disabilities.

As per the instructions of the Election Commission of India

- Separate polling station wise list of

**It was ensured that all polling stations are situated on the ground floor and ramps are made available at each and every polling station.**



Ajad Island-Mid Sea Voting

PwDs indicating the type of disability are prepared from the voter list.

- It was ensured that all polling stations are situated on the ground floor and ramps are made available at each and every polling station.
- Wheel Chairs are made available at every polling station location.
- All possible steps are taken to ensure that PwDs are not required to wait in queue to cast their vote.
- Braille facility is provided in the EVMs.
- Braille dummy ballot is provided at all polling stations.
- Postal Ballots were issued to PwDs flagged in the electoral roll who opted for the same as per Form 12d.
- Transport facility also provided to the voters to bring them from home to polling booths and back on the polling day.



STATE: **ARUNACHAL PRADESH**

REGISTERED ELECTORATE: **8,05,547**

REGISTERED PwDs: **3,608**



**A**runachal Pradesh in the Northeast was formed from the erstwhile North-East Frontier Agency region and became a state on 20 February 1987. It borders the states of Assam and Nagaland to the south and shares international borders with Bhutan in the west, Myanmar in the east, and a disputed border with China in the north.

## » BACKGROUND

The State Programme for Rehabilitation of Persons with Disabilities scheme is a state sector ongoing scheme implemented for the welfare and providing rehabilitation services to Disabled Persons of the state under Rights for Person with Disabilities Act, 2016.

## » INITIATIVES

- Polling station wise mapping of all PwD Citizens was done in their respective districts.
- All EROs and AEROs met personally with the PwDs of their jurisdiction to explain them about the facilities provided to them during registration and casting of votes.
- All BLOs were trained in Sign Language.
- Trained Volunteers were appointed polling station wise.
- Polling Parties were sensitized to facilitate PwD voters get priority during Elections.
- Special Campaigns were organized for

awareness of PwD voters for EVM & VVPAT familiarization through education materials. Welfare associations and NGOs were rolled to spread awareness. AMF were arranged but some polling stations located in the hilly terrain didn't have wheel chair facility.

- Volunteers in those regions, were deployed to assist the PwD voters. The polling booths where AMF doesn't exist, temporary arrangements were made with resources available like ramps constructed with wooden planks.

### I GOT INKED

In Lower Dibang Valley of Arunachal Pradesh, Yilly Meme was beaming with happiness to see the members of Accessible Election team who arrived at her home to escort and assist her for polling on April 11, 2019, in Lok Sabha election. She had given up hope on voting due to the barriers that she had to face to reach the polling station. Accessible Election team has left an indelible impression by drastically increasing the PwD voter's turnout. Lower Dibang Valley witnessed a PwD voter turnout of 92.06% as compared to the general voter turnout of 81.3% and out of the 126 registered PwD voters in the district, 116 PwD voters turned up to cast their vote.



STATE: **ASSAM**

REGISTERED ELECTORATE: **2,33,61,097**

REGISTERED PwDs: **1,43,023**



**A**ssam a state in North-East is known for its wildlife, archeological sites and tea plantations. In the west, Guwahati, Assam's largest city, houses silk bazaars and the hilltop Kamakhya Temple.

### >> **BACKGROUND**

In an effort towards social inclusion, 25,646 were registered PwDs in 1996.

### >> **INITIATIVES**

- DEO, Goalpara, Smti Varnali Deka, IAS launched a special App - "Divyaang Sarathi" App enabling voters with disabilities to request transportation from their respective locations to the Polling station. The App requires uploading of epic card and disability card for preferred pickup time for convenience of the PWD voters.
- DEO, Goalpara also released a SVEEP voting awareness video recorded in sign language for the deaf and dumb. This video urged the voters with disabilities of Goalpara to come out on April 06, 2021 and cast their votes.
- In sync with the ECI directions ensuring accessibility to the persons with disabilities wide, non-slippery pavements with ramps approaching the polling Station were created.
- Signage, pictures and enlarged text to guide voters towards polling station were widely displayed.
- Adequate number of wheelchairs were made available at the polling station.
- Separate entry for Persons with Disabilities and availability of ramps with proper gradient and safe handrails were ensured.
- Polling rooms were assigned at the ground floor else with elevators/ ramp that could accommodate wheelchairs and polling counters, desks, ballot sheets and EVMs were the wheelchair accessible height.
- Ballot Sheets and EVMs were in Braille.
- Special drive like rally, workshop and PwD Conclave were organized. DEOs were directed to ensure Wheel Chairs, Ramps, Poll Volunteers and other AMFs at all polling station. In addition to the above, iHelp, an initiative with CSOs was launched and Sishu Sarothi, an NGO working since 1987 was engaged to facilitate PwD voters.
- Prior to the General Elections to the Legislative Assembly of Assam-2021, Assam State Steering Committee on Accessible Elections (ASSCAE) was constituted with CEO, Assam as Chairperson. State Disability Coordinator was appointed. Special facilities were provided to PwD voters at Polling stations for inclusion of PwD voters in the Election process etc.
- Chief Electoral Officer's office and the websites of Chief Electoral Officer, Assam are made accessible to PwD voters. It was ensured that all offices of the District Election Officers have wheelchair facility for use by PwD



Ensuring strict compliance of all Covid norms during elections

voters.

- Assamese version of PwD App was developed.
- Postal ballot facility was made available for PwD & 80+ Voters.
- Collaboration with Civil Society Organizations working in the field of Persons with disabilities was done for offering better services
- All 33 number of Revenue & Administrative Districts had formed DMCAE before conduct of General Elections to Assam Legislative Elections, 2021. District Election Officers were directed to make necessary arrangement to include name of eligible voters with disabilities in the Electoral roll and to facilitate them in casting their vote without any difficulty.
- Minimum Two wheelchairs per Polling Station locations were made available at all polling stations. Sarva Shiksha Abhiyaan, Assam procured 8000 wheelchairs alongwith existing wheelchairs for use by PwD voters with locomotor disability.
- Covid norms were duly complied with proper sanitation by providing Covid

protective gear like N95 masks, face shield, hand sanitizer to all Election polling staffs. Facilitated vaccination of around 1.75 lakh Polling & Police personnel before the actual polling day.

- Facilitated Rapid Antigen Test of around 30000 counting Officials, candidates & counting agents at the time of counting of votes.

**আমি সবার ভোটের অধিকার**

**Now YOU CAN VOTE FROM HOME! THROUGH POSTAL BALLOT.**

For the first time, postal ballot will be available for **Differently Aabled Persons**

In case, voters of the above category want to cast their votes through postal ballot, then they can contact their respective BLO/RO to submit the application 12 (D) along with necessary certificate issued by the competent authority.

Last Date of Form Submission for Phase I | **6<sup>th</sup> March**

To know more, call our Toll Free Helpline **1950**

**#NoVoterLeftBehind**

Issued by Chief Electoral Officer, Assam





STATE: **BIHAR**

REGISTERED ELECTORATE: **7,52,98,449**

REGISTERED PwDs: **6,94,277**



The theme of General elections to Legislative Assembly, 2020 is Sahaj, Sugam and Surakshit Matdaan. SAHAJ indicates making each voter comfortable with easy use of EVM (Electronic Voting Machine)-VVPAT (Voter-Verified Paper Audit Trail) and overall election process. SUGAM indicates allround accessibility to all voters, with special consideration to PwD voters, Senior Citizens and those affected by COVID-19. SURAKSHIT indicates through safety measures related to COVID-19 pandemic for voters as well as election officials.

### >> INITIATIVES

CEO Bihar office adopted a 360-degree approach of awareness generation and information dissemination which included use of Print, Electronic, Social and Digital Media, massive campaign through posters/Banners/Matdata Jagrukta Rath and

traditional ways of publicity like Door-to-Door campaign, use of Community Radio etc. for ensuring active participation of PwD voters. 81-types of posters, 22-awareness audio clips, 16-awareness video clips in Hindi as well as in local languages/dialects were introduced for awareness generation with a special focus on PwD voters while developing SVEEP content.

- Accessibility Observers were appointed for ensuring AMFs on booths for PwDs. For ease of voters, publicity of online NVSP portal, PwD App, Voter Helpline App, c-VIGIL were taken up by all print, electronic and social media across the state.
- CEO office started regular monitoring on AMF through video conference and ERONET reports. SVEEP action plan for General Legislative Assembly Elections 2020 had planned massive use of JEEVIKA workers, Anganwadi workers, Mid-Day Meal Workers, SHG members, NCC, NSS, NYKS, Red Cross Society, Scout and Guide, PwDs organizations etc. for facilitation of PwD voters and ensuring their active participation during whole election process.
- 12564 wheelchairs were provided at identified polling stations, where the numbers of PwD voters were significantly higher. More than 60 thousand volunteers from Scout and Guide, NCC, etc. were deployed

**Sahaj, Sugam, Surakshit Matdaan was the election theme for General Elections to Legislative Assembly 2020.**



Special Arrangements for Persons with Disabilities

to assist PwD voters on polling day across state.

- Instructions for displaying sign language and Braille script in Hindi, English and regional dialect were given.
- Persons with disabilities were given priority at polling stations and they could enter the same without waiting in the queue.
- More than 12 lakh Postal Ballot 12-D Forms were distributed and postal ballot facility is given after scrutiny.
- Through MATDAN app all relevant details of Postal Ballot for absentee voters were collected and compiled for monitoring.

These collaborative efforts resulted in a judicious and effective utilization of available resources which bolstered the active participation of PwD voters in entire election process. In the times of COVID-19 pandemic, CEO Bihar office successfully conducted the elections involving over 73 million electors, recording a higher voter

turnout compared to 2015 assembly elections, which is indeed a remarkable feat.

### I GOT INKED

Biologically, Sabah and Farah may have been a pair of conjoined twins. But they have a mind of their own that yearns for recognition as two distinct identities.

For the first time, during Lok Sabha election 2019, the conjoined sisters were recognized as separate persons by the Election Commission of India and allowed to cast their independent votes. This landmark decision was taken at polling station number 97, Samanpura in Digha Legislative Assembly, Patna, on May 19, 2019.

It was a 'dream come true' moment when they were recognized as two separate citizens of the country who enjoy their right to vote equally.



STATE: **CHHATTISGARH**

REGISTERED ELECTORATE: **1,93,50,713**

REGISTERED PwDs: **1,36,476**



**C**hhattisgarh is a heavily forested state in central India known for its temples and waterfalls. Near the capital Raipur, the town of Sirpur on the Mahanadi River is home to the red-brick Lakshmana (Laxman) Temple, decorated with carvings from Indian mythology.

### » BACKGROUND

A state where the total PWD population rose from 22.4 percent to 26.8 percent in the 2011, the state government had to walk the extra mile to conduct Accessible Elections for persons with disabilities. As a result, the Systematic Voters' Education and Electoral Participation (SVEEP) programme of the Election Commission of India (ECI) gathered steam in Chhattisgarh, especially in the areas where the tribal population was in the majority. Collectors

in various districts of the state built innovative campaigns aimed at maximum voter participation.

### » INITIATIVES

Under District SVEEP program "Jash Pran", door to door campaign was conducted to make voters aware. During this campaign, Electors took pledge to vote and also make others in their family to vote. The two case studies oft quoted were Sukhni Mahto and that of Tahmuddin. 76-years-old Sukhni, a resident of Gamharia Panchayat, district Jashpur has been living movement disability that is as high as 30.4 percent in the population.

But, despite the mobility challenge, she decided to cast her vote with her grandson carrying her in his arms to the polling station on Nov 20, 2018. Hence, inspired by the drive and committed to the pledge Balbir Mahto, 31 (grandson of Sukhni Mahto) decided that he would motivate every Elector in his family to vote.

He explained importance of voting to his grandmother, who later agreed to his request. On Nov 20, 2018, Balbir took her on his Motor cycle to the Main gate of PS 234. Afterwards he lifting grandmother Sukhni Mahto in his arms inside the



Sukhni Mahto from Gamharia



Polling station building. Sukhni Mahto voted successfully in AE 2018 despite all challenges. Coming from a poor and struggle oriented background, her family grit and commitment made democracy win.

Just to name a few, in another case, amidst his extremely physical disability, Tahmuddin "will" showed the way to cast his vote. "Where there is a will, there is a way" quipped Tahmuddin Shah, 40, a resident of village Saitangartoli (30 km away from District HQ) in Jashpur district who crossed all hurdles of his physical disability to cast his Vote for Assembly elections 2018.

Born on Jan 1, 1979, Tahmuddin's physical growth stopped after he turned one. If this was not enough, he was put to greater tests of life when he lost his parents, Mr Badku and Mrs Manjiran Shah. Responsibility for

**Under District SVEEP program "Jash Pran", door to door campaign was conducted to make voters aware. During this campaign, Electors took pledge to vote and also make others in their family to vote.**

his care fell upon his younger brother Tadaruddin who is a wage laborer by profession. At present His brother, brother's wife and their children are taking care of Tahmuddin who at the age of 40 can only crawl. When under District SVEEP program "Jash Pran", door to door campaign was conducted to make voters aware, Tahmuddin conveyed his wish to cast his vote in AE 2018 to his brother Tadaruddin. Younger brother Tadaruddin left no stone unturned to fulfill his brother's wish.

With his limited resources he made a push cart and laid Tahmuddin on it and took him to the polling station on Nov 20, 2018. This is how Tahmuddin's wish to cast his vote was fulfilled and he created a milestone in Voter awareness and exemplary will.

#### I GOT INKED

Tahmuddin Shah, a resident of Saitangartoli village who was 40 years old suffering with extreme different ability travelled 30 kms to cast his vote for Assembly Elections, 2018.



**STATE: GOA****REGISTERED ELECTORATE: 11,42,408****REGISTERED PwDs: 8,321**

**I**t is surrounded by the state of Maharashtra to the north and Karnataka to the east and south, with the Arabian Sea forming its western coast. It is India's smallest State by area and its fourth smallest by population. Goa has the highest GDP per capita among all Indian states, two and a half times as high as the GDP per capita of the country as a whole.

### >> BACKGROUND

Among disabled persons Goa has the second highest literacy rate at 70% the report said. As per the Census of India 2011, Goa's population of persons with disabilities stands at 33,012 persons making it 2% of the total state population.

### >> INITIATIVES

- Tagging of PwD voters was done carefully as during Lok Sabha it was learnt that some voter's disability was interchanged.

- NGOs were involved in wide publication of Electors' verification programme and the media campaigns.
- 'Most Valued' Voter Badge as a token of motivation for PwDs was appreciated.
- Officers at PwD manned polling stations were trained efficiently.
- All polling stations were visited by ERO/AERO and relocation of the polling stations was done if required, considering its accessibility.
- A total no. of 5345 PwD voter were mapped in the State. Two special volunteers were deployed at each polling station to assist the PwD voters and senior citizens. Vehicle with special features were hired for PwD voters. In some places, Dummy Braille ballot paper were not provided, after observation two dummy Braille ballot papers were provided at each polling station. One wheelchair for each polling station was provided in both constituencies.

**All polling stations were visited by ERO/AERO and relocation of the polling stations was done if required, considering its accessibility.**

STATE: **GUJARAT**

REGISTERED ELECTORATE: **4,73,48,312**

REGISTERED PwDs: **3,67,863**



**G**ujarat is a state on the western coast of India with a coastline of 1,600 km, most of which lies on the Kathiawar peninsula and have a population of 60.4 million. It is the fifth-largest Indian state by area and the ninth-largest state by population.

## » BACKGROUND

A challenging task: Polling Station no. 71 in 'Ajad Tapu' alias Island is part of the 81-Khambhaliya Assembly constituency of Devbhumi, Dwarka District in the state of Gujarat. Geographically and practically, the island is an inaccessible area, located in the Gulf of Kutch, the north-east and west side of this island fall in the Gulf of Kutch, while on the south there is a small village of Khambhaliya Taluka, called Nana Asota.

In the last census (2011), Ajad Tapu recorded 89 people:- 45 males and 44 females and 13 households. But, owing to lack of government infrastructure, these numbers have been dropping ever since, almost rendering it a "ghost town" status. Populations here comprises essentially of the Wagher community. They earn a livelihood through fishing, farming and seafaring, living on the island only for two-three months during the fishing season. Most families have migrated to Okha, Salaya, Arambda and Moto Asota nearby places owing to proximity of schools and healthcare services.

So in order to reach this sparsely populated Island, for the last mile connect, the polling officials had to go to the Gadu region, 13 kms from Mota Asota of Kalyanpur taluka of Devbhumi Dwarka district. From the Gadu region via boat to the island, the travel distance was approximately 8 kms i.e., 4.30 nautical miles.

It was a challenging task to get the necessary polling material and the polling staff to reach the Ajad Island. Necessary polling staff and polling machinery like EVM and VVPAT were transferred from the mainland through a boat ahead of the polling day which was scheduled on April 23, 2019. Polling staff and police had to use the boat of Gujarat Maritime Board (GMB) for travelling through the sea to reach at the Ajad Island.

## » INITIATIVES

- In order to execute the election process without any obstructions on Ajad Island, the district collector himself had joined in the election process to personally oversee all the arrangements from ferrying the election material to and fro from the island after the votes are cast.
- In order to execute voting fearlessly without any discrimination, Special Zonal officer was also appointed to look after the entire polling procedure. The booth was functional for the entire day and 13 female voters out





Ajad Island-Mid Sea Voting

### I GOT INKED

Rashmikaben Patel was a registered voter who could never cast her vote owing to her physical disability and mobility restrictions. But inspired by the Commission's awareness campaigns on accessibility, a day before the election, she reached out to the PwD Nodal officer Patan, Gujarat and expressed her desire to vote.

A team was sent to her residence on poll day with a wheelchair. But Rashmikaben was not even capable of sitting in a wheelchair. Immediately, a special vehicle was arranged for her and she was assisted till the Polling Station by volunteers. "I could cast my vote because of facilities made available by the Election Commission. I heartily thank everyone associated as I could begin my democratic journey after all these years," said an emotional Rashmikaben.

of 23 and 16 male voters out of 21 casted their vote. Ajad Tapu recorded 90 percent voter turnout which was the highest in the entire District.

- For conducting Accessible Election in District Jamnagar extensive SVEEP activities were conducted in all five Assembly Constituencies of Jamnagar district in order to create awareness and promote maximum people participation during Parliamentary General Election-2019.
- Common people as Brand Ambassadors with a theme "No Voter to be Left Behind":- Administration and SVEEP Team prepared Voter Awareness hoardings, posters, banners by involving common people viz. Vendors, women, Farmers, Auto alas, Seller, shopkeeper, Young student, Senior citizen, Migratory laborer, disabled person etc. as Brand Ambassadors and displayed them at all populated places of urban and rural areas such as main roads, bus stands, railway station, government offices, markets, banks, post offices, ATM machines, panchayat offices and all public places to connect with the masses.
- Migrant Voters from other states and districts who were employed in different industries like Brass industries, GSFC (Sikka Township), GIDC Dared and

Petroleum Refineries at Jamnagar, were made aware to vote and the voting process.

- Since Jamnagar houses all the three wings-Army, Navy and Airforce, SVEEP programmes were specially organized for them at Air Force Station, INS Valsura and Army Cantonment, Jamnagar to make them aware about enrollment and casting votes through new Electronically Transmitted Postal Ballot System (ETPBS) introduced by ECI.
- Because of all these efforts, Jamnagar district reached overall turnout from 57.80% to 60.68%, an increase of 2.88%. Female voter turnout increased from 52.18% to 55.92%.

STATE: **HARYANA**

REGISTERED ELECTORATE: **1,89,94,608**

REGISTERED PwDs: **1,50,811**



**H**aryana in the North surrounds the national Capital, New Delhi on three sides. Yamuna River runs along its eastern border with Uttar Pradesh. The state shares with Punjab, the state capital Chandigarh, known for its modernist buildings and grid like street plan designed by Swiss architect, Le Corbusier.

## » BACKGROUND

The Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016 was enacted by Government of India on 28.12.2016 and came into force from 19.04.2017. This Act replaces The Persons with Disabilities (Equal Opportunities, Protection of Rights and Full Participation) Act, 1995. The types of disabilities have been increased from existing 7 to 21 by the Central Government.

## » INITIATIVES

Going by the Election Commission's AMF directive:

- A direction was issued to ensure that ramps of slope 1:10 or less should be provided at all the polling stations.
- A 'Help Desk' was set up at Polling Stations at a prominent location.
- Tented arrangements for shades with the size of 15X15 sq. ft. were erected at each polling station for the ladies/senior citizens/PwD Voters.
- Red Cross Society was requested to facilitate and provide wheel chairs to PwD Voters at polling stations.
- On the directions of the Commission,

a State Steering Committee on Accessible Election (SSCAE) was constituted for the Lok Sabha Election- 2019 that ensured that all AMF were provided to the specially-abled persons.

A visually challenged voter casting his vote



**A State Steering Committee on Accessible Election (SSCAE) was constituted for the Lok Sabha Election- 2019**



STATE: **HIMACHAL PRADESH**

REGISTERED ELECTORATE: **53,15,984**

REGISTERED PwDs: **54,020**



**H**imachal Pradesh is a northern Indian state in the Himalayas. Its home to scenic mountain towns, snowcapped peaks and picturesque locales such as Dalhousie. Host to the Dalai Lama, Himachal Pradesh has a strong Tibetan presence.

### >> BACKGROUND

In order to make elections accessible to persons with disabilities, a well-designed framework of guidelines, as directed by Commission for facilitating PwDs, was in place at every step in the electoral process. An International Conference on 'Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities (PwDs) in Electoral Processes', held in January, 2018, aided to consolidate and gain from international experience. Prior to this, the Commission's resolve in support of inclusion of PwDs has also been conveyed in the state, through official directives.

**All polling stations were visited by ERO/AERO and relocation of the polling stations was done if required, considering its accessibility.**

### >> INITIATIVES

In an effort towards making voting accessible for PwDs in HP, Assistant Professor cum Officer Incharge Sh. Manjeet Singh Saini of Composite Regional Centre for Skill Development, Rehabilitation and Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (Under Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment, Government of India), Sundernagar, District Mandi (HP) was appointed by the Election Commission of India as Nodal Officer (HP) for further coordination on technical standards for accessibility of PwDs for the General Elections - 2019.

The major steps/ activities undertaken were:

- Finalizing few booths: In a meeting with SDM cum ARO Sundernagar, District Mandi, it was decided to visit nearby booths for selecting few accessible booths which could be developed as model booths. 21 booths were shortlisted out of which 18 booths were served with 2 special education trainees of CRC and 3 booths had 6 such special education trainees. All model polling booths were made barrier-free and provided basic amenities besides Braille experts and Sign language experts.
- Setting up of Special Auxiliary booth: A separate booth was set up at Himachal Pradesh Institute for Children with Special Abilities, Sundernagar, Mandi





Sensitisation training of polling officials for PwDs

(HP) with Special Auxiliary tag. This was especially meant for PwD voters. Polling party was also drawn from PwDs. Specially trained Indian Sign Language interpreter and person trained in braille were deputed along with 6 special education trainees as volunteers from CRC, Sundernagar (a centre working for PwDs under Ministry of MSJ&E, GoI). This booth was tastefully decorated and made accessible to PwD voters with all basic amenities.

- Sensitizing the masses: For sensitizing the masses a number of steps were taken under SVEEP programme of Election Commission of India. Charts, banners and posters were pasted/ displayed at various places across the constituency including all the above selected booths. 2 models and 1 special auxiliary booth were provided with audio clues for better accessibility for voters. The video was prepared in Indian Sign Language, audio and with Hindi subtitles.
- Huge Banners, Posters and Hoardings with photos of sign language interpreter exhibiting various suitable signs of various steps of voting were displayed at various places of Sundernagar, District Mandi, Shimla and other various places. Special T-Shirts were prepared and worn by the staff and students of CRC, Sundernagar under the SVEEP programme.
- Rallies & street plays were organized for generating awareness among the public. Series of rallies & street plays were organized at various places on various days. The participants wore specially printed T-shirts displaying message to vote. Hand-outs and pamphlets were distributed among public. People were sensitized for voting through social media.
- A total of 1338 Presiding Officers, Polling Officers and other personnels were sensitized towards the voting procedure of Persons with Disabilities at Govt. Polytechnic Sundernagar. The polling officials were sensitized



Hoarding depicting sign language

towards Indian Sign Language and the Braille in brief. They were also provided with Braille alphabet charts and oriented with the Braille Ballot Paper.

- Preparing voter slips, voters guide and signage features for PWDs: The Nodal Officer was entrusted with the responsibility of getting the voter slips, voters' guide and signage features prepared for all the PwDs of the state. This also included the printing of voter slips and voters guides for all about 5500 Visually Impaired voters. Signage's in braille were also printed which were used at all the booths across state.

Every possible efforts were made in Nalagrah Assembly Segment to inform, motivate and facilitate PwD electors on the day of poll. As a consequence 684 out of a total 823 PwD electors (83.11%) cast their vote, which is higher than the voters' turnout in respect of the said Assembly Segment.

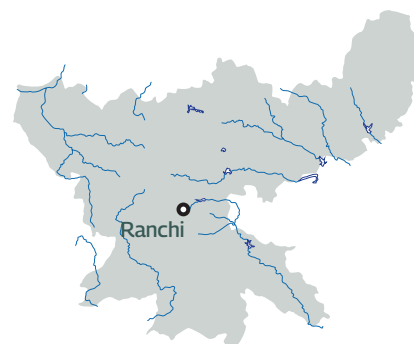
For instance, 80-year-old Smt Anita Devi permanent resident of village khera, Tehsil Nalagarah, District Solan (H.P.) and was very weak owing to her physical disability following a paralytic attack. The polling station where she was to cast her vote in Khera - Nanowal of 51 - Nalagarh Assembly segment, was about 3 KM from the place of her residence.

On the day of poll i.e. the May 19, 2019, an information was received from BLO, Khera-Nanowal that the said lady was expressing her inability to exercise her franchise owing to her physical disability and non-availability of any means of transport. Receiving this information, Sh. Prasant Desta decided to visit this lady's residence personally and motivate and facilitate her to cast her vote. He carried and lifted her to his vehicle, transported her to the polling booth and dropped her back home after she cast her vote!

STATE: **JHARKHAND**

REGISTERED ELECTORATE: **2,37,24,287**

REGISTERED PwDs: **2,89,680**



Jharkhand meaning 'the land of forests' is a state in eastern India. The state shares its border with the states of Bihar to the north, Uttar Pradesh to the northwest, Chhattisgarh to the west, Odisha to the south and West Bengal to the east. It has an area of 79,710 km<sup>2</sup> (30,778 sq. mi), is the 15<sup>th</sup> largest state by area and the 14<sup>th</sup> largest by population.

## » BACKGROUND

Jharkhand has total 77,462 voters with disabilities. Chief electoral office decided to provide all basic facilities to differently-abled persons in the Lok Sabha polls, to ensure hassle-free participation of voters with disabilities.

## » INITIATIVES

- As per the record with the chief electoral office, elector population of visually impaired in Jharkhand is 11,676. Facilitating the visually impaired, Braille-enabled voter slips were used for the first time in Jharkhand. Braille-enabled ballot paper with name and symbol of candidates, was also pasted on the voting machine.
- Nearly 498,000 senior citizens and disabled people in Jharkhand were given the facility of postal ballot, enabled by the Commission.
- Some PS were also managed by PwDs.
- Training module were prepared for the

A Person with Disabilities on his way to cast his vote







A senior citizen inside the Polling Station

- specially-abled to sensitize officials.
- One Nodal Officer was deputed from the Health Department for the General Election to Vidhan Sabha 2019, who coordinated with surgeons/ related offices in getting the list of PwDs and distributing the same to District Election Offices.
- One Nodal Officer was deputed from the social welfare Department who coordinated with all the DEOs for facilitating PwDs.
- Building department did sample check of the ramps at the polling station and verify the same as per the specification.

**Nearly 498,000 senior citizens and disabled people in Jharkhand were given the facility of postal ballot.**

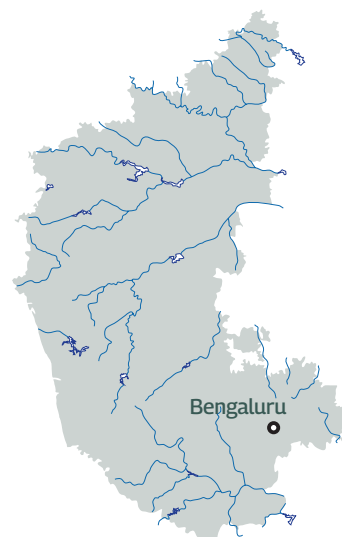
#### I GOT INKED

Simdega also known as cradle of Hockey in the state is located 150 kms from Ranchi known for its fighting spirit. The voting percentage of the people with disabilities turned out to be 92.08%. Pick up and drop services was included to enable the PwD voters to vote at their designated polling booths

STATE: **KARNATAKA**

REGISTERED ELECTORATE: **5,23,52,430**

REGISTERED PwDs: **4,12,686**



**T**he largest state in South India and the sixth largest in India Karnataka lies in the south western region of India. In a first of its kind social security, Karnataka happens to be the first state to give a monthly maintenance allowance to the specially-abled in the state.

## » BACKGROUND

The persons with disabilities did not readily come forward to take part in the election process. They were shy of registering in the voters list as they have to stand in the queues. Some of them who registered as voters did not participate in the polling as they were not able to go to the polling booths due to constraints.

All out efforts were undertaken to create awareness among them as per ECI directions. 4,28,433 PwDs voters were mapped polling station wise out of which 3,43,277 PwD voters exercised their franchise. This implies 80.12% Persons with Disabilities casts their votes, even higher than the state voter turnout of 68.23%

## » INITIATIVES

During Karnataka General Assembly election 2018, 8054 PwDs were identified and voting turnout among PwDs was 52%. During Lok Sabha 2019 election special drive was conducted and enrolled 14723 PwDs and of them 14,718 voted thus voter turnout was 99.68%.

- A workshop was organized on February 4, 2019 in Bangalore and all 33 district SVEEP Nodal Officers attended the same. New rules regarding EVM VVPAT, action to be taken for setting up of ELCs, presentation of SVEEP Action Plan of the concerned districts, sharing of experiences and action taken by few DEOs in mapping of PwDs and the facilities to be provided and the procedure to be followed for conducting the SVEEP activities were explained.
- List of all the contesting candidates was provided in Braille script at all Polling Stations, for benefit of visually challenged.
- Special postage stamp was released in coordination with the Indian Postal Department containing the facilities provided to PwDs.
- Street plays were organized in 12 Districts by the "Suvarna" Deepa Visually Impaired and physically challenged development trust".
- The Ola authorities provided free transport to the PwDs to and fro residence to the polling booth in urban



Sturdy Ramp with Gradual Slope and good strong railings

areas of Bangalore, Belgaum, Mysore, Dharwad, Raichur, Kalaburgi, Dakshina and Kannada. Uber authorities have provided 39 cabs for transport of PwDs in BBMP area Bangalore.

As a result of the above activities taken by the SVEEP committees following achievements were made:

- 4,30,088 PwD voters were mapped Polling Station wise. All 58,186 PSs located on the ground floor with AMF. 25,346 wheel chairs were procured by local bodies. Voters' Guide, Dummy ballot paper were provided in Braille. Free Transport from home to polling stations was provided. Wheel chairs, Magnifying Glasses, Braille voters' guide, sign language interpreters and assistants to help were made available in all the polling stations. Besides, Institutional Mechanism and close monitoring was done. Sturdy ramps, dedicated queue, special parking facility were provided. Besides, outreach activities of rallies, skits, radio, tv shows undertaken. To facilitate the PwD voters, a Mobile Apps for booking wheel chairs was also released, 300 persons booked wheel chair by using this facility.

### I GOT INKED

During Karnataka General Assembly election 2018, 8054 PwDs voters were identified and their participation was merely 52%. After several efforts and initiatives taken up for their inclusion in the electoral process, 14723 PwDs voters were enrolled and 14,718 voters participated in the 2019 election, thereby skyrocketing the voter turnout from 52% to a whopping 99.68%. In this context of 'Accessible Elections', SVEEP provided effective and efficient information, awareness, facilitation for enhanced participation of PwDs.

- Besides, 45,326 wheel chairs were provided and 1, 25, 344 PwD voters availed the facility at all PSs.
- 53,441 magnifying glasses were made available and 33,684 voters availed the facility.
- 56,033 volunteers were appointed and 2, 20, 819 voters used the volunteer services.
- 2,743 Sign Language Interpreters were provided and 3,265 Persons with Disabilities availed their facilities on the day of poll.
- 17,016 vehicles were arranged for free transport of PwD voters on polling day 1, 74, 069 PwD voters availed this facility.
- Rs. 19.63 crores was incurred to purchase of 28,043 wheel chairs at cost of Rs. 7,000 per wheel chair
- 98 PwD PSs were fully managed by 500 PwD officials



STATE: **KERALA**REGISTERED ELECTORATE: **2,74,33,681**REGISTERED PwDs: **2,94,667**

**H**istorically known as Keralam, the state was formed on November 1, 1956 following the States Reorganization Act by combining Malayalam speaking regions of Travancore, Kochi and Malabar. Spreading over 38,863 km<sup>2</sup>, it is bordered by Karnataka to the North and Northeast, Tamil Nadu to the east and south and the Arabian Sea to the West.

## >> BACKGROUND

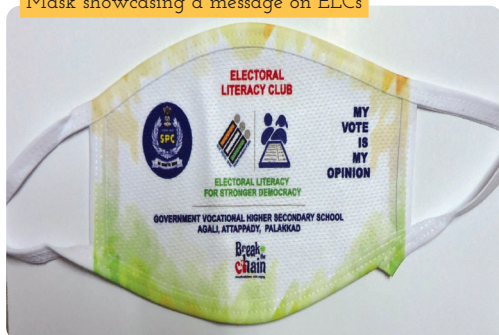
With 3,33,87,677 inhabitants as per the 2011 Census, Kerala is the 13th largest State by population and is divided into 14 Districts with Thiruvananthapuram being the capital city. Malayalam is the official language of the State. The Kerala model of development has been widely acclaimed all over the world.

## >> INITIATIVES

### Community Intervention in Attappadi Tribal Hamlet:

- Students of a Government School

Mask showcasing a message on ELCs



in Kerala began a new epoch in the history of democratic politics in India through their community intervention programs in tribal hamlets in Attappadi.

- Their activities and initiatives under Electoral Literacy Club (ELC) and Students Police Cadets (SPC) at Government Higher Secondary School, Agali rekindled Kerala's journey to substantive democracy. Their activities resulted in the significant rise in electoral participation of inhabitants of tribal hamlets in Attappadi.
- The impact of their community intervention programs was not limited to surge in voter turnout, rather it strengthened the growth of substantive democracy.

Inhabitants of tribal hamlets in remote areas of Attappadi hardly turned out to vote

**Voting was carried out overcoming Maoist fears and tough journey through forest cover.**





Volunteers deployed for election duty



till 2019 election to the Lok Sabha. They were obstructed by lack of transportation and other infrastructure facilities. This led

**ELC and SPC also arranged transportation and refreshment facilities for physically challenged and senior citizens to cast their vote on the polling day.**

to their sense of alienation and lack of motivation for political participation. They had to travel around 14 km to reach the nearest polling station. Further it involved a six km walk through forest and eight km by a jeep, if available, through a narrow forest path where elephant infestation in the afternoon is regular.

The climate of fear and covert counter ideologies stemmed from past incidence of Maoist encounters might have created a psychological barrier. Electoral education programs jointly conducted by students of ELC and SPC made significant growth on the voter registration and electoral participation of inhabitants of Attappadi tribal hamlets in elections to Lok Sabha, Local Bodies and

Legislative Assembly in 2019, 2020 and 2021 respectively.

ELC and SPC also arranged transportation and refreshment facilities for physically challenged and senior citizens to cast their vote on the polling day. They succeeded in convincing electors from Murugala and Thadikkundu hamlets that boycotted election in 2019. Election process did not confine to a procedure for establishing formal institutions of governance. They had raised their livelihood and development needs through this community intervention activities. Students became a channel between authorities and electors in tribal hamlets. Students not only taught electors how to vote, but why to vote.

STATE: **MADHYA PRADESH**

REGISTERED ELECTORATE: **5,31,68,564**

REGISTERED PwDs: **4,65,313**



**M**adhya Pradesh meaning Central Province is a state in central India. Madhya Pradesh, with an area of 3,08,000 sq.km. is the second largest state in India after Rajasthan. Its capital is Bhopal, and the largest city is Indore, with Jabalpur, Gwalior, Ujjain, Satna being the other major cities. Madhya Pradesh is the second largest Indian state by area and the fifth largest state by population with over 72 million residents. It borders the states of Uttar Pradesh to the northeast, Chhattisgarh to the southeast, Maharashtra to the south, Gujarat to the west, and Rajasthan to the northwest.

## » BACKGROUND

Madhya Pradesh is a part of peninsular plateau of India lying in north central part, whose boundary can be classified in the north by the plains of Ganga-Yamuna, in the west by the Aravali, east by the Chhattisgarh plain and in the south by the Tapti valley and the plateau of Maharashtra.

## » INITIATIVES

India is biggest democracy in the world. Success of any democracy depends on active participation of their respective citizens. Country like India which has vast population, It has been a herculean task for any electoral administration for equal participation of its citizens.

Unity in diversity is also one of the

additional features of our beloved country. We need to construct a road map to tackle these challenges at national level. Any democratic setup cannot be succeeding without resolving local and small issues.

Similar type of stumbling block is faced in completion of democratic process of India. Election is toughest and proven exam of democratic succession.

To enhance participation of its citizen in election not only we have to sort out our national issue but also will provide local feasible input. When policies are designed to carry its citizens to polling booth while keeping a vigilant eye on local circumstances and its nature and when these policies are successful it becomes story.

Same effort was taken by Bhind administration during mehgaon and gohad constituency assembly by election 2020 and we have been live spectators of mehgaon and gohad constituency assembly by election 2020.

When mehgaon and Gohad Constituency by-election 2020 were announced then one of the biggest hurdles for district administration was to bring its citizen to polling station in maximum capacity for smoothly casting their votes. Due to demographical situation, we had faced three stumbling blocks below given.





Two among them had historical reasons First is Vulnerable packet second is less participation of female voters in election due to conservative nature of family background and the third problem is very notoriety and well known not only to India but also to entire world that is obvious covid-19

We citizen of India Particularly Bhind are festival lovers and participate from bottom of our heart in any festival. So Bhind district administration decided to organize election as local festival to ensure that no single citizen would be left out without celebration. After that a calendar of festival was prepared from declaration of election to voting day.

Various type of awareness Programme was conducted to ensure maximum participation of citizen in election festival. Different types of rallies, Painting, essay writing were organized with the help of students and district administration citizens were made realize how precious their single vote is.

Some special effort was made to ensure the presence of female voters.

This time election commission established selected "Pink Booth" to fascinate female voters for casting their votes where all the voting officers were female. It will impact on common female mind that if female can successfully conduct election then why can't we caste our vote too.

Active participation of female in election in ravines region will turn out to be a mile store in the process of election reforms certainly it will make election process more affirmative and feasible. Bhind district administration made every possible attempts to conduct for free election and succeeded too some of the appreciable effort made by district administration for female votes. Senior citizens and physically handicapped voters. After all we were able to bring our voters to polling booth and even on the polling day on some polling stations, there was an environment on festival.

Election official assisting a senior citizen



STATE: **MAHARASHTRA**

REGISTERED ELECTORATE: **8,99,43,877**

REGISTERED PwDs: **4,52,940**



**S**pread over 307,713 km<sup>2</sup> (118,809 sq mi), it is the third largest state by area in India. Maharashtra is the most industrialized state in India and the state's capital, Mumbai is India's financial and commercial hub. Located in the western and central peninsular region of India it occupies a substantial portion of the Deccan Plateau. Maharashtra is the second-most populous state in India with a population of 124.7 million (as of 2021) as well as the third-most populous country subdivision in the world.

## » BACKGROUND

Occupying a substantial portion of the Deccan Plateau, Maharashtra is the second-most populous state in India as well as the third-most populous country subdivision in the world. According to census 2011, Maharashtra has 11 per cent of the total disabled in the country. As per July-December 2018 report on "survey of persons with disabilities" by the National Statistical Office, the prevalence of disability was 2.2 per cent of the total population. Hence in line with the Election Commission's mandate to encourage persons with disabilities (PwD) to exercise their franchise, an appeal letter was issued to every PwD voter on behalf of the District Administration to get maximum participation in voting. Special appeal letters in braille were also issued.

## » INITIATIVES

The key parameters that were undertaken for increasing the PwD participation and to ensure the accessibility of Persons with Disabilities:

- The electors with disabilities and senior citizens were mapped polling station wise to provide them targeted and need based assistance on the day of poll.
- To facilitate PwDs during the enrollment process door to door registration drives were carried out.
- A special mobile application dedicated to PwD electors was developed by the Commission for easy registration, to avail the services like pick up and drop, wheelchairs and special volunteers through this app.
- Particular attention was given on the sensitization of the polling personnel about the unique needs of the differently abled.
- The elderly and electors with disability were given priority access in the polling station and Special volunteers were assigned to assist and guide them through the polling process.
- Based on survey conducted by Zilla Parishad & Municipal Corporation, doorstep registration of PwD voters was carried out. Total 21742 PwD voters were marked in the electoral roll.



PwD voters voting with great enthusiasm



As a result Sangli District achieved a never before success in ensuring participation of PwD voters in the electoral process in Assembly Elections 2019. Key features of the planning and achievements were:

- PwD Voters Registration: Based on survey conducted by Zilla Parishad & Municipal Corporation, doorstep registration of PwD voters was carried out. Total 21742 PwD voters were marked in the electoral roll. Massive awareness campaign was carried out for the ECI PwD app.
- Sign Language Video: Sign language video focusing on EVM VVPAT awareness and other information was prepared and made available for PwD Voters.
- Brand Ambassador for PwD Voters: International and National 'Divyang' players like Nayeem Shaikh, Swati Chavan and 'Divyang' litterateur Sachin Patil were appointed as Brand Ambassadors to appeal for maximum participation in the voting of PwD voters.
- Street Plays: Specially scripted Street Plays were organized at all places in the district to reach out to PwD Voters.
- Special 'Chunav Pathshala' (ELC): Special 'ChunavPathshalas' were held for 'Divyang' voters on all the polling booths.
- Door to Door campaign: Village and Ward level nodal officers visited the houses of PwD voters and made them aware about the facilities provided for voting.
- Training and Sensitization of election personnel: Training was given to the electoral staff and polling parties to make them aware about facilities for the PwD voters inside and outside the polling station, using the training module provided by the Election Commission. The field machinery was sensitized to ensure smooth voting for PwD voters.
- Dummy ballot paper: Dummy ballot paper was displayed in Braille outside the polling station for blind voters and 1150 magnifying lenses were provided- one in each polling station for partially blind persons.
- Transport Facilities: In order to pick up and drop the PwD voters from the house to the polling station, a total of 699 vehicles in rural area & 51 in urban area were made available along with a total number of 1150 wheel-chairs (provided by ALIMCO).



STATE: **MANIPUR**REGISTERED ELECTORATE: **19,64,566**REGISTERED PwDs: **7,760**

**M**anipur, is bordered by Nagaland to the north, Assam to the west, Mizoram to the southwest and by Myanmar (Burma) to the southeast. Like other northeastern states, it is largely isolated from the rest of India.

## » BACKGROUND

Manipur as the name suggests, the 'Land of Gems' is located in the northeastern part of the country. Its economy centers on agriculture, forestry and cottage industries.

## » INITIATIVES

- A campaign was taken up in collaboration with the Handicapped Foundation, Manipur for spreading electoral awareness as well as for seeking further suggestions from the PwDs on steps to further facilitate their participation in election.
- The latest list of PwDs was prepared by the Health and Social Welfare Departments for onward submission to DEOs and EROs for taking up further marking of Electoral Rolls.
- The earmarked funds for SVEEP activity for PwDs were used with the involvement of NGOs, Health and Social Welfare Departments.
- Election Department participated proactively in the conduct of a Mega Certification Campaign for the PwDs.

### I GOT INKED

"Yes, I am ready to vote!" said an enthusiastic 86-year-old Yumnam Lairenjao of Wangoi, Manipur with a locomotive disability. His verve even on the wheelchair inspired voters in the polling station who were overwhelmed by his indomitable courage and spirit.

Sorokhaibam Imoshana Meitei, Block Development Officer and Champhai ensured to conduct bye election during covid pandemic.

Arrangements for bye-elections during covid pandemic





STATE: **MEGHALAYA**

REGISTERED ELECTORATE: **20,32,574**

REGISTERED PwDs: **5,896**



One of the Seven Sister States of northeast India, the state of Meghalaya is mountainous with stretches of valley and highland plateaus that are geologically rich. Meghalaya was formed by carving out two districts from the state of Assam: The United Khasi Hills and Jaintia, and the Garo Hills on 21 January 1972. Meghalaya was previously part of Assam, but on 21 January 1972, the districts of Khasi, Garo and Jaintia hills became the new state of Meghalaya.

## >> BACKGROUND

The village of Kongthongin Meghalaya's East Khasi hills, perched on an adjoining ridge is known far and wide, as the village where its residents, are identified not with their names, but through various musical whistles and sounds. It is strikingly ironical that just across the hill, and in stark contrast, lies the village of Massar, known as a "silent village", with its 87 households,

being either, partially or completely tone deaf and hearing impaired. In the year of Accessible Elections, this was what drew Frederick RoyKharkongor, Chief Electoral Officer and this team to visit the village, in an effort to better understand and to make Elections truly accessible to each and every voter, and to perhaps make an "unheard" election "heard".

Massar nestles in a mountain crevice enroute to Pynursla Sub-Division, about 35 Km from the State Capital Shillong. The village is accessed by a steep winding road that twists and turns, through deep mountains, and is not too far away from the country's South ward borders with Bangladesh at Dawki.

As they tread through the pristine woods, that lie splashed by occasional bursts of wild hill flowers, they are confounded by the thought as to how such beauty could engender a community of deaf women condemned to concentric circles of silence. With a view to penetrate these impervious circles, the team reaches the village Headman's house to learn at length a detailed account of how over 87 households belonging to the Nongsteng clan have remained silent for generations together for the past 100 years.

He further revealed that there are two groups of people amongst the Nongsteng Clan. The "hearing group" – Nongstengngew



Massar Village nestled in a Mountain crevice

and the “deaf group” Nongstengkylut, live on two different hills. About 87 households from amongst the village residents are dominated by the Nongsteng “deaf group”. Most of the children, in the age bracket 0-6 years were at various stages of hearing impairment. Records of some NGOs working in the village, reveal that this community of hearing impaired numbers about 90 persons, including 42 children. The village elders also point out, that with deafness often comes the inability to speak, while various stages of deafness exists, ranging from partial to profound. When prodded on the reasons, the village elders, in the absence of any logical explanations, accounted the genetic handicap to a legend that, deafness descended on the clan due to a curse of having eaten the “DohkhaSyiem – the queen of fish”. This perhaps, is but a small subset amongst the many reasons, behind this all pervasive and continued affliction.

In LS 2019 the overall turn out recorded is 71.43% - the highest standalone turn out for LS Elections in the State's electoral history. Average PWD turnout in most districts touched 87.43% plus

## » INITIATIVES

**Meghalaya Sign Bank App** - As part of the Year of Accessible Elections, the Office of the Chief Electoral Officer, Meghalaya in collaboration with office of Commissioner of Disabilities had collaboratively developed and incorporated 114 Electoral terms as a tool to educate citizens, especially the Polling officials to communicate with greater empathy, clarity & understanding with PwDs during elections. The Office of CEO also actively engaged with the Meghalaya Deaf Association, on the production of short video clips, that forms part of the above Sign Bank, besides organizing

trainings across the state with poll officials on Sign language. The above initiative was recognized at NVD 2021 with a Special Award for IT Applications as part of the Best Electoral Practices for 2020-21..

The other initiatives included to facilitate PwDs through Poll Volunteers/ Scouts

States First Hearing impaired BLO appointed in Massar Village under East Khasi Hills District to encourage & inspire the PWD community for Silent Ballot

States leading Visually impaired Music Band-Light after Dark -extensively engaged in all SVEEP activities as State Disability Icon for Accessible Elections, across all forums ranging from live programmes to electronic and social media.

Embodying applause quickly followed when it was announced that as part of Assured Minimum Facility (AMF), priority voting and continued endeavours to ensure the presence of specially trained volunteers would be made available for them, in all future elections.





**STATE: MIZORAM****REGISTERED ELECTORATE: 8,16,186****REGISTERED PwDs: 3,177**

**A**mong one of the smallest state in India in terms of size and population, Mizoram lies in the North Eastern part of India. Mizoram, has been a model state for peaceful, orderly and inexpensive elections for years. Civil societies and the church here, work in harmony with the Election Commission to ensure that elections are free, fair, transparent and peaceful.

### >> BACKGROUND

In line with directions from the Election Commission of India, a committee on Accessible Elections was constituted at the State and district level. The objective was to ensure that Polling Station wise mapping of PwD electors was carried out in the state to identify, facilitate and enroll the PwDs in the electoral roll. The initiatives of the committee resulted in increased enrolment of PwDs in the electoral roll as well as their involvement in the electoral process.

**Polling Officials were taught basic sign language. EPIC cards were printed in Braille for visually impaired voters.**

### >> INITIATIVES

During the General Election to Mizoram Legislative Assembly, 2018 and the Lok Sabha, 2019, the following initiatives were taken which significantly increased voter turnout of PwD electors within the State of Mizoram.

PwD electors were contacted through their respective Booth Level Officers (BLOs) to ascertain whether they would need vehicle pick up on Poll Day to cast their votes. Based on the list submitted by the BLOs, vehicles were arranged to enable PwD voters to cast their votes in their respective Polling



Anganwadi workers assisting blind elderly voter



Volunteers assisting PwD voter on poll day

Stations. In some Polling Stations, the PwD voters were assisted by 'Anganwadi' workers while in others, volunteers from the NGOs such as Young Mizo Association (YMA) and Mizoram People's Forum were deployed at the Polling Stations to assist the PwD voters travel from their house to the Polling Station.

- Posters and sign language were displayed at Polling Stations on Poll Day as an aid to PwD voters.
- Election Pamphlet and Voters' Guide

were prepared for blind voters which were distributed on the day of the Poll.

- Polling officials were taught basic sign language to enable them communicate with the hearing impaired voter.
- Ramps were provided in most Polling stations to aid the movement of physically disabled voters on Poll Day.
- Wheel chairs were made available in most polling stations to facilitate voters with locomotive disabilities.
- Epic cards were printed in Braille for visually impaired voters.



Wheel Chairs were provided at polling stations



STATE: **NAGALAND**

REGISTERED ELECTORATE: **12,30,118**

REGISTERED PwDs: **6,119**



**N**agaland is a state in the north-eastern part of India. It is encircled by the state of Arunachal Pradesh to the north east, Manipur to the south, Assam to the west and Myanmar in the east. Nagaland became the 16th State of India on 1st December 1963. It has an area of 16,579 square kilometer with a population of 19, 80,602 as per the 2011 census of India.

### >> BACKGROUND

The very foundation of a democracy lies in the representation of all stake holders. It is an indispensable part of nation building that starts with an inclusion of all in its electoral process. Given this fundamental premise, equal access is paramount for participation of Person with Disability (PwDs) and senior citizens.

In order to make electoral participation more accessible, various awareness

programmes were organized for the PwDs with an objective "No voter to be left behind". Wide publicity through various approach were carried out extensively. Publicity materials was prepared in regional languages and sign language in the last Lok Sabha election, 2019 and Bye election to 14 Southern Angami A/C and 60 Pungro Kiphire A/C.

### >> INITIATIVES

- During the 13th Nagaland Legislative Assembly Election 2018, the number of PwDs' identified was 2516 voters. Initiative of various sensitization programmes was undertaken to enroll and identify PwDs voters in Electoral Roll. Henceforth, the final figure of PwD voters rose to 6002 during 2019 Lok Sabha Election.

Special Awareness Programme for PwD voters organized under SVEEP campaign Dimapur





- During the 13th Nagaland legislative Assembly Election 2018, in a first, 'All Differently-Abled' polling team managed by PwD officials was set in place at P.S. No.15 of 38 Wokha Assembly constituency
- Polling Station No.15 Managed by all Differently Abled Officials
- The PwD SVEEP Icons played a very important role in various programmes to motivate the PwDs voters like open air concerts and door to door visit to PwD voters to encourage this section of community participate in election and vote.
- As most of the Polling stations were located in government schools, the election Department successfully collaborated with the School Education Department. Permanent ramps in many government run schools were constructed to facilitate participation of disabled voters. Apart from the election process the presence of 'Assured Minimum Facilities' at the Polling Station was a big boost to the differently-abled electorate.
- The Department of Health & Family Welfare Nagaland conducted various camps for PwDs in the entire district. During such camps they mobilized doctors who examined the PwDs and certified them.
- Dummy Ballot sheets in Braille were introduced for the visually impaired.
- With the collaboration of Social Welfare Department, a few hundred wheel chairs were procured and were made available to PwDs and senior citizens during poll day in both State Assembly Election 2018 and Lok Sabha Election 2019.
- Postal Ballots were also issued and made available to PwDs voter during the last two Bye elections to 60



Viswema, Kohima District casting his vote

Pungro Kiphire Assembly Election and 14 Southern Angami Assembly constituencies.

- In several districts EVM/ VVPAT demonstrations were organized for the PwDs and senior citizen during 2019 Lok Sabha elections.
- During the last Summary Revision of electoral roll more effort were made to enroll PwDs and senior citizens. Camps were organized to register their name in the electoral roll.



Volunteers assisting voter on wheel chair



STATE: **ODISHA**

REGISTERED ELECTORATE: **3,23,87,059**

REGISTERED PwDs: **4,90,193**



**O**disha (formerly Orissa), an eastern Indian state on the Bay of Bengal, is known for its tribal cultures and its many ancient Hindu temples.

### >> BACKGROUND

There have been constant endeavor in the past, by the Election Commission of India to facilitate free, fair and inclusive Elections in order to give access to maximum voters to participate in the Elections without fear and influence or without being subject to inaccessibility. In pursuit of this goal, ECI adopted various reforms and innovative practices at different points of time. Introduction of (SVEEP) Systematic Voters Education and Electoral Participation, Accessible Elections for PWD Voters, Dummy Braille Ballot Paper for Visually Challenged voters are just to name a few.

These initiatives have been milestones in achieving inclusive electoral participation. Prior to the recent Bye Elections in Odisha and in many other states as well as in the General Elections in Bihar-2020, the Commission introduced the Postal Ballot

### I GOT INKED

Smt. Ahalya Pradhan (102 Yrs.), Village- Chhatara, Srirampur G.P. of Balasore District, when the officials reached out to her with the postal ballot. Frail and weak as she was, the very thought that her presence mattered, instantly lifted her spirits. She casted her vote through postal ballot on 25-10-2020



Polling Officials crossing difficult terrains and country sides



Ahalya Pradhan (102 Yrs.), Village- Chhatara, Srirampur G.P. of Balasore District casting her Postal Ballot vote

system for absentee voters which has benefited thousands of Voters under the categories of voters above 80 years and PwD Voters.

## >> INITIATIVES

**Postal ballot for absentee voters:** The Democratic value of participatory Elections reached a new high with Centurion Voters exercising voting rights from their own homes during Bye Elections-2020 in Odisha. Under the newly introduced facility of Postal Ballot for Absentee Voters by ECI; Old age persons (80 yrs. Above), PwD Voters and COVID-19 affected/suspected voters were allowed to vote from their homes using Postal Ballots. Thus a no. of voters, who would have otherwise faced difficulty in going to their polling stations on the poll day to vote, have availed the opportunity and opted for postal ballots and accordingly exercised their franchise by handing over their votes confidentially, to the assigned Polling teams.

Collecting Votes from Absentee voters through Postal Ballots was not an easy task. Meticulous plans were chalked out, specific polling teams were selected & adequately trained, their route plans were worked out,



A volunteer in a booth of 38-Balasore A.C, assisting a PwD Voter in returning to his home after vote

security/cameraman & BLOs were tagged to the teams. Contesting Candidates were informed to deploy their representatives. The Postal Ballot Teams operated on the assigned routes on the assigned dates on which appointments were given to absentee voters as per ECI guidelines.

Here are some of the real stories from Odisha Bye Elections-2020 pertaining to Postal Ballot facilities:

Voters and some COVID-19 affected/suspected voters have conveyed their heartfelt gratitude to E.C.I for securing their democratic rights at such late

**Old age persons (80 yrs. & above), PwD Voters and COVID-19 affected/suspected voters were allowed to vote from their homes using Postal Ballots.**





Electors in queue following social distancing as per COVID-19 guidelines near a booth of 102-Tirtol (SC) AC Bye Elections, Odisha-2020

During Poll while entering the premises of each Booth Thermal Scanning of all Voters were carried out. Voters having higher than normal temperature were given tokens to come at the last hours of Poll. To ensure standard protocols, two additional personnel including Asha workers were engaged outside the polling station to conduct thermal scanning and distribution

of gloves to voters and to ensure social distancing among voters waiting to vote.

age and conditions. During Odisha Bye Elections-2020, 3193 votes from Absentee voters of 102-Tirtol (S.C.) A.C. and 1631 votes from Absentee voters of 38-Balasore A.C. have been collected in shape of Postal Ballots from such Absentee voters.

**Covid-19 safety measures:** On release of press note by Election Commission of India on September 29, 2020 for conduct of Bye-Elections in the two Assembly Constituencies of 32-Balasore AC & 102-Tirtol (SC) AC on November 3, 2020 the foremost challenge was to conduct a COVID - Safe Election as the Poll was to be held amidst the fear of COVID and it was first of its kind not only in the state, but also in the Country.

Special attention and emphasis was given for safety & security of Voters during Poll as well as the Polling staff.

All the COVID-19 protocols such as Social distancing, face masks and hand gloves to voters was ensured. Strictly following Commission's guidelines, every person involved in Election activity was asked to wear facemask during every stage of election activities.

**Facilitation of PwD Voters Ensuring COVID-19 Protocols:** For facilitating PwD voters, Vahan passes were issued to 1871 electors in both the ACs. For the PwD / old electors, in every polling station, arrangement of wheel chair has been made and Asha worker / NYK volunteers were engaged to help the old and infirmed voters. In both the constituencies, 3500 polling personnel, 800 Asha workers and equal number of volunteer have been engaged on the poll.

### I GOT INKED

When 100-year old Lochana Naik is a voter of Bijepur reached her polling booth to cast her vote, she left every everybody amazed at spirit. Escorted on a wheelchair by volunteers, she was warmly welcomed by the Project Director of DRDA for her effort to participate in the state by-polls on October 21, 2019. Lochana has always set aside everything to exercise her franchise and nothing could dampen her spirit-be that an injury or old age!

STATE: **PUNJAB**REGISTERED ELECTORATE: **2,09,83,342**REGISTERED PwDs: **1,33,695**

**P**unjab, a state bordering Pakistan, is the heart of India's Sikh community. The city of Amritsar, founded in the 1570s by Sikh Guru Ram Das, is the site of Harmandir Sahib, the holiest gurdwara (Sikh place of worship).

### » INITIATIVES

- Punjabi singer Harman Sidhu and Prof. Dr Kiran Kumari, President awardee on the International Day of Disabled Persons, were appointed as Icons for motivating Persons with Disabilities (PwDs) to come forward and cast their votes.
- Wheelchairs: By and large wheelchairs were provided in every polling station, both in rural as well as urban areas. Despite that, it was observed that

**A thorough sensitization was recommended among all the Police/ Security personnel for which special counseling sessions were conducted. Besides, all the volunteers were properly trained/ sensitized.**

availability of only one wheelchair was not sufficient in many polling Stations. Hence availability of least two wheelchairs in all Polling Stations was insured. All citizen centric organizations, NGOs, CSOs and Red Cross Society were roped in for this purpose.

- Inappropriate gradient of ramps at few places: It was found that all Polling Stations had the ramps but some of these were not of appropriate gradient as per the guidelines. It was recommended that at least 6 months prior to commencement of an election, thorough audit should be conducted with photographs.
- Sensitization of Police Personnel: It was observed that the behavior of police personnel engaged in election duty was not up to the mark. Hence a thorough sensitization was recommended among all the Police/ Security personnel for which special counseling sessions were conducted. Besides, all the volunteers were properly trained/ sensitized.
- Low penetration of PwD mobile App in rural areas: It was observed that penetration of PwD mobile App was low in rural areas. People in rural belts were not well versed with mobile technology and they were challenges in making them aware about



**An accessible toilet was ensured in every Polling Station.**

**One braille expert and one sign language expert was trained in each district.**

latest development. Asha workers/ Anganwadi workers were trained to further give training to villagers on how to use mobile apps.

- Separate entry and exit point: Few polling stations had only single entry and exit point which created inconvenience for voters especially PwDs. Hence it was ensured that every polling station has separate

#### I GOT INKED

Hema, a 28-year-old visually impaired citizen of Amritsar wanted to enrol herself as a voter before the General Elections 2019. Commission's wide publicity for Accessible Elections and thereon SVEEP interventions, were a shot in the arm for Hema who initiated a call on the toll-free number 1950. Not only was she facilitated with all the information but a Booth Level Officer (BLO) visited her residence to help her fill up form number 6. She got her EPIC card in time and the provision of pick and drop facility on polling day.

entry and exit points. The ones having single entry point were replaced.

- Accessible toilets for PwDs: During Lok Sabha elections-2019, all Basic Minimum Facilities (BMF) in line with the Commission's directives were provided in all Polling Stations but accessible toilets were not available in all Polling Stations. It was ensured that accessible toilet in every Polling Station, be made available as the rights of PwDs had to be respected, protected and promoted as per the mandate. In this context "Accessible Elections" and enabling environment for the same leads to electoral participation in true spirit, besides enabling barrier free environment for PwDs.
- 101774 PwDs were mapped, DMCAE AND AC Committees were established in 117 ACs, Disability coordinators appointed in 22 districts, 18 PS managed by all PwDs polling station, 2 PwD State Icons and 8 PwD District Icons were appointed. Braille Voter Guides and Sign Language videos are used.
- One Braille expert and one sign language expert was trained in each district. 38 PwD voters sought facility through PwD App. 337 camps were conducted in special schools/ institutions for PwDs. 239 PS verified by the observers in the state, AMFs were available along with Dummy Braille Ballot Paper, accessible toilet, dedicated parking, volunteer's along with magnifying glass.



STATE: **RAJASTHAN**REGISTERED ELECTORATE: **4,95,31,090**REGISTERED PwDs: **5,02,544**

**G**eographically, the largest State of India, Rajasthan is situated in the western arid region of India. PwDs participation in Rajasthan is sought in all walks of life in an effort to bring them in the mainstream in the state. In a first of its kind effort in the country, the state government amended the Rajasthan Municipal Act in March this year to introduce the provision of nominating PwDs to the Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) as members. Out of total 213 ULBs in the state, PwDs have been nominated in 73.

## » BACKGROUND

In the year 2018, Rajasthan held the first ever State Consultation on Accessible Elections at the instance of the then Election Commissioner of India (ECI) Sunil Arora, in Jaipur on April 16. The CEC graced the event as an enthusiastic participant. The key actionable deliberations' harvested in the State Consultation, spurred 'accessible endeavors' in the State Election Machinery - to move in a well-defined direction.

## » INITIATIVES

As a result and in order to ensure maximum inclusivity in the electoral process, the following slew of activities spurred into action:

- Data from the Disability Commission and the Department of Social Justice and Empowerment was collected, collated and further mapped with

the electoral rolls of Assembly Constituencies. 5, 00, 024 registered PwD voters were mapped.

- The BLOs contacted PwD electors on telephone, and if needed, in person (while keeping Covid-19 norms in mind), to help them w.r.t. NVSP Portal.
- After detailed overview, a concise list of 131 CSOs specifically catering to the interest of PwDs were identified across Rajasthan. A District level PwD Committee meeting was held on September 14, 2020. All 130 identified PwD NGOs operating in the State, participated and enriched the proceedings with their invaluable insights & feedback on the road ahead in pursuit of 100% accessible elections.
- State Steering Committee on Accessible Elections (SSCAE) regularly

**The BLOs contacted PwD electors on telephone, and if needed, in person following all safety precautions as per Covid-19 norms.**



**Accessible toilets were made available at every Polling Station in addition to providing AMFs as per the Commission's guidelines.**

conducted meetings. Members deliberated upon various facets of consolidation as well as augmented usage of registration measures for PwDs. As a result, a total of 5,00,024 PwD electors were flagged across all districts.

- ELC Registration was undertaken on mission mode for every level; School, College, VAF and 'Chunav Pathshala' and ease of registration was provided at doorstep.
- A separate Facebook Page for PwD voters was designed and floated for all posts/uploads exclusively for

promotion of awareness to the PwD segment of voters.

- Online and door to door campaign and action plan for enrollment and sensitization was executed through BLOs, CSOs and NGOs for specific inputs and registration.
- 925 wheelchairs were deployed at the polling stations in all the three ACs that went to polls on April 17, 2021 and 137 vehicles were deployed to ferry Geriatric and PwD voters.
- Comprehensive Cluster Enrolment Drives were conducted across all districts. A total of 7000 PwDs were registered in exclusive camps.
- Audio-Video guide for hearing and visually impaired voters were released. 1275 Voter information slips in Braille and 1255 Dummy Ballot Papers were filled up.
- The Postal Ballot facility widely publicized by the ECI was extended to geriatric and 80 plus PwD voters. For 80 plus voters, 753 Postal Ballots and for PwD Voters, 151 Postal Ballots were issued. Thus, a total of 904 Postal Ballots were issued out of which 895 voted. Observers & DEOs ensured

PwD Tricycle Rally to create awareness to PwD voters during Assembly Bye-Elections 2021





Cluster Camp for PwD Voter Registration organized at "Manav Dharam Shikshan Sansthan", December 2020

smooth facilitation service to these voters.

- Banners displaying basic sign language were put up prominently at polling stations. Instructions in Braille

### I GOT INKED

To ensure 100% voting by the PwD voters, the authorities initiated the program 'Vote Divyang' in Bharatpur district and Divyang Saarthi (charioteer of the PwD) in Ajmer. 1,500 volunteers came together as human chains to form a wheelchair, to motivate the especially abled.

In Ajmer district, 'Divyang Saarthi' volunteers were trained to facilitate the PwD voters so that they could have a smooth voting experience. Around 7000 "Divyang Saarthis" were taken aboard to facilitate 15,180 PwD voters in the Ajmer district. These two programmes aimed at inclusion, resulted in effective and successful integration of Persons with Disabilities in the electoral process.

in English, Hindi as well as Regional Language, were widely circulated.

- Polling stations where PwD and Geriatric electors were to cast their vote were provided with volunteers (drawn from Scouts & Guides, NCC, NSS etc.), to act as Voting Assistants.
- As per ECI's mandate to make voters 'SIVE' - Safe, Informed, Vigilant, Empowered, continued thrust on accessible elections, such as customized tailor cut measures in Rajasthan, led to a whopping increase in VTR as shown in table below. The state scaled more than 150% increase as compared to VSE 2018. This was more than a quantum jump and in future we intend to keep pace with such measures to maximize the participation of PwD voters and attain the utopian 100% voter turnout.

Year of Election	PwD VTR %
VSE 2018	22.2
LGE 2019	27.0
BE 2021	57.45



**STATE: SIKKIM****REGISTERED ELECTORATE: 4,38,798****REGISTERED PwDs: 2,152**

**S**ikkim is a state in northeast India, bordered by Bhutan, Tibet and Nepal. Part of the Himalayas, the area has a dramatic landscape that includes India's highest mountain, 8,586m Kangchenjunga. Sikkim is the least populous and second smallest among the Indian states.

### >> BACKGROUND

Landlocked state in northeast India, Sikkim is bordered by Bhutan, Tibet and Nepal. Part of the Himalayan Mountain Range, it is home to 8,586m high Kanchenjunga mountain peak, the third highest in the world. The state with the lowest population in India has about 25 per cent of the area under forests, covered by the Kanchendzonga National Park.

During the General Elections, 2019, special focus was given to ensure participation of 'Persons with Disabilities.' All basic facilities as per the guidelines of the Election

Commission of India, like mapping of PwDs, providing 'Minimum Assured Facilities' at the Polling stations, sufficient supply of wheelchairs and sturdy ramps for the convenience of PwD electors were provided.

To facilitate PwDs during the enrollment process door to door registration drives were carried out. A special mobile application was also developed by the Commission for easy registration. On the day of poll, electors with disabilities could also avail services like pick up and drop, wheelchairs and assistance of special volunteers.

Often in the race for development, we tend to ignore some sections of society which may not fit in any developmental index. But, we decided to penetrate some of these ignored pockets and sensitize the last voter, PwD Centres and old age homes across the State. The staff of these institutes were also sensitized.

### >> INITIATIVES

#### Campaign 'Reaching the Unreached'

- Taking a leaf from the motto of Election Commission of India, 'No Voter to be Left Behind', the office of the Chief Electoral Officer, Sikkim initiated 'Reaching the Unreached' Campaign, wherein the Department

**On the day of poll, electors with disabilities could also avail services like pick up and drop, wheelchairs and assistance of special volunteers.**

and the District Election Offices sensitized Child care Institutions, Old age Homes, Sikkim Spastic Society and Detoxification centers in and around Sikkim about the Electoral process.

- To facilitate PwDs during the enrollment process, door to door registration drives were carried out and a special mobile application was also developed by the Commission for easy registration.
- Special focus was laid on sensitizing polling personnel about the unique needs of the differentlyabled. For smooth and convenient voting experience the elderly and electors with disability were given priority access in the polling station. Further, they were provided with special volunteers who assisted and guided them at the polling station.
- During the General Elections 2019, the focus and emphasis with respect to accessibility of polling booths was made not only on the facilities but also on the services to be provided to



Volunteers assisting a Senior citizen voter on Poll Day

the PwDs to facilitate them in every possible way. For this, two volunteers were designated at every Polling Station to assist PwD Voters.

- Dummy ballot papers were printed and distributed to blind voters. Arrangements were made for transportation vehicles to ferry the identified PwD voters to and fro, from the Polling Stations.



A senior Sangha Voter assisted by the Volunteers in Sangha polling Station



### EPICs in Braille

In order to further the cause for Accessible Elections, printing of EPICs in Braille for visually impaired voters.

For this, the data for visually impaired Voters was extracted from the EROnet and was converted into Braille printing format.

As of date, there are 282 visually impaired voters who will be empowered with EPICs in Braille shortly.

**The office of CEO wrote to disability homes and centers in the State for nominating a Nodal officer who would be responsible for getting new PwD Voters enrolled on time, every year during Special Summary Revision.**

These EPICs in Braille will be handed over to them in a short program to be held once the COVID containment measures are lifted

In order to account for the facilities received by the PwD voters during Poll day, CEO office came up with a feedback form on Accessible Elections.

Besides, in order to further the initiative of the ECI on 'Accessible Elections', the staff of Spastic Society of Sikkim was sensitized on electoral processes.

To maintain the continuity of the 'Reaching the Unreached' Campaign, the CEO office wrote to disability homes and centers in the State for nominating a Nodal officer who would be responsible for getting new PwD Voters enrolled on time, every year during Special Summary Revision.

During the campaign, a total of 21 forms were collected including new enrolment and corrections. However, as most of them had not reached the eligible age, only 04 new enrolments could be accepted.

These new voters were felicitated during the State level National Voters Day function and their EPIC cards handed over to them.

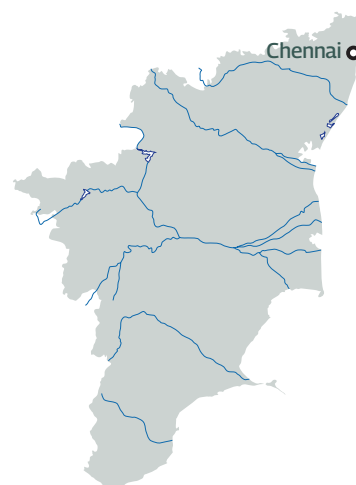
A total of 2015 PwD Voters have been marked in the Electoral Roll database. Out of which approximately 500 PwD voters exercised their franchise.



STATE: **TAMILNADU**

REGISTERED ELECTORATE: **6,29,25,970**

REGISTERED PwDs: **4,58,488**



**T**amil Nadu lies in the southern-most part of the Indian subcontinent and is bordered by the union territory of Puducherry and the South Indian states of Kerala, Karnataka, and Andhra Pradesh. It is the tenth largest Indian state by area and the sixth largest by population.

## » BACKGROUND

The Government of Tamil Nadu through various policies and initiatives have extended full support to the Differently Abled Persons in their pursuit of full and equal involvement in every aspect of society.

## » INITIATIVES

- TN CEO engaged trained sign language interpreter for his communication / press briefings to the media on all public announcement regarding elections.
- Polling station was set up within the Institute of Mental Health to facilitate voters with psycho social disabilities residing within IMH.
- Accessible Elections Committees inclusive of members with disabilities were set up at the Assembly Constituency level to evaluate and execute Accessible Elections Measures.
- The process of identifying the PwDs and flagging them in the electoral roll are regularly done. Instructions have been issued to all the District Election Officers' to ensure that Assured Minimum Facilities (AMF) were provided in all the Polling Stations.
- Access surveys are conducted in coordination with the District Differently Abled Welfare Officers and remedial actions are taken. Steps have been taken to get all the 18 year and above disabled and eligible voters to have voter ID.
- The District Disability Welfare Officers have been directed to coordinate with the SS Tahsildars and obtain information about the Differently abled voters. In polling stations, priority should be given to the differently abled persons in queues.
- An exclusive WhatsApp helpline facility is made available for persons with disabilities prior to Tamil Nadu Legislative Assembly General Election, 2021
- Various events and competitions were held in a number of districts
- Special voter registration camps were conducted for PwD voters in residential institutions, district level offices and other public spaces. Many eligible adults with intellectual and psycho social disabilities were enrolled as well as sensitised on voting process through experiential demonstrations.
- Awareness campaigns and materials were made available
- Polling officers were sensitized on providing Braille candidate sheet to voters with visual Disabilities and sign language interpreters were also deployed at the polling stations.
- All polling booths were ensured on the ground floor for easy access and disability of the elector was mentioned in the EPIC.
- Ramps were setup in proper gradient i.e. 1:12 in all the polling stations.



STATE: **TELANGANA**

REGISTERED ELECTORATE: **3,03,67,514**

REGISTERED PwDs: **5,03,074**



**S**ituated on the south-central stretch of the Indian Peninsula on the high Deccan Plateau Telangana is the eleventh largest state and the twelfth most populated state in India.

### >> BACKGROUND

In Telangana a well-designed framework of guidelines was put in place under the directions of the Commission for facilitating PwDs at every step in the electoral process.

In all 33 districts of Telangana district coordinator for PwDs were appointed to oversee the issues related to PwDs regarding the electoral processes. Data about the number of PwD electors was collected based on Sadarem Certificates and mapped with the Electoral Rolls and the list was made available to the BLOs.

Besides, Assembly Monitoring Committees on 'accessible elections' were also set up.

In line with the Election Commission's mandate to encourage persons with disabilities (PwD) to exercise their franchise, public Icons were identified among PwD voters. The State icons included Abhinaya, the world's first hearing and speech impaired film actress; Anji Boya, International Para Badminton Player; visually impaired Singer Sravya; International visually impaired Cricketer Mahender Vaishnav and locomotor disabled TV Anchor Sujata.

### >> INITIATIVES:

- Four Short Films featuring the PwD icons motivating persons with disabilities to come out, register and vote were prepared and screened in all cinema theatres and also on LCD screens in public places as well as over Cable TV Networks. As a result, in a phased manner, 4.58 lakh Persons with disabilities (PwDs) were enrolled prior to the elections.
- EVM and VVPAT camps and mock polls were also conducted, especially for PwDs, involving sign languages and Braille election material. Voters' guides and other election material were distributed in Braille to facilitate visually challenged voters. The



enrolment of PwDs was just 2.67 lakh in August 2018 and in response to the strong campaign, the number had increased to 4.44 lakh by November 2018.

- Around 20,000 wheelchairs were arranged, covering all the polling station locations across Telangana for PwDs and senior citizens. Helpdesk was set up, 40,000 NSS volunteers and 52,000 other volunteers drawn from Anganwadi, ASHA and other village-level workers were deployed to help PwD voters. Signages and dedicated parking slots were also arranged. A PwD friendly mobile application 'Naa Vote', was also developed for facilitating voter enquiries and to request pick up and drop facilities for the PwDs.

To serve 24,034 polling locations, and 32,815 Polling Stations and wheelchairs were arranged. 32,192 NSS Volunteers were deployed to assist. Other volunteers included ASHA workers, Anganwadi workers and village level workers. 14, 997 Braille EPIC cards were printed and distributed.

- Various, disabilities have been considered while preparing the guidelines for Barrier free Environment. Adequate space was allocated for persons using mobility devices, e.g., wheelchairs, crutches and walkers, as well as those walking with the assistance of other persons.
- It was ensured that polling stations had at least one entrance accessible to the Persons with disabilities.
- This entrance was approached through a ramp or stepped entry. Ramp was finished with non-skid material to enter the building. The width and gradient of ramp was according to the specifications with double handrail on both sides.

- Voter Awareness Walk for PwDs: With an objective to create awareness on the importance of voting and the arrangement of facilities to Persons with Disabilities, an awareness Walk was organized at People's Plaza Necklace Road on March 31, 2019 at 7.30 A.M with the participation of around 2500 Persons with Disabilities, NGOs Working for the empowerment of Persons with Disabilities, PwD Activists and State PwD Icons. CEO, Telangana, Rajat Kumar, addressing the rally, informed that all the facilities arranged in the previous elections would be extended to all the PwD voters in forthcoming Lok Sabha Elections with greater improvisation and fervour.
- Special invitees to the event were, Mithali Raj, Captain, Indian Women Cricket Team; Ananth Sri Ram, Lyricist and Rajashree Reddy, T.V. Actress. They too conveyed their motivational messages on the importance of voting in democracy and appealed to the persons with disabilities to utilize the facilities provided by the Election Commission and participate in the upcoming elections.
- The event was attended by senior government officials and sportspersons. They appealed to voters, in general and PwDs, in particular, to utilize the facilities provided by the Election Commission and vote in the elections.

Election Commission of India recognized the outstanding work done and adjudged Telangana State as Best State for providing all Accessible facilities to Persons with Disabilities and Senior Citizens Voters in State Legislative Assembly Elections 2018.





STATE: **TRIPURA**

REGISTERED ELECTORATE: **26,85,252**

REGISTERED PwDs: **11,912**



**T**ripura a hilly state in northeast India is bordered on 3 sides by Bangladesh and home to a diverse mix of tribal cultures and religious groups.

### >> BACKGROUND

The central government has pledged to ensure safety and security of the senior citizens. The Tripura government allotted six acres of land for construction of the Rs 20 crore 'Composite Regional Centre'. A total of 3,226 senior citizens of Khowai and West districts will be provided over seven thousand different materials including wheelchair, hearing aid, walking stick, spectacles among others under 'Rashtriya Bayoshri Yojana' that was launched in 2017.

### >> INITIATIVES

- District and AC Committees on Accessible Elections set up.
- Disability Coordinator appointed in District.
- PwD icons suitably engaged in SVEEP programmes.
- Voter Awareness material produced in

**Two EVM-VVPAT familiarization camps were set up in special schools/institutes for PwDs**

### I GOT INKED

The State Steering Committee was formed with the following members:

- i. The Chief Electoral Officer, Tripura (Chairperson)
- ii. The Chief Engineer PWD,
- iii. The Special Secretary, Social Welfare & Social Education,
- iv. The Director, Elementary Education,
- v. The Director Health,
- vi. The Dy. Commissioner, Disabilities, etc.

accessible format

- Sensitization of PwDs on special needs of PwDs
- Braille Voter Slips distributed
- Special Drives, mobilization events organized for PwDs
- Two EVM-VVPAT familiarization camps set up in special schools/institutes for PwDs
- All assured minimum facilities were provided i.e Ramp with appropriate gradient, Wheelchair, Drinking water at appropriate height, Dummy Braille Ballot, proper signage, volunteers, Accessible toilets, dedicated parking for PwDs, and additional facilities.

STATE: **UTTARAKHAND**

REGISTERED ELECTORATE: **78,67,919**

REGISTERED PwDs: **54,190**



**U**ttarakhand was formed on November 9, 2000 as the 27th State of India, when it was carved out of northern Uttar Pradesh. Located at the foothills of the Himalayan Mountain ranges, it is largely a hilly State, having international boundaries with China (Tibet) in the north and Nepal in the east.

### » BACKGROUND

ECI has taken many steps after the landmark judgement of Hon'ble Supreme Court of India dated April 19, 2004 but yet the turnout of PwDs to the polling booths has not been very encouraging. All the instructions given by the ECI were

### I GOT INKED

After assessing the need of Divyang Doli numbers a total of 740 Divyang Dolies were arranged and used across the state for the transportation (bringing Divyang voters from the polling station and taking them back to the residence) PwDs during the General elections 2019.

95



Using Doli for election purposes



Movement of PwD voter to polling station

well thought of and appropriate, the major limitation however was their effective implementation.

Divyang (PwDs) have been a much-neglected part in the electoral process in the hills, because of their inability to reach the booth without any assistance. Thus, various facilities were provided to PwD voters in last General elections for their encouragement & inclusion in electoral process.

**A door-to-door survey of the sick, old and PwDs was carried out by Youth volunteers to identify the requirement of 'Divyang Doli'**

## >> INITIATIVES

- Wheelchairs are not a mobility option for the PwDs in the hilly terrain. Most of the booths in the hills are inaccessible as far as vehicles are concerned. To overcome the barrier, Divyang Doli was the only option for the PwDs to reach their polling station.
- A door-to-door survey of the sick, old and PwDs was carried out by Youth volunteers to identify the requirement of Divyang Doli on the basis of the list of PwDs provided by DEO office.
- The need assessment survey was carried out to accessibility of the booth assigned to PwDs in the mind. After assessing the need of Divyang Doli a total of 740 Divyang Dolies were arranged and used across the state for the transportation to and from the polling station.
- The volunteers were named as Divyang Mitra and were selected from NSS, NCC, NGO, Mangal Dal and local volunteers. As a result of this initiative the turnout of PwDs voter increased 30 per cent.
- To facilitate in the initiative a special workshop was organized across the state to better understand the sign language.
- Bajaj institute of learning Dehradun assisted in the initiative so that the election functionaries could understand the special needs of PwDs. This initiative helped in sensitizing the election functionaries and PwDs.



STATE: **UTTAR PRADESH**

REGISTERED ELECTORATE: **14,69,60,885**

REGISTERED PwDs: **9,25,397**



**U**ttar Pradesh is a state in northern India. With over 200 million inhabitants, it is the most populated state in India. It was created on 1 April 1937 as the United Provinces of Agra and Oudh during British rule, and was renamed Uttar Pradesh in 1950, giving it the acronym UP.

## BACKGROUND

The state is divided into 18 divisions and 75 districts, with the state capital being Lucknow, and Allahabad serving as the judicial capital. The two major rivers of the state, the Ganges and Yamuna, join at Triveni Sangam in Allahabad and flow further east as Ganges. The forest cover in the state is 6.1% of the state's geographical area. The cultivable area is 82% of total geographical area and net area sown is 68.5% of cultivable area.

## INITIATIVES

As per the directives of the Commission, the following minimum facilities have been provided to the differently-abled at each polling booth by the said committees:

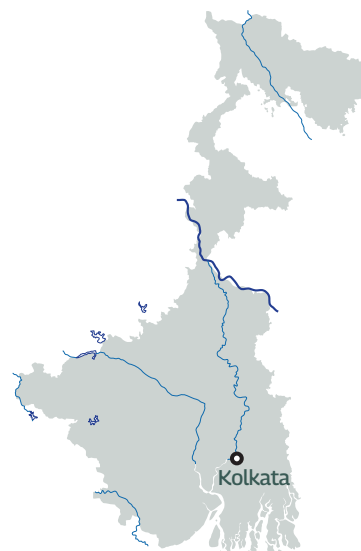
- Wheel chair, ramp, help desk, arrangement of drinking water at appropriate height, dummy braille ballot paper, volunteers, accessible toilet and separate parking arrangement for differently abled people etc. Apart from this, Each and Every disabled voter has been category wise and polling station wise tagged and the job of carrying them to the polling location has been entrusted to the Booth Level Officer.
- On International Disability Day celebrated all over the world on 30 December to bring them into the mainstream of the society. Under the SVEEP scheme, awareness programs are run for ensuring the participation of differently-abled people in voting.
- In urban areas, the assistance of cadets of NCC and NSS and civil defence is obtained for the differently-abled.
- For Divyang voters of 18 years and above, all the Electoral Registration Officers have been instructed to get the certificate of Divyangjan after conducting polling location wise survey in the next summary revision.
- SVEEP and PWD icons are deployed to motivate Divyangjans to vote. In this regard, International Kabaddi player Shri Rahul Chaudhary has been appointed as the SVEEP icon of Bijnor district.
- A Strategic Framework 2016-25 has been prepared for the inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in the election process. This includes special facility for registration of disabled voters, making every polling station disabled friendly, setting up of handicapped voter facilitation center at each district headquarter and further strengthening the existing disabled facilities.



STATE: **WEST BENGAL**

REGISTERED ELECTORATE: **7,32,40,329**

REGISTERED PwDs: **5,03,456**



**T**he state in the eastern region of India, West Bengal lies along the Bay of Bengal. With over 91 million inhabitants, it is the fourth-most populous state and the fourteenth-largest state by area in India. It is also the eighth-most populous country subdivision of the world with a population of 91,347,736 (7.55% of India's population). Part of the Bengal region borders Bangladesh in the east, and Nepal and Bhutan in the north. It also borders the Indian states of Odisha, Jharkhand, Bihar, Sikkim and Assam.

## **>> BACKGROUND**

The lauded Postal Ballot - story of Kalimpong: Situated at a height of more than 1,200 metres above sea level, in the eastern Himalayas, Kalimpong has extreme climatic conditions and some most inaccessible terrains. In some areas the Polling Party needs to trek a considerable distance along the ridges of the steep hills. The smallest District in the state of West Bengal, Kalimpong was formed by bifurcating Darjeeling District. It has a single Assembly Constituency. As per 2011 census, this hilly district has the population of 2.51 lakhs. The majority of the population consists of various tribal and non-tribal groups like Lepcha, Bhutia, Tamang, Limbu, Sherpa, Dukpa, Yolmo, Mech, Santal, Sarki, Damai, Kami, Rai, Magar, Chettri, Gurung and others. Nepali is the lingua franca which has forged bonding among them all.

## **>> INITIATIVES**

The novel initiative of Election Commission of India in extending the Postal ballot facility to persons with disability and to the electors of above 80 years of age in the General Election to West Bengal Legislative Assembly-21, was applauded in this hilly district. Around 45% of the flagged voters of these categories totaling 2400 electors opted for Postal Ballot.

Considering the hilly terrain and hidden hamlets in the slopes, meticulous planning was done to cover each and every absentee voter within the stipulated time. The Polling Party comprising of two Polling Officers, Videographer, Micro Observer and half section of CAPF apart from State Police each, started their journey from April 05, 12 days ahead of Poll. There was a well-managed Distribution Centre at the District Treasury where Postal Ballots were split and handed over to the Polling Teams under tight security.

51 such Polling parties were on the field, travelling by car to some distance and trekking or hiking in the slopes of the hill till they reach the voter every day. There were many women in the Polling Parties



Maintaining covid protocol



Special SVEEP activities for Accessible Elections

as Polling Officers, as Videographers, as Micro Observers or as Police Personnel. The heartwarming experience everyday, made them look forward to the next day.

- Pavitra Pradhan, AVSC, 106 Years old in Part No.86 in the Municipal area of Kalimpong AC voted through Postal Ballot in this General Election, an inspiration for others in the locality. A proud moment for Kalimpong.
- It was heartening when the Polling Party went to the house of Jivan Roy, AVPD, 31 year old, who could hardly crawl, in the Lower Beong village of Gidabling Gram Panchayet. He voted for the first time - thanks to Absentee Voters Postal Ballot.
- Lalit Hang Subba of Dr. Grahams Homes Gram Panchayat, could read but not hear. He was explained the voting process by writing. He voted through Postal Ballot.
- For Bhuddhiman Mukhia, 82-years-old absentee voter of Nokdara village, it was a pleasing moment to have the entire Polling Party at his residence.
- For some members of the Polling Party, the hilly terrain was unfamiliar. But, so enthused were they to reach the last mile, they even reached the hidden hamlet, 'Mansintar' in a remote corner at the Bhutan border. For sure, No voter was left behind!

### ABILITY EXPRESS – A unique initiative for making elections accessible to all:

The South 24 Parganas District Administration took an initiative to connect with the 'Specially Abled Electors' of the district, through five specially designed vehicles, named the 'ABILITY EXPRESS'.

The objective of creating the Ability Express was to send it to the nearby areas of the especially abled electors throughout the District. The especially abled identified by the Booth Level Officers, Health and Anganwadi Workers were duly marked in the Electoral Roll, in order to provide them an opportunity of 'Virtual tour of the Polling Station'.

This virtual tour was designed not only to make them aware about the process of voting inside the Polling Station, but also to inspire them to participate in the process of the largest democracy of the world, by casting their valuable vote.

**Methodology:** The following steps/ methodology were followed for ensuring proper utilization of the Ability Expresses:

- Special components fitted in each of the Disability Expresses.
- Audio visual system for step-by-step demonstration of the process of voting (for electors, having any type of disability).





- Instructions written at the wall panels of the vehicle in Braille script (for visually impaired). Wheel chair and Ramp (for electors having locomotor and neurological disorders).
- Sign language interpreter (for deaf and dumb electors).
- Special Disability co-ordinator cum demonstrator and Quiz Master (for rendering necessary guidance and support to all specially abled electors and make them aware about various important points from the perspective of the electors including use of EVM, VVPAT and using NSVP portal and getting e-EPIC, etc.).
- LED Display.
- EVM and VVPAT for demonstration.
- Laptop and printer with data entry operator for providing various web based services of ECI (Knowing Part No. and Serial No. of the Electors and getting e-EPIC) on the spot.
- Power back-up to run the entire setup.
- Travel Plan of the Ability Expresses: Five Ability Expresses were flagged

**The five ability expresses covered 12,000 kms during one month of special extensive campaign. About 85,000 especially abled electors were connected through this campaign enhancing their confidence manifold.**

off by the District Election Officer & District Magistrate, South 24 Parganas on 6<sup>th</sup> March, 2021 from the office of the District Magistrate at Alipore, Kolkata, in presence of the especially abled icons of the district. Thereafter, one vehicle was allotted for each of the five Sub-Divisions (Alipore Sadar, Diamond Harbour, Kakdwip, Baruipur and Canning) of the district.

- Date and area wise calendar was prepared by the respective Sub Divisional Officers, Returning Officers and Block Development Officers for effective utilization of the vehicle, each day, for the entire period of one month.
- Concerned Returning Officers and Block Development Officers were instructed to ensure coverage of all such areas identified by the BLOs as the residence of the especially abled electors.

#### The Ability Express

- Proper SVEEP activities were taken up in each areas to be covered by the Disability Expresses, at least three days prior the actual visit of the vehicle, through due intimation to the concerned electors by concerned BLOs
- The five Ability Expresses covered various areas including very remote areas of all 31 (thirty-one) Assembly Constituencies of South 24 Parganas District. These vehicles covered about 12,000 KMs during this one month special extensive campaign. About 85,000 especially abled electors were connected through this campaign enhancing their confidence manifold.
- As a result, the motto of the Election Commission of India 'NO ELECTOR TO BE LEFT BEHIND' could be achieved in true sense.

## UNION TERRITORY: **ANDAMAN & NICOBAR ISLANDS**

REGISTERED ELECTORATE: **3,08,585**

REGISTERED PwDs: **1,817**



**T**he Andaman & Nicobar Islands are an Indian archipelago in the Bay of Bengal. They are known for their palm-lined, white-sand beaches, mangroves and tropical rainforests. Coral reefs supporting marine life such as sharks and rays make for popular diving and snorkeling sites. Indigenous

### >> **BACKGROUND**

These are roughly 300 islands comprising remote islands, many of which are off limits to visitors.

### >> **INITIATIVES**

- Green model polling stations in traditional style were set up in the region, decorated with eco-friendly materials such as Banana leaves, Coconut Leaves, Bamboo stem, Natural Flowers and areca nut leaves etc. in consonance with the lifestyle and traditions of the tribal people. The Green Model Polling Station offered warm welcome with ornamental leaves bouquet, Plastic free atmosphere, crèche facility, AC waiting room, light refreshment, webcasting, all facilities for person with disabilities, medical facilities etc.
- During the election all polling stations were equipped with enough supply of wheelchairs, sturdy ramps and Assured Minimum Facilities such as clean drinking water, adequate furniture for voters in the queue, shed,

and toilets for the voters.

- As a special initiative, Anganwadi Sevika under Department of social welfare were engaged to provide transport facilities for the differently abled voters
- Special Camps were organized to map the differently-abled electors and senior citizens to provide them targeted and need based assistance on the day of poll.
- Special focus was laid on the sensitization of the polling personnel about the unique needs of the differently abled. Braille signage on
- As a special initiative voters awareness initiative under the theme “No Voter Left Behind” was undertaken among the remotely located polling stations of Rangat Tehsil such as Bangaon, Wrafter Creek and Macarti valley to persuade voters’ participation.

As a result of the hard work of polling

**Green model polling stations in traditional manner were set up in the region, decorated with eco-friendly materials.**



Officials ensuring- "No Voter to be Left Behind"

personnel: More than 85% differently abled persons voted with enthusiasm.

- Nancowry Sub-division falls under the central part of the Nicobar group of Islands. It consists of five scattered inhabited islands viz. Kamorta, Nancowry, Katchal, Teressa and Chowra. All the polling stations of these islands are accessible by sea route only. Out of 23 total polling stations in this area, 15 are isolated and located far away from the headquarter.
- Focus was laid on the sensitization of the polling personnel about the unique needs of the differently-abled electors through various training programmes by the ARO/AERO of the Sub-division. For smooth and convenient voting experience, the elderly and differently-abled electors were given priority access in the polling stations.

Despite being the most isolated area, all basic minimum facilities in the form of:

- Permanent ramps for differently-abled electors;
- Route/layout signage in traditional Nicobari style;
- Shade for the ladies/senior citizens/ differently-abled voters and children accompanying them
- Public transport for persons with visual and locomotive disabilities & infirmed voters with impaired movement;
- Separate queue for male, female, & senior citizen/differently elected voters; drinking water facility;
- Basic amenities like table & chair, lighting/electricity arrangements;
- Separate toilet facility for men & women were provided at all polling stations;
- First time at Nancowry Sub-Division, three Women Polling Stations were set up at PS Kamorta, PS ChotaEnaka and PS Vikas Nagar;
- To create mass mobilization and awareness, special drives and





Inclusion of Senior Citizens and PwDs in Electoral Process



campaigns were conducted in these far-flung islands. To celebrate the process of elections as 'Mahatyohar', various activities such as ChunavPatshala, SVEEP Activities (Women knockout Football Tournament, Women Volley

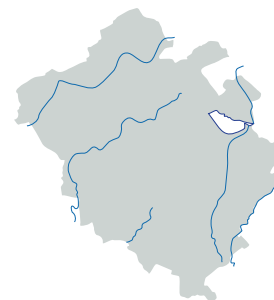
Ball Tournament, Night Kabbadi Knockout tournament), Traditional Food Festival, SHG Mela for Sale-cum-Exhibition of Handicrafts & Traditional Fashion Show (Miss/Mrs. Nancowry) were conducted.

- During these events, wide publicity was given to the spectators about electoral roll, 100% voting and VVIP (helpline no. 1950, Voter Helpline App, Voters helpline 1950 through SMS and NVSP) and c-VIGIL.
- Mock poll exercises were conducted in every polling station area to sensitize the people to cast vote with EVMs and VVPATs. Followed by the mock poll, counting was done by the people themselves. By seeing the printed slips from the VVPAT, the electors felt immensely satisfied and contented.

With all these concerted efforts put in by the local administration, the Parliamentary Elections - 2019 were smoothly conducted in the Islands with immense satisfaction and greater participation of the people.

### I GOT INKED

It was during the Parliamentary elections 2019, that the principle of accessible election was thoroughly followed in North & Middle Andaman District. A special initiative for the election, called 'Anganwadi Sevika', under the Department of Social Welfare, was started to ensure that all differently abled voters are facilitated to cast their vote. A separate voters awareness initiative under the theme 'No Voter Left Behind' was also taken among the remotely located polling stations of Rangat Tehsil such as Bangaon, Wrafter Creek and Macarti valley to persuade voters to participate in the election process. As a result, more than 85% differently abled persons voted with enthusiasm.

**UNION TERRITORY: CHANDIGARH****REGISTERED ELECTORATE: 6,32,251****REGISTERED PwDs: 3,086**

Chandigarh, the capital of the northern Indian states of Punjab and Haryana, was designed by the Swiss-French modernist architect, Le Corbusier. His buildings include the Capitol Complex with its High Court, Secretariat and Legislative Assembly, as well as the giant Open Hand Monument.

### >> BACKGROUND

The city has 8,581 disabled persons, with the maximum (4,289) being orthopaedically handicapped (OH) and the least (98) suffering from autism, according to a report released by the Regional Institute of Mentally Handicapped. The data bank has been created which can be used by the Chandigarh Administration for the purpose of planning various rehabilitation interventions.

**First ever wheel chair walkathon and wheel chair cricket match was organized.**

### >> INITIATIVES

- Cricket Match for persons with disabilities
- All AEROs and BLOs to mark all the PwDs in the Electoral Rolls during SSR
- Camps and activities to be organised under SVEEP for motivation of voters with disabilities
- Director of Social Welfare Department supplied the list of beneficiaries drawing PwD or Old age pensions so that BLOs could check and verify them for mapping in the Electoral Rolls
- District Education Officer to make all Polling Stations in the UT to be accessible A total of 3100 PwDs were mapped booth wise in Chandigarh. DMCAE had been set up in the UT. One polling station was managed by the PwD staff. Braille voter slips were distributed among visually impaired voters.
- Special drive, mobilization events organized for the PwDs at various venue i.e. Asha Kiran Chandigarh and Institute for the Blind, Chandigarh. Everyone was made aware about the facilities available on the PwD app. However Wheel Chairs were made available at all the locations irrespective of separate registration on PwD app. Due to awareness 41 people were availed the benefit of transportation in the UT.

**UNION TERRITORY:**  
**DADRA AND NAGAR HAVELI**  
**REGISTERED ELECTORATE: 2,58,588**  
**REGISTERED PwDs: 1,077**



**T**he Union Territory of Dadra and Nagar Haveli lies near the western coast of India and consists of two separate parts. Of these, Dadra is surrounded by the state of Gujarat, and Nagar Haveli lies on the border of Maharashtra and Gujarat. The territory consists of two sections—Dadra and Nagar Haveli—which together embrace roughly 70 villages. On August 11, 1961, it became a part of the India and was announced to be a Union Territory.

### » BACKGROUND

The Portuguese occupied Dadra and Nagar Haveli between 1783 and 1785 and ruled it till its liberation in 1954. About 170 years of Portuguese rule was brought to an end on August 02, 1954 by the volunteers of Goa parties acting in close cooperation with the local inhabitants. After its liberation, the administration of the territory was carried on by an Administrator with an Advisor to advise him on all administrative matters and soon steps were taken to associate the local people in the administration by the creation of Varistha Panchayat and Group Panchayat.

Dadra Nagar Haveli, endowed with nature's munificence, it's a land of spell-binding beauty. Green forests, winding rivers, unimaginable waterfronts, gentle gurgle of streams, distant dotting mountain ranges, a gorgeous kaleidoscope of flora and fauna. Owing to its serenity and quaint sylvan

surroundings, this district is a heaven for those who hunt around for a tranquil holiday. Being near the coast, the sparsely inhabited easternmost parts of the District have a typical north Indian Ocean maritime climate. According to the 2011 census Dadra Nagar Haveli has a population of 343,709.

### » INITIATIVES

- 736 PwDs were mapped.
- Disability Committees not being set up as U.T of Dadra and Nagar Haveli has no legislative Assembly.
- Disability Coordinators were appointed in the district.
- PwD icons engaged to spread awareness.
- Sensitisation training were organised alongwith EVM & VVPAT awareness camps.
- Braille Voter Slip distributed, AMFs were provided in all the PS along with Magnifying glass, bariile ballot paper and transport facility.

**Sensitization training was organized to spread awareness of EVM and VVPAT. AMFs were ensured in all the Polling Stations.**

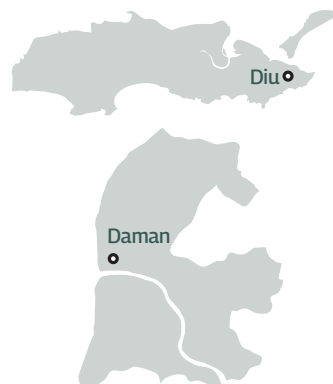




UNION TERRITORY: **DAMAN & DIU**

REGISTERED ELECTORATE: **1,19,083**

REGISTERED PwDs: **634**



**A**fter conferring statehood on Goa on May 30, 1987, Daman and Diu was made a separate Union Territory. Daman lies about 193 km away from Mumbai. It is bound in the east by Gujarat, on the west by the Arabian Sea, the north by the Kolak River and on the south by Kalai River.

### >> BACKGROUND

During the General Election to Lok Sabha - 2019, each elector was given due importance by the Commission for better functioning of democracy. The Electoral laws not only guaranteed equality to person with disabilities, but also made provisions for facilitating their access and participation in the election process.

According to the 2011 census, Daman and Diu had a literacy rate of 87.1%, higher than the national average of 74.04%. Male and female literacy rates were 91.5 and

79.5 per cent respectively. According to the Right of Persons with Disabilities Act 2016, 21 disabilities were enlisted.

### >> INITIATIVES

- Preliminary data was collected by Election Department of Urban & Rural Areas from Municipal Council, District Panchayat and Health Department.
- Polling Station wise list of 18 plus 'Persons with Disabilities' was prepared from the data collected from the above mentioned departments at DEO, ERO and AERO level. And the AERO directed Booth Level Officer's to verify PwDs voter's especially blind voters and submitted the report to the concerned authority.
- NSS Volunteers from school and college made effort to motivate and

**BLOs distributed Braille Voter slip to the Blind Voters. A PwD help centre was setup under the supervision of RO/ DEO.**





Volunteers assisting senior citizens and Pwds to reach polling booth



created awareness regarding the Election Process among the PwDs.

- Door to Door visit was conducted by the Nodal Officer along with his team to encourage the Persons with Disabilities to come out and vote and inform them about the facilities for pick up and drop on the day of Poll.
- The PwDs voters were provided the facilities for transportations on the day of Poll.
- Wheel Chairs and other Physical Support was provided to PwDs voters.
- A PwDs help centre was setup under the supervision of RO/DEO in both District of UT of Daman & Diu
- A Nodal Officer for PwDs deployed from 06:30AM to 06:30PM on the day of Poll and sufficient number of Vehicle and wheel chairs and transport was available at the Help centre.
- In addition to the PwDs voters, 56 voters classified as aged, pregnant

women and physically challenged voters were assisted by the Nodal Officers.

- BLOs distributed Braille Voter slip to 35 Blind Voters. (35 Daman-22 & Diu -13).
- A separate Polling Stations wise list of PwD voters was prepared including the types of disabilities.
- 80 NSS Volunteers were deployed for assistance of PwDs voters on all 152 polling stations of UT of Daman & Diu.
- Special drive was launched for awareness about the voting through the EVMs and VVPATs by PwDs Coordinator.
- Braille Photo Voter Slip and Ballot Paper were provided to all the visually impaired voters. Hands on training were organized for PwDs voters in both the district of UT of Daman & Diu.



UNION TERRITORY: **NCT DELHI**  
REGISTERED ELECTORATE: **1,48,15,574**  
REGISTERED PwDs: **57,211**



Officially the National Capital Territory (NCT) of Delhi, is a city and a union territory of India containing New Delhi, the capital of India. It is bordered by the state of Haryana on three sides and by Uttar Pradesh to the east. The NCT covers an area of 1,484 square km (573 sq mi). According to the 2011 census, Delhi's city proper population was over 11 million, the second-highest in India after Mumbai.

### >> BACKGROUND

Over 37 percent of new voters in Persons with Disability (PwD) category were added for the Delhi Assembly election, as compared to previous general election. A total of 55,823 PwD voters are registered

in the electoral roll as on January 6, 2020, for the Assembly Election 2020, according to the latest figures compiled by the office of Chief Electoral Officer, Delhi. The number of PwD voters was 40,532 in the Lok Sabha election, 2019. This was a net increase of 15,291 voters (37.72 per cent).

### >> INITIATIVES

- A list of polling stations where number of PwD voters was more than 20 was created for proper focusing and better facilitation.
- AC level committees conducted meeting on quarterly basis.
- 100% audit was conducted by civic agencies & NGOs.
- Ola and Uber were utilized to provide better services.
- Fresh and good quality food/refreshment were served to the polling staff and volunteers.
- A number of official from CEO headquarters and from district were trained in the Sign Language.
- Social Welfare Department, GNCT of Delhi intimated its PwD or old age beneficiaries to mark themselves as PwD Electors.
- First year PwD student in colleges were enrolled during special drive, sensitized towards PwD elector App, voter helpline App and helpline number 1950.
- A panel of 220 Braille Experts was prepared within a month with the help

**A panel of 220 Braille Experts was prepared within a month with the help of Social Welfare Department GNCT of Delhi and constituted with the approval of State Commissioner of Person with Disability.**





Sign Language training in process

of Social Welfare Department GNCT of Delhi, constituted with the approval of State Commissioner of Person with Disability to certify dummy braille paper at District Levels.

- 
- PwD Posters were prepared in consultation with NGOs.
- The mapping of PwD Electors in the Voter list was completed by all the Districts. Volunteers were centrally assigned through Directorate of

Education and R.O.s. On an average two volunteers per location were being provided. All districts in all divisions fulfilled the AMF facilities at all the polling Stations.

- Instruction was issued to provide Braille EPIC Cards, Braille Voter Guides and Braille Dummy Ballot Sheets three day prior to the poll day. For providing transport facilities on the poll day, the district was instructed to depute the staff for pick up and drop facility to the PwD

Voters.

- The districts were regularly conveyed instructions received from the ECI regarding accessible elections. Customized SVEEP interventions for the sensitization and awareness of both PwD electors and polling personnel were carried out. The use of Voter Helpline App, PwD App, C-Vigil App were publicized through both traditional and social media.

### I GOT INKED

Two persons with disabilities(PwDs), Darsana and Sheel(sisters) cast ballot at their residence in Panchsheel enclave during the General Election to the Vidhan Sabha of NCT of Delhi, 2020. The sisters said "The staff from ECI who visited us were very helpful and cooperative. They used a three sided screen to ensure secrecy of ballot. We were able to stamp our vote using ink. They immediately sealed our vote in an envelope"

**Instruction was issued to provide Braille EPIC Cards, Braille Voter Guides and Braille Dummy Ballot Sheets three day prior to the poll day.**

**UNION TERRITORY:  
JAMMU & KASHMIR & LADAKH****REGISTERED ELECTORATE: 78,00,944****REGISTERED PwDs: 38,880**

Jammu and Kashmir is a region administered by India as a Union Territory and consists of the southern portion of the larger Kashmir region.

**>> BACKGROUND**

The Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation Bill, 2019 provides for reorganisation of the state of Jammu and Kashmir into the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir and Union Territory of Ladakh. Finally, in 2021, the Government framed the Jammu and Kashmir Rights of Persons with Disabilities Rules in order to ensure smooth implementation of Central Law aimed at promoting and protecting the rights and dignity of people with disabilities in various aspects of life.

**Effort were undertaken to facilitate the PwDs at the CEO/DEO/ERO level meetings. On the poll day a few polling stations were managed by officials who are PwDs.**

**>> INITIATIVES**

- A few polling stations were managed by officials who are PwDs, on the day of poll and effort were taken to facilitate the PwDs at the CEO/DEO/ERO level meeting.
- Identification of such PwDs was done well in advance.
- A training module was developed on sensitization of officials.
- Special training session was organized at grass root level for all polling parties especially presiding officers who understand the needs of PwD voters.
- Polling Station Level micro planning was done for providing facilities to the disabled people and for that advance preparations were undertaken involving BLOs.
- PwD Icons were selected and sensitized towards the needs of PwDs and engaged in the awareness camps and special camps for registration.
- Sensitization camps were organised in non-election period also and Nodal officers for the same were appointed by various departments working for PwDs for better coordination for the electoral process.

**UNION TERRITORY: LAKSHDWEEP****REGISTERED ELECTORATE: 55,543****REGISTERED PwDs: 335**

India's smallest Union Territory Lakshadweep is a tropical archipelago of 36 atolls and coral reefs in the Laccadive Sea, off the coast of Kerala, India. Not all of the islands are inhabited, and only a few are open to visitors (permits required). It spreads over 32.62 sq. km. It is the small Parliamentary constituency in terms of Population with only 55,543 electorate.

**>> BACKGROUND**

The Union Territory was formed in 1956 and it was named Lakshadweep in 1973. As per details from Census 2011, Lakshadweep has population of 64 Thousands, an increase from figure of 60 Thousand in 2001 census. Total population of Lakshadweep as per 2011 census is 64,473 of which male and female are 33,123 and 31,350 respectively. In 2001, total population was 60,650 in which males were 31,131 while females were 29,519.

The flora of the islands include Banana, Vazha, (Musaparadisiaca), Colocassia, Chambru (Colocassia antiquarum) Drumstic moringakkai (Moringa Oleifera), Bread Fruit, Chakka (Artocarpus incisa) wild almond (Terminalia Catappa) which are grown extensively.

The marine life of the sea is quite elaborate and difficult to condense. The commonly seen vertebrates are cattle and poultry. Oceanic birds generally found in Lakshadweep are Tharathasi (Sterna

fuscata) and Karifetu (Anous solidus). They are generally found in one of the uninhabited islands known as PITTI. This island has been declared as a bird sanctuary.

**>> INITIATIVES**

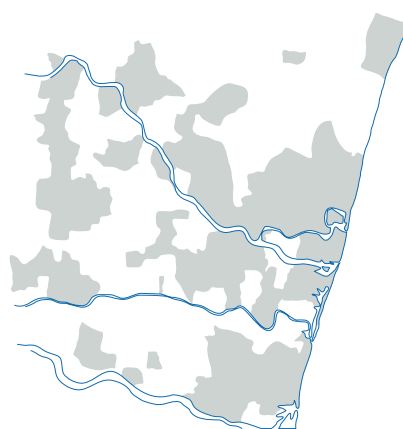
- Service of NSS Volunteer was taken up by the administration.
- Committee recommended to ensure the availability of AMF facilities, Ambulance & Firefighting teams in the premises of Polling Booth during Poll. IT Apps were developed for increasing Commission's initiatives on accessibility to PwD electors.
- Bulk SMS services to PwD electors for disseminating poll related information were widely used.
- Transport facility to PwD was provided.
- Screen Reader facility in CEO's Website and in IT apps for blind electors was put in place.
- A Nodal Officer was designated for Accessible Election

**Bulk SMS services to PwD electors for disseminating poll related information were widely used.**





UNION TERRITORY: **PUDUCHERRY**  
 REGISTERED ELECTORATE: **10,04,184**  
 REGISTERED PwDs: **12,126**



**P**uducherry was a French territory until 1954. The UT is surrounded by Andhra Pradesh, Kerala, and Tamil Nadu. The French influence however is still intact. Puducherry is the 29th most populous of the states and third most densely populated union territory of India.

### » BACKGROUND

Puducherry was a French territory until 1954. The UT is surrounded by Andhra Pradesh, Kerala, and Tamil Nadu. The French influence however is still intact.

Election Commission of India's vision that "No Voter to be left behind" and its concept of "Accessible Elections" was

further augmented with the introduction of 'Postal Ballot' facility for the first time to PwD electors, above 80 years of age and to COVID patients.

The Elections Department of Puducherry steered towards creating awareness on the Postal Ballot facility specifically amongst the targeted segments during the pre-phase and implementation on Poll Day of the recently concluded General Election to Puducherry Legislative Assembly 2021.

Polling personnel visiting residence of electors who availed postal ballot



In synch with Commission's theme towards an Accessible, inclusive and safe elections, and the importance attached to enable the participation of the Persons with Disabilities in the electoral process, Target specific awareness activities were organized so as to reach the groups concerned. It was ensured that every individual was educated on the facilitation provided and safety precautions arranged at the polling stations. The objective was to inform, empower and facilitate the elector to come forward and participate to make the world's largest democratic exercise inclusive.

## >> INITIATIVES

- To realize the objective of "Accessible Elections" exclusively Postal Ballot facility inter alia, PwD electors were mapped polling station-wise to provide them targeted and need based assistance on the day of poll.
- Thiru. K. Rajasekar, Oulgaret Assembly Constituency appreciated the efforts of the Elections Department in conducting an elaborate training on



Volunteers assisting PwD voters

Apart from the Assured minimum facilities (AMF) provided at the polling stations, special focus was given to the extension of Postal Ballot Facility to the PwD electors. They were given the option to seek postal ballot for casting their vote from their homes.

Casting of votes following covid safety precautions





**R. Sathya, Mangalam** Assembly Constituency said that during elections commuting to and fro to the Polling Booth and back home used to be such an arduous task

"Though I utilized the pick-up drop facility extended by the Elections Department during the 2019 Parliamentary elections; the introduction of postal ballot for Persons with Disabilities was an incredible move to ensure that citizens like us, who are physically challenged, can fulfill our duties"

Postal Ballot and demonstration on EVM-VVPAT at Satya Special School. He said, "The introduction of Postal Ballot was a big boon for persons like me to ensure that we could participate in the election and cast our votes at ease from our homes. This is certainly one huge step of reform towards a truly inclusive accessible election".

- Special focus was laid on the sensitization of the officials concerned in implementing the Postal Ballot facility on Poll Day. Orientation programs were held which enabled the officials involved understand the process and their roles and responsibility. In the UT of Puducherry, there was a high percentage of Postal Ballot turnout, to an extent of 1.73% of total electors. In all, 1546 PwD electors exercised their franchise through Postal Ballot during this General Election to Puducherry Legislative Assembly 2021.

### I GOT INKED

Three centenarians, voters since the first Elections of Puducherry Union Territory in 1964, were a sight to behold as they voted with ease with the technological advancement in voting system through the EVM. 101-year-old Vedhavalli of Sorapet Village, 102-year-old K Annamalai from Madukarai and Poongavanam a centenarian voter from Veerampattina were fascinated by the new facilities implemented by the Election Commission of India during the General Elections to Lok Sabha 2019.

Despite their age and physical ailments, the Centenarian voters fulfilled their fundamental duty of casting their vote religiously in each election over the years, to elect their representatives. Voters' like them are the reason behind strong democracy and high percentage of voter turnout out in Puducherry with an average of 80% and above.

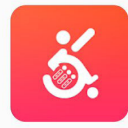




# Associations & Partnerships (CSOs/Icons)



**Your convenience is our duty!**

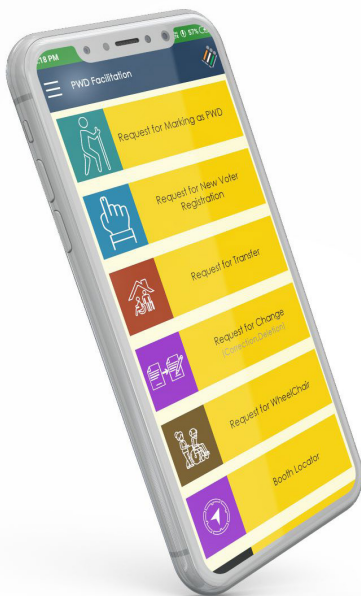


**PWD App**

Presenting a specially designed PWD App for persons with disabilities.

Now, Persons with Disabilities can do the following at ease through their mobile.

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- Request for Transfer
- Request for Change (Correction/Deletion)
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For more information, contact helpline number 1950 (toll free) or log on to <https://ceo.maharashtra.gov.in>.

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**E**CI periodically brings together the prime stakeholders (persons with disabilities), along with the Chief Electoral Officers, District Electoral Officers, officials from the Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities, officials from other concerned departments, technology partners and social partners across the table to discuss strategies to overcome any existing gaps and enhance the experience of accessible electoral process for voters with disabilities.

ECI promotes associations and partnerships with citizens groups across the country to engage and provide enhanced accessible elections experience to voters with disabilities. Following are the suggestions and recommendations received from the disability sector and the states

## FROM DISABILITY SECTOR

### >> BHUSHAN PUNANI

**Blind People's Association  
Ahmedabad**

"I very much appreciate efforts of ECI in providing Ballot Papers and other election material in Braille. Now ECI should provide ballot papers in Audio format also."

#### Recommendations

- **Text to Speech convertor:** To incorporate a system of "image text to speech conversion" in the Electronic

Voting Machines to enable the persons with visual impairment to capture the image of the paper slip generated by the printer in VVPAT. Image text to speech conversion (ITTS) device shall extract text and convert the text into speech that can be heard through the headphones. The ECI should request the manufacturers of VVPAT to incorporate this system for the convenience of the voters who are visually impaired.

- **Appointment of Persons with Disabilities as Booth Officials or Volunteers:** Some States permitted persons with disabilities as booth officers or Guides at the polling booths and the results were encouraging. The ECI should issue appropriate guidelines in regard for ensuring availability of persons with disabilities at the polling booths.
- **Training Manual in Local languages for training of Polling Officials w.r.t specific needs of persons with disabilities:** In the last General Election, some States had organized training sessions for the District Officials and the Polling officials. The ECI should develop standard material which should be provided to all State Election Commissioners in the local languages with mandatory provision for organizing such training programs.
- **Online Voting:** In the recent State Level elections, experiment was done for postal ballots and online voting for persons with restricted mobility or persons facing acute immobility. This concept should be formalized and guidelines issued well in advance.

- **Quality of Ramps:** Most States have accepted and implemented concept of providing ramps for wheelchair users. However, it is essential to carry out "Access Audit" of such ramps to ensure that they meet the basic requirements of gradient, quality and stability.
- **Proper Signage:** We need to provide proper signage for person with hearing impairment. The ECI should develop and circulate standard signage and ensure that such signage is used at all polling booths.
- **Orientation of District Election Officers:** It is essential to organize a full day training of all District Election Officers on various initiatives of ECI w.r.t. accessible elections and their role in ensuring the same.
- **Representation of leading NGOs, DPO and Persons with Disabilities in the State Election Commission and District Election team:** It would be easier to implement various provision of accessible election by providing such representation.
- **Ensure Implementation:** The initiative of providing free transport to persons with disabilities/ restricted movement has been accepted by ECI but it was not implemented universally in the last general elections. The guidelines and budget in this regard shall be provided to concerned authorities well in advance to ensure implementation of this provision.

## >> DEEPAK KALRA

Umang, Jaipur

"Most of the recommendations given by CSOs to ECI on Accessible Elections were implemented at ground level. Besides many State CEOs are doing their best for implementation."

## Recommendations

- A large number of youth had volunteered in last election and were highly motivated, but it was noticed that they were not aware of the special provisions for disabled, also in some booths they were not clear of their roles. It is recommended that a short video be made on the above issues and emailed to the volunteer as soon as they register themselves, so they are clear about their responsibility.
- Where possible Special educators could be used to train them in person as per standardised training program.
- Provision of transport for disabled on day of voting needs more serious planning. Almost all states had given this feedback after last election.
- There needs to be more discussion on persons with mental health issues, right from their right to vote and special provisions.
- Every district should have a model voting booth that anyone can visit and learn about dimensions, height of table, placement of furniture etc.
- More use of social media to share special provisions for various categories of disability as majority of stakeholders are not aware of these provisions.

## >> DAWINDER SINGH

State Advisory Board on Disabilities  
Punjab

"No process is perfect but so far whatever recommendations are being made by CSOs to the Election commission of India on accessible elections, most of them are being implemented at ground level. So overall we are moving in a positive direction."





### Recommendations

- Flagging of Disabled voters is a big issue in urban areas. In villages most of the disabled are quite evident and the sarpanch knows them even by their name. But in urban areas it's very tough to identify persons with few disabilities.
- The BLOs are already so occupied that they are least concerned about the disabled and this leads to spoiling the best efforts of ECI & CSOs
- Need to fill the gap between the best policies designed at ECI Level and implementation of those policies at ground level.
- For that instead of appointing dedicated officers and putting financial load on system, youth can be involved and can be paid on pro-rata basis as per number of disabled voters flagged by them, with proper disabled certificates.

### >> DR. RAJIV KUMAR PRESIDENT

**Happy Family Health Care & Research Association, Roorkee**

"Use technology as an accessibility tool. Geo-tagging of all Disabled persons should be done."

### Recommendations

- As we have plenty of time, Micro planning of residences of all disabled persons, booth wise can be made with the help of ASHA/Aanganwadi workers, District Disability Rehabilitation Centres, NGOs, BLO etc.
- In the hills, to transport disabled persons from far flung hilly areas to polling booth, "DOLI SYSTEM" should be used.
- Since we have identified all the PwDs and marked their disabilities, we can plan accordingly. Those suffering from

immobility can have mobile EVM which can be sent through Sector Magistrate to his/her home for casting vote on the day of polling or Postal ballot option can be exercised for such persons.

- For visually impaired persons Magnifying glasses can be placed in the polling booths beside facility of volunteers as with the case of Intellectually disabled persons, where need arises.
- For hearing impaired cases, in Uttarakhand all returning officers were trained for basic knowledge of Sign language. It can be done in other states or if volunteers with knowledge of sign language are available. They can be stationed in booths where hearing impaired persons are likely to cast their vote.

### >> SANJAY KUMAR

**Deputy Director (Admin)  
ISLRTC, Government of India**

### Recommendations

- Awareness videos of small duration may be prepared in Indian Sign Language, ISL with the help of Indian Sign Language Research and Training Centre (ISLRTC) on following topics:
  - a) How to search pooling booth.
  - b) How to vote.
  - c) No. of contesting candidates, with their sign and brief profile.
  - d) General instructions issued by ECI etc.
- NCERT may be approached to circulate such videos in their DIKSHA portal for wider publicity among teachers as they are normally deputed for election duties.
- UGC may be asked to issue instructions to all Universities and Colleges to display such videos in their campus at common place.
- The videos prepared in ISL may be widely

circulated through electronic media and social media. The videos may be shared with ISLRTC for wider dissemination among deaf community, renowned organisation, deaf schools etc.

- All awareness material prepared by ECI and for which ISL videos are prepared, may have barcode which can be printed on the poster, pamphlets etc., with a remark/sign that hearing impaired persons can scan the barcode and assess the ISL Video.
- The District Authorities may be asked to prepare a list of candidates with their sign (and brief profile if feasible) in ISL Videos along with their barcode. Such videos may be printed on the poster, pamphlets etc for wider dissemination. Such videos may be played on TV screens at least in District Headquarter Bus Stands, Colleges, Government Offices, Railway Stations etc. for wider dissemination. The videos may be shared with all schools and with NGO's working at the district level.
- Separate set of words and terminology used generally at polling booth may be prepared by ECI for making Videos in ISL. This would also facilitate officials deputed for election duty to communicate with Hearing Impaired persons at polling booth. These videos should have sign, Audio and captioning, preferably in local language.
- This can be circulated through WhatsApp to all officials deputed for election duty in local/Hindi language. These videos can also be circulated to all district Headquarters for further disseminating to Block Level Officials /Gram Pradhan to further share these videos to hearing impaired persons in the area.
- It has been brought to notice that hearing impaired persons are asked to stand in a normal queue. Appropriate instruction

may be issued in the guidelines prepared by ECI that hearing impaired persons may be permitted to vote as per the specific provisions made at polling booth for PwD voters.

## >> SUVARNA RAJ

### Social Worker

"In my opinion, there is a need to appoint a regional consultant in every region, because each state has its own issues and its own language. It is not necessary that any person sitting in Maharashtra can understand the issues of Bengal. Common person with disability needs everything in his own language."

- Any building which is a polling booth should be accessible to persons with disabilities. It is mandatory for all government and private buildings to be accessible under the RPWD Act and such measures cannot be temporary.
- Access audit before elections is important to assess how a particular building or environment performs in terms of accessibility and ease of use by a wide range of actual and potential users, including persons with disabilities.
- Enforce Accessibility to enforce the inclusion of accessibility for persons with disabilities in the official agenda of the government and private agencies.
- Create Awareness of the importance of the concept of barrier-free environments for persons with disabilities.
- The Audit Report should include observations, measurements, sketches, and photographs covering all parts of the public building audited, including the external and internal environment and



the services provided in the building.

- PWD's Requirements at the Polling booth should be sensitively designed.
- For accessing the premises, for a person with a disability, the parking area must be nearest to the polling booth, along with an approachable route to the entrance. Appropriate signs and symbols, street furniture and transport accessibility that can help them reach the voting area easily, are a must.
- Steps with railing and ramp must be present and free of obstacles. The entrance doors should be wide enough and should be equipped with thresholds.
- Reception areas should include desks, seating, and lighting Illumination (100 to 150 lux).
- Building and service should be tailor made for people with hearing/visual impaired as they face considerable challenges. An inclusive & sensitized attitude and appropriately trained staff (BLO, Volunteers, etc.) should be present at every polling booth for their assistance.
- Visually Impaired candidates should be permitted a companion to accompany them inside the polling booth. Also, a candidate sheet in braille and braille EVM should be present in the booth for their convenience. Since a handful of people are familiar with sign language, interpreters and communicators of sign

language are necessary. A few issues that need to be addressed include: -

- a) PWD App Accessibility
- b) Easy Voters ID card Procedure
- c) PWD Icons must be included in the process locally
- d) District level briefings to the ECI grassroots officials.

## >> DR. AMITABH MEHROTRA

Director, SPARC India

### Recommendations

- Suggestive Measures for neurologically disabled people to ensure ease of registration and voting:
  - Identification of eligible PwD citizens
  - Marking in E- Roll Database
  - Facilitation to the eligible PwD Citizens
  - Set up of special exclusive Polling Booths for PwD
  - Creating facilities in Polling Booths according to need of PwD.
  - Assistance at Polling Station on poll day
  - Dissemination of information regarding available facilities to the Stakeholders, Political Parties, Election Machinery, Media, Electors.
  - SVEEP activities for registration, poll day and ethical voting
  - Identification of special needs, if any





## FROM THE STATES

### >> ARUNACHAL PRADESH

**Trupten Tsering**, Indian Idol amputee singer conducted awareness campaigns during election 2019.



Trupten Tsering,  
Indian Idol  
amputee singer

### >> ASSAM

Three NGOs, Shishu Sarothi, Ashadeep and Swabalambi and the DPO Pratibandhi Suraksha Sanstha were members of the advisory group for the District Election Office (DEO) for Kamrup (M) district. They provided inputs on procuring wheelchairs for all polling booths and AMF for voters with disabilities and for dissemination of information on postal ballots.

Other NGOs like Mrinaljyoti Rehabilitation Centre and Prerona Pratibandhi Sishu Bikash Kendra worked with DEOs for Dibrugarh and Jorhat district respectively to create awareness amongst people with disabilities to come out and exercise their right to vote. A Walkathon was organised by Shishu Sarothi in Kamrup district to create awareness amongst voters with disabilities in the district where stakeholders were apprised of various provisions introduced specially to ensure inclusion of persons with disabilities, elderly voters above 80 years of age and Covid-19 affected voters who may have difficulties in physically going to polling stations.

Keeping accessibility and ease of voting in mind for the PwD voters, Goalpara Election District designed a simple and user-friendly App called "Divyang Sarathi-Goalpara" to facilitate the PwD voters with transportation facilities. Using this mobile App, the PwD voters could request for

transportation to the polling station at a specified time slot.

Appeal by young deaf & dumb voters-Jorhat Jorhat Deaf & Dumb School was made part of SVEEP activities in the district and a special awareness video was made where the young deaf & dumb voters appealed for ethical voting. Not only this brought these voters into the mainstream, as envisioned by the ECI, it also had the ability to inspire general voters.



Rakesh Banik, Para-cyclist

**Rakesh Banik**, Noted Para-cyclist and PwD icon for Assam, travelled to 15 districts of the state and urged people to cast their votes for the welfare of our region. "Ride for Vote was a massive success across Assam and I extend my heartfelt gratitude for giving me such an incredible opportunity. My passion for cycling had met the right purpose when I was roped in for the state election cycling campaign throughout Assam. As a part of the initiative, I cycled through Assam, met youngsters and spoke to them about my journey as the reason to spread information about how a single vote can bring about a change into the entire dynamics of our state.



Piyali Foundation, Chhattisgarh

## » CHHATTISGARH

**Piyali Foundation** run by Jagruk Parents Association Raipur in collaboration with the office of the CEO Raipur organised workshops for CSOs and DPOs.

The CSO met with all experts in their field of disabilities and gender equality and took suggestions from the experts. Workshops were conducted to invite inputs from BLOs, Polling officers, Government officials regarding the needs of PwDs and trans-genders. Mapping of PwDs was done to get the accurate data.

Besides, the CSO met with stakeholders, created a model dummy booth and dummy EVM so as to make the PwD aware and in turn get a clear idea about their needs. A social audit was also done to monitor the facilities available.

## » GUJARAT

Visually challenged cricketer **Ganesh Muhudkar** as the PwD Icon, from Dharampur, Valsad participated in all SVEEP awareness activities and created awareness among the Satipati



Ganesh Madhukar, cricket player (Blind)

tribal community to register themselves as voters and cast their vote for an inclusive democracy. The community owing to lack of faith in the government machinery had for years distanced themselves from the mainstream public life.

In association with the district election team Ganesh spoke to the community about the role of the government and shared his personal experience with the community on the aid and support he received from the government. Subsequently 1577 members of the community enrolled as voters. The participation of the state icon in various SVEEP activities over the years aided in momentous voting turnout in the last Lok Sabha elections.

## » HIMACHAL PRADESH

Assistant Professor cum Officer In charge Manjeet Singh Saini of Composite Regional Centre for Skill Development, Rehabilitation and Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (Under Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment, Government of India), Sundernagar, District Mandi (HP) was appointed by the Election

Commission of India as Nodal Officer (HP) for further coordination on technical standards for accessibility of PwDs for the General Elections - 2019.

A separate booth was set up at Himachal Pradesh Institute for Children with Special Abilities, Sundernagar, Mandi (HP) with Special Auxiliary tag. This was especially meant for PwD voters. Polling party was also drawn from PwDs. Specially trained Sign Language interpreters and persons trained in braille were deputed along with six special education trainees as volunteers. 18 accessible booths were developed as model booths that were made barrier-free and provided all the basic amenities. All these booths were provided with Braille experts and Sign language knowing experts.

For sensitizing the masses, a number of steps were taken under the SVEEP programme of Election Commission of India. A total of 1338 Presiding Officers, Polling Officers and other personnel were sensitized towards the voting procedure of Persons with Disabilities and Sign Language and the Braille in brief. They were also provided with Braille alphabet charts oriented with the Braille Ballot Paper.

**Muskan Thakur's** message, "When the blind persons like me exercise my right to vote, why can't you? Was a clarion call for PwD populace in Himachal who believed that the blind couldn't vote. The singer contributed her bit in creating awareness through outdoor broadcast activities in College/Universities and public places. She also sent out motivational Videos and Audios informing about the Election Commission's AMF to encourage people to come out and vote.

"It's our right guaranteed by the



Muskan Thakur, Singer

Constitution of India and also national responsibility as enshrined in the constitution, to choose good government for a better future. We all must go to vote and motivate others to strengthen our democracy," she emphasised.

## >> JAMMU & KASHMIR

CSO Hope Disability Centre in collaboration with National Development Foundation NGO and Humanity Welfare organisation Helpline Kashmir organised special camps for registration of PwDs across the U.T of J&K and Ladakh. They made people aware of the AMF and ensured that proper rampa were built at the polling stations.

PwD Icon **Chandeep Singh** a Para Athlete assisted the election department in



Chandeep Singh, Para Athlete





identifying disabled unregistered youth and assisted in getting them registered.

## >> KARNATAKA

State Icons played an iconic role in creating awareness among the PwD electors!



Muskan Thakur, Singer

**Ashwini Angadi**, 27-year-old from Bengaluru was among the seven young girls from across the world who were honoured with the UN Special Envoy for Global Education's Youth Courage award for Education,

She appealed to all voters to vote without fail. "Voting is your civic duty. Just as it is the responsibility of the elected leader to ensure the well-beings of the voters, it is the duty for the people of India to contribute to choosing the correct leader for their representation" she urged people.

Add to that **Girish N. Gowda** a Paralympic high jumper from India, Shekar Naik, visually impaired Cricketer, Vishwas KS, Paralympic athlete swimmer, Prakash Jayaramaiah from India blind cricket team took part in SVEEP activities, rallies and communicated about registration, ethical voting and the accessibility initiatives of the Election Commission.



Girish N. Gowda, Paralympic high jumper

In India, first time there were 26 polling stations fully managed by PwDs who performed efficiently and successfully which clearly demonstrated their ability and competence to participate in the difficult Electoral processes.

## >> MADHYA PRADESH



CSO Arushi

CSO **Arushi** has been facilitating the participation of people with disabilities in elections by helping them exercise their right to vote. People with disabilities often face difficulty in reaching the polling booths. There are many other barriers in the entire process of casting votes. Volunteers from Arushi accompany them to the polling booths and train people who are blind or visually impaired to vote independently. In 2008, Arushi introduced Braille in electronic voting machines. Bhopal, in a creditable first, is the only city in the country where all 1,150 polling booths in urban areas are Braille-enabled.



## » MAHARASHTRA

Actively engaged with the Election Process since 2001, CSO **V Can** Mumbai addresses the issue of Inclusive Accessibility of the built infrastructure, transportation, public utilities and other objects of public use for the citizens and voters with respect to all aspects of the Electoral Process.

As a part of the accessibility initiatives a first of its kind facility for PwDs, 'Seedee Wheelchair', was introduced for Maharashtra Assembly election 2019. This special battery-operated wheelchair called SEEDEE, could be taken up the stairs and also brought down and safely halted midway as well.

It was used in identified polling booths, in Greater Mumbai both in Mumbai Suburban and Mumbai City Districts, as well as in one place in Nagpur. The service was provided totally free, including the trained staff to operate the wheelchairs.

Additionally, special vehicles/taxis were equipped with a mechanised ramp for the wheelchair to be taken into the taxi and safely out as well. As part of our commitment to Accessibility, VCAN had booked such taxis for use on polling day in Greater Mumbai, both for Lok Sabha and Vidhan Sabha Elections.

These vehicles were made available to the District Election Offices of Mumbai City and Mumbai Suburban and executed multiple trips for PwDs. Logistics were worked out for maximum use of these vehicles. We also used their call centre facility.

Centenarian **Satyabodh Narayan Singit**, who turned 100 this year, has never failed to vote. He was a Freedom Fighter and to this day remains a Gandhian. Like many

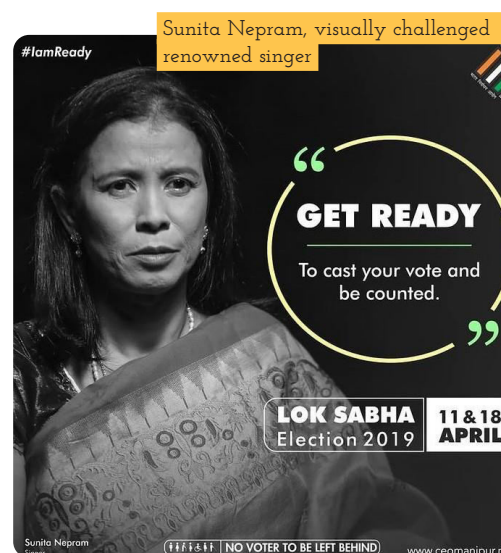
others at the time, he went to jail during the Quit India movement.

"During the Lok Sabha Election 2019, it was a treat to interact with Shri Satyabodh Narayan Singit, paternal grandfather of Shri Nilesh Singit, the ECL's PwD Icon Maharashtra," said Indrani Malkani the Chairman of V Citizens Action Network (VCAN). A wheelchair accessible vehicle was sent to the residence of the Singits and both grandfather and grandson were wheeled in, whilst the other members of the family reached the polling station directly.

## » MANIPUR

CSO Handicapped Development (HD) Foundation, Manipur organized awareness campaigns in various districts with stakeholders including District Election Officers, District Social Welfare Officer, Barrier Free Campaign Committee, Village Chiefs, Persons with Disabilities, Parents, etc.

State PwD Icon: **Sunita Nepram**, a visually challenged & a renowned singer from Bishnupur district was engaged as PwD





State Icon of Manipur since 2018.

Sunita Nepnam actively cooperated with the Chief Electoral Officer, Manipur in creating awareness for Persons with Disability. During the Lok Sabha 2019, she took the initiative of disseminating information on registration and accessible elections to her friends, neighbours and among the PwD community.



Handicapped Development Foundation, Manipur

During the period of Campaign, **Handicapped Development Foundation**, Manipur also tied up with various CSOs working for PwDs in the districts. Persons with Disabilities turned up in large numbers and were encouraged to register in the Electoral Rolls and to exercise their universal adult franchise in the Lok Sabha Election, 2019

## >> ODISHA

Civil Society Organisations like **Swabhiman, Odisha Election Watch** played a major role in training and capacity building. These CSOs at the State level and several other NGOs at the district level were associated with the DEOs for training and support services to PwD voters.

Five eminent personalities from various fields were appointed by the CEO for

spreading awareness among voters and conducting various sensitisation drives for the General Election, 2019. They were: Sprinter Dutee Chand, para-athlete Jayanti Behera, para shuttler Pramod Bhagat, Cine Artist Sivani Sangita and Swaraj Barik.



Jayanti Behera, Para athlete



Pramod Bhagat, Para-shuttler

State PwD Icons: Para athlete **Jayanti Behera** and para-shuttler **Pramod Bhagat**.

PwD Engagements: Campaigns, workshops on electoral reforms, District level Convention - involving key stakeholders with regional consultation meeting, Prepare Audio Visual Campaign Material, Radio & TV spot, State level Quiz Competitions. These initiatives created a positive environment and culture for equal access, empathy, and dignity of the PwDs voters leading to their enhanced participation in the electoral process.

## >> PUDUCHERRY

CSO **Satya Special School** as an organisation committed to including people with disabilities in the main stream, enthusiastically supported the government in ensuring that the elections inclusive and accessible. They participated in enrolment of people with intellectual disability, postal ballot and accessible elections awareness programs, youth voters fest etc.

## >> RAJASTHAN

At present, 130 CSOs/NGOs working in the PwD field are the permanent SVEEP partners of the Election Department, Rajasthan. The inputs of the CSOs have been instrumental in the continuous refinement of AMF facilitation at the more than 50,000 polling stations in the State.

With the help of SJED and the CSOs/NGOs in the PwD field, more than 5 lakh PwD electors have been mapped in the Electoral Roll. 4.81 lakh PwD Electors were flagged on the Electoral Rolls during the SSR2021. This figure now stands at 5,01,923.

CSOs like **Umang** played an important role in steering the standardization of the AMF facilities at the Polling Stations. The CSO, also a member of ECI's National Steering Committee on Accessible Elections, created a model AMF set-up at the Umang premises. (e.g., proper-gradient ramps, proper-height tables for EVM-VVPAT, wide entries and exits, signages etc., for voter education purpose).

In Chittorgarh, NGO **Aapno Sight** did a commendable work for carrying out third-party audit for the AMF facilities and efforts for accessible election at the polling stations. The Electoral Literacy Clubs at the level of NGOs are a strong tool for spreading awareness towards their duty

as citizen of India. With the help of SJED Nodals and CSOs, Hands-on Training for NVSP registration process was conducted for District PwD Nodals, PwD-related NGOs and CSOs and Government Homes for Intellectual Challenged.



Devendra Jhajhariya, Paralympian javelin thrower

**Devendra Jhajhariya** Paralympian javelin thrower, was appointed State Icon in 2016 and has been the National PwD Icon since 2018. A craze among the youth of Rajasthan, his life has been inspiring all along. He participated in all voter awareness programmes of the Election Department.

**Shatabdi Awasthi**, Para athlete was also appointed State Icon recently on 28.08.2021 to engage with the PwDs in spreading awareness about electoral participation.

## >> SIKKIM

The CSOs showed some notable work for Accessible elections with PwDs with disabilities and helped in their enrolment as electors during the Summary Revisions:

- i. Spastic Society of Sikkim, Syari, Gangtok
- ii. Sikkim Viklang Sahyog Samiti, Gangtok
- iii. National Association for Blind State PwD Icons: Special Olympian and a Gold medallist **Nirmal Charda Dahal**



Nirmal Charda Dahal, Body Builder



and popular Body Builder in the State, and a motivational speaker, **Joseph Subba**

These CSOs actively took part in all the meetings of the State Steering Committee for Accessible Elections and made credible suggestions on behalf of the PwD voters which were implemented during the General Elections, 2019.

## >> TELANGANA

State PwD Icons **Abhinaya Hearing** and Speech impaired film Actress, **Ramanjaneyulu Boya** international wheel chair para badminton Player and **Sravya** International visually impaired Singer spoke about their electoral experience through videos, motivating the PwDs.



Samir Barman, para national level swimmer

## >> TRIPURA

**Samir Barman**, para national level swimmer contributed his bit through video messages during revision of electoral rolls and spreading awareness about accessible elections to the especially-abled.

## >> UTTAR PRADESH

Padamshree **Arunima Sinha** world's first amputee Everest climber and **Arun Kumar**, Gold medallist para power lifting, created awareness on social media about the importance of registering as voters and exercising their franchise.



Arunima Sinha, amputee Everest climber

## >> WEST BENGAL

Some leading CSOs like **Indian Red Cross Society**, **Sevadarpan**, **Asha Bhavan Centre** and **Naba Bharat Pratibandhi Sevakendra** helped in providing wheel chair & tri-cycle to the disabled and infirm voters. They assisted in awareness generation among PwD in casting their votes and assisting them with transport to and from the Polling Centre.

These CSO/NGO regularly assisted the District Administration in each accessibility activity organised from their district, such as awareness programme, in applying for postal ballot and participated in each meeting.

**Nadia Ranaghat Sampriti Society** a community-based organization, for LGBTHIQ+ keeping in mind the problems of LGBTHIQ people, organized SVEEP awareness workshops in general election, 2021 for the Transgender community.



Turnstone Global

**Turnstone Global** worked closely with DEO and campaigned for youth, women and Persons with disability through door-to-door campaign, SMSs, and WhatsApp messages. Apart from these, to cut urban apathy the CSO organised awareness quiz Competition.



## >> LIST OF (PwD ICONS)

S.No.	Name	Details	States/UTs	Contact Details (Mobile No. & E. Mail)
1	Shri Ajay Kumar Reddy	Captain of Visually Impaired Indian Cricket Team	Andhra Pradesh	NA
2	Mr. Thupten Tsering	Singer Amputee	Arunachal Pradesh	Mob: 09560670250 email: thupten.tsering@gmail.com
3	Shri Rakesh Banik	Para Cyclist	Assam	Mob: 07002891936 email: rakeshparacyclist@outlook.com
4	Sh. Chitrasen	Civil Engineer, National Wheel Chair Basketball player, Double Leg Amputation	Chhattisgarh	Mob: 09907840881 email: halfhumanrobo@gmail.com
5	Taha Haziq	NA	Goa	NA
6	Mr. Ganesh Mahudkar	Cricket player - Blind	Gujarat	Mob: 0823474759 email: ganeshmahudkar@gmail.com
7	Ms Muskan Thakur	Singer- Blind	Himachal Pradesh	Mob: 094189-94439 email: Muskannegil8@gmail.com
8	Mr. Girisha Hosanagara Nagarajegowda	Paralympian Athlete	Karnataka	Mob: 09980784382 email: Girishhn26@gmail.com
9	Ms Divya Jyoti Jain	International 3rd Runner (Deaf)	Madhya Pradesh	Mob: -09425141757 email: Wh.tikamgarh@mycem.in
10	Ms Sunita Nepam	Renowned Singer - Visually Challenged	Manipur	NA



S.No.	Name	Details	States/UTs	Contact Details (Mobile No. & E. Mail)
11	Light After Dark	Visually Impaired Music Band	Meghalaya	Mob: 7005338526 email: lalomlianasailo@ymail.com
12	Padmashree Bertha Dkhar	Visually Impaired		Principal, Jyoti Sroat School, Bethany Society, Lady Veronica Lane, Laitumkhrah, Shillong, Meghalaya - 793003 Ph.- 0364-2222111 email:jssie08@gmail.com
13	Mr. Pramod Bhagat	Badminton(Para)	Odisha	NA
14	Ms.Jayanti Behera	NA		
15	Sh Vivek Joshi	Cerebral palsy 100% disable On wheel chair is a National Awardee by President of India	Punjab	NA
16	Miss Mona Goyal	Visually impaired is a lecturer by profession		
17	Shri Nirmal Charda Dahal	Special Olympian and Gold Medallist- cerebral palsy 100% disable & Visually impaired	Sikkim	NA

S.No.	Name	Details	States/UTs	Contact Details (Mobile No. & E. Mail)
18	Abhinaya	i. Film Actress - Hearing and Speech impaired	Telangana	NA
19	RamanjaneyuluBoya	ii. International wheel chair para badminton player		
20	Sraya	iii. International visually impaired Singer		
21	Sh. Samir Barman	National Level Para Swimmer Total Medals = 26 Nos. (Gold-20 Nos. & Silver Nos.-6)	Tripura	8014726774
22	AnkurDhama	1. Para Athlete	Delhi	Mob: 09999351856 Mob: 09312062637 email: Ankur.etheleet@ gmail.com
23	Neeraj Yadav	2. Javelin Throw		Mob: 08076308310 Mob: 00071317803 email: Neeraj.ny@gmail.com
24	Shri Chandeeep Singh	Para Athlete - Loss of both of his arm at the age of 11 due to electric shock	Jammu & Kashmir & Ladakh (UT)	NA
25	Smt. MitaliSamanta	Having Locomotors Disability	West Bengal	NA
26	Ms. Arunima Sinha	First female amputee climb to Mt. Everest	Uttar Pradesh	NA
27	Mr. Lalbuatsaiha	Asstt. Professor- Dept. of Political Science- Blind	Mizoram	Mob: 09612146892 email: buatapcl@gmail. com



# Lok Sabha Election 2019

## लोक सभा चुनाव २०१९

Accessible Elections सुगम मतदान



### Key Sign for communication with Deaf / Hard of Hearing Voters

1	 <b>Deaf / Hard of Hearing Voters</b> बधिर / कम सुनने वाले मतदाता	7	 <b>Do not remove the ink</b> स्याही नहीं हटाये
2	 <b>Write Your Name</b> अपना नाम लिखें	8	 <b>Sign or thumb Impression</b> हस्ताक्षर या अंगूठा लगाएं
3	 <b>Show me Voter Card</b> मतदाता पहचान पत्र दिखाएं	9	 <b>Go to Compartment</b> मतदान कक्ष में जाएँ
4	 <b>If His/Her Name is in the Voter List</b> आपका नाम मतदाता सूची में है	10	 <b>Press the button of your choice in the EVM machine</b> ईवीएम पर अपनी पसंद का बटन दबाएं
5	 <b>Sorry your name is not in the voter's List</b> आपका नाम मतदाता सूची में नहीं है	11	 <b>Yes/ No</b> हाँ / ना
6	 <b>Left Hand</b> बायां हाथ	12	 <b>Thank You</b> धन्यवाद

Election Commission of India  
www.eci.gov.in

Voter Helpline  
1950

www.nvsp.in

NO VOTER  
TO BE LEFT  
BEHIND





# Way forward

May 12, 2018



## ENABLING DEMOCRACY FOR YOU

Exercise your vote



#AllToPoll  
[www.ceokarnataka.kar.nic.in](http://www.ceokarnataka.kar.nic.in)



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**A**ccording to the Constitution of India, Article 14, all citizens should be ensured equal rights, safety and justice. Government should ensure their fundamental rights without discrimination.

**Recommendation 1: Comprehensive monitoring mechanism and provision of adequate funds to ensure accessible infrastructure at polling stations and for development of accessible communication formats**

Comprehensive monitoring mechanism at the ground level to be devised for ensuring standardised accessible facilities are available at Ground Level. Besides, adequate Budget is to be allocated for creation of accessible facilities for Voters with Disabilities, including awareness material in accessible formats and improvised facilities at polling stations.

**It is recommended to integrate all existing policies and programs in lines of ensuring that elections are fully accessible and inclusive for persons with Disabilities.**

**Recommendation 2: Accessibility Assessment**

Elaborate (or) detailed Accessibility Assessment of all polling Stations to be carried out by trained personnel to ensure standardised accessible infrastructure at all polling stations.

**Recommendation 3: Integration of all mainstream policies and programs for Persons with Disabilities**

Various Ministries and Departments at the National and State Level cater to persons with disabilities through their programs and services, based on disability policies and schemes. These departments also arrive at specific Government Orders & notifications to ensure their implementation at grassroots level. However, there is no central integrated mechanism to monitor all the existing policies across departments. Therefore, it is recommended to integrate all existing policies and programs in lines of ensuring that elections are fully accessible and inclusive for persons with Disabilities.

**Recommendation 4: Advanced capacity of human resource (Training and sensitization)**

Continued training and sensitization of all officers, staff, police officials etc. involved in the election process is key. The knowledge and attitude of the work force is crucial for ensuring non-discrimination and participation. Human resource capacity should be improvised/ advanced through effective education and training of

**FACILITIES FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES ON ELECTION DAY**

EVERY BOOTH WILL HAVE SOME SPECIAL ARRANGEMENTS

<b>RAMP &amp; WHEEL CHAIR</b>		<b>TRANSPORT FACILITY</b>	
<b>EVM WITH BRAILLE</b>		<b>VOTER HELPLINE</b>	
<b>SIGN LANGUAGE</b>		<b>SIGNAGE</b>	
<b>SPECIAL VOLUNTEERS</b>		<b>PRIORITY ACCESS</b>	

**#GoVote**

**Voter Helpline : 1950 | [www.nvsp.in](http://www.nvsp.in)**

@ECISVEEP 
 @ecisveep 
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 Election Commission of India

election officials, on dealing with persons with Disabilities by engaging experiential experts. Training of Nodal officers to be carried out to ensure all publications are in accessible format.

**Recommendation 5: Increased public awareness on disability and social perspectives to disability through SVEEP activities.**

Mutual respect and understanding contribute to an inclusive society. Therefore it is vital to improve public understanding of disability, confront negative perceptions, and represent disability fairly. In most cases,

persons with disabilities are excluded due to social barriers including negative attitudes and may not be able to show interest to be involved in electoral process. Information on social and developmental perspectives and etiquette on disability can help identify gaps in public understanding that can be bridged through education, awareness and public information.

Engagement strategies with Icons with disabilities need to be revisited to motivate persons with disabilities to get enrolled, identified as voters with disabilities and to vote.





### Recommendation 6: Improved disability data

Currently, persons with disabilities get marked in electoral roll by self declaration and have option to categorise under 4 sub categories viz. Visually impaired, hearing impaired, locomotor disability and others. There is a process of mapping persons with disabilities in specific disability category in electoral roll. The Commission is of the view to enrich the actual data to ensure appropriate facilitations and maximum participation of persons with Disabilities. Maximum people need to be reached out and sensitized, so that they get registered as voters and participate in electoral process. Special drives may be conducted to enroll persons with intellectual and psycho social disabilities. Data collected, may be cross-verified with the database of concerned departments.

### Recommendation 7: Increased awareness on Postal Ballot facility for persons with disabilities and senior citizens

The facility of opting for postal ballot has been extended beyond the election duty officials.

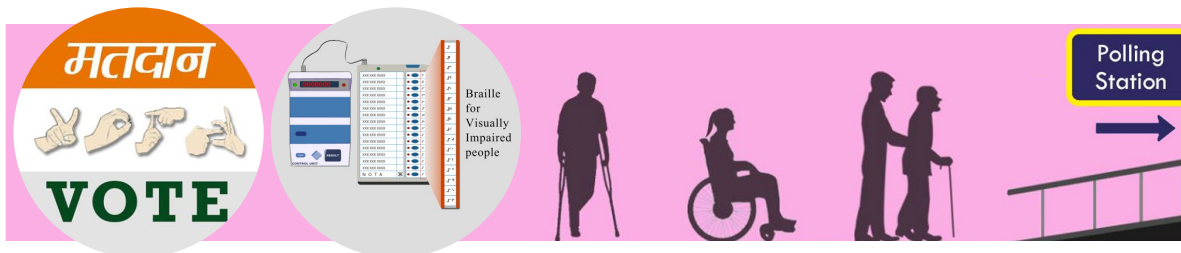
Persons with disabilities with restricted mobility and senior citizens of age 80 years and above have been provided the option of postal ballot in the year 2019, however the aforesaid facility needs to be promoted among the stakeholders to generate awareness about this novel initiative.

### Recommendation 8: Robust IVRS Helpline and WhatsApp grievance mechanism

In addition to the existing PwD mobile Application, Robust IVRS based grievance redressal mechanism, WhatsApp helpline (Chat bot & sign language video call facility) should be made available during all times in addition to Election periods for the purpose of assisting PwD voters.

### Recommendation 9: Deployment of Specific Observers to ensure Accessibility at all Levels of electoral process

Specific Observers shall be deployed in all elections conducted by the Election Commission of India to ensure Accessible Electoral process at State, District, AC and polling station level. Micro observers, preferably from the disabled fraternity to be identified amongst the pool of officers as well as eligible members from Civil Society Organisations may be deployed to oversee the arrangements at grass root level and report back to the Commission for further public discussion.









## Election Commission of India

Nirvachan Sadan, Ashoka Road, New Delhi-110001

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