

# Systematic Voters' Education & Electoral Participation (SVEEP)

➔ INFORMATION ➔ MOTIVATION ➔ FACILITATION



**Systematic Voters' Education and Electoral Participation (SVEEP)** is a multi-intervention programme that reaches out through different modes and media to educate citizens, electors and voters about the electoral process in order to increase their awareness and participation. SVEEP is designed according to the socio-economic, cultural and demographic profile of the state as well as history of electoral participation in previous rounds of elections and learning thereof.

## The Rationale

India is the largest democracy with the second largest population in the world and the voter is the central actor of this institution. The success of democracy thrives on the free, fair, ethical and inducement-free participation of each citizen. Hence, it is imperative for all to not only understand the significance of this right that ensures many others, but also to have appropriate information and know-hows of the electoral process for easy participation. SVEEP provides the information and motivation needed for active and aware engagement in the electoral process, especially reaching out to those in difficult circumstances of life.





## Setting Sight

- ▶ Increasing electoral participation through voter registration and turnout
- ▶ Increasing qualitative participation in terms of ethical and informed voting
- ▶ Continuous electoral and democracy education

### Charting the Course

SVEEP is designed to address gaps in two phases

1

#### The pre-poll phase

(registration of voters)

2

#### The poll phase

(turnout of voters to cast their vote)

# This is Achieved Through

- ▶ Situation Analysis (Gap Analysis through Elector Population Ratio, Age Cohort, Gender Ratio, KABBP Surveys)
- ▶ Planning & Preparation (Preparation of National Framework of Action Plan, Preparation of State SVEEP Plans, Preparation of District SVEEP Plans based on polling station level gaps, Drafting the Calendar of Activities, Developing content for creatives, Resource Allocation, Formation of SVEEP Core Committees at State & District level, Formation of Booth Awareness Groups (BAGs)/Village Awareness Groups (VAGs), Appointment of Nodal Officers at State & District level, Training & Capacity Building of officers)
- ▶ Partnerships & Collaborations (Government Departments, Educational Institutions, Youth Organisations, Media Houses, Civil Society Organisations/ Non- Governmental Organisations, Corporate Houses & Public Sector Undertakings, Associations & Federations, National & State Icons, Individuals & Groups as Volunteers)
- ▶ Implementation (Information-Motivation-Facilitation, Mass Mobilisation, Inclusion, Targeted Interventions, Specific Innovations)
- ▶ Monitoring & Evaluation (Reporting, KABBP Survey, Feedback, Documentation)



# Plan of Action

SVEEP works on a three-pronged strategy of

## INFORMATION

Meeting the gaps in information related to registration and voting process – the What, Where and How of the electoral process through interpersonal communication, mid-media, inter-media and mass media tools



## MOTIVATION

Making citizens aware of their electoral rights and duties besides urging and encouraging citizens to partake in elections



## FACILITATION

Delivery of services and facilities to make registration and voting more accessible, easier, quicker and hassle-free

After assessing the electoral participation trends during previous electoral cycles in a specific region through situation and gap analysis, SVEEP plans are chalked out and implemented through the Chief Electoral Officers in the States and Union Territories and the District Election Officers in the Districts. Targeted interventions are implemented thereafter, and initiatives strengthened with partnerships and collaborations. A robust monitoring and review mechanism helps evaluate the progress made which is in turn documented and shared for learning.

# Sharing Responsibilities

## National Level

The Systematic Voter Education and Electoral Participation Division at ECI formulates policies, lays down the framework, plans interventions and monitors implementation besides carrying out continuous discourse with voting publics, civil society groups and media. Realizing the intricacies of bringing out a behavioural change among people, ECI emphasized on social orientation and collaborative approach in the whole process of SVEEP.

## State Level

In each of the State CEO's office, an officer is assigned the charge of the SVEEP programme in the state. Core groups at state comprising representatives from Government departments, Educational institutions, Youth organizations and Civil Society Groups facilitate voluntary action for electoral participation. Additionally, Awareness Observers are appointed to monitor SVEEP work during elections.

## District Level

At district level the institution of District Collector – the administrative head of a district – traditionally plays the key role in election management. The District Collector is usually the District Election Officer (DEO). They spearhead the implementation of the SVEEP programme at district level. A district SVEEP committee is constituted at the district level headed by the Chief Executive Officer of the Zila Parishad/Chief Development Officer, who is mostly an Additional District Magistrate, to supervise the implementation of the programme in the district.

## Booth Level

Since 2006, the ECI has introduced the institution of Booth Level Officers, popularly known as BLOs, who generally cover one or two Polling Stations and are responsible for maintaining the electoral roll in good health. Overall, custodian of electoral roll of an Assembly/Parliamentary Constituency is the Electoral Registration Officer. Also, Booth Awareness Groups are formed at Booth level comprising of officials and members of civil society to disseminate information and facilitate people's participation.



*Students with voter awareness messages, Arunachal Pradesh*

# The Evolution

## SVEEP I (2009-2013)

The seed of SVEEP was born out of managerial underlining of the gaps in registration of citizens as voters and the more glaring gap in turnout from election to election. In India, the turnout in national elections had historically stagnated around 55-60 percent, thus leaving out the choices of millions of eligible citizens. There was a small experimental beginning under the banner of IEC interventions in 2009, which was subsequently revamped in 2010 and given its present name. This phase spread broadly from end 2009 to March 2013, and covered 17 General Elections to State Assemblies and three revisions of the Electoral Roll in varying geographies, levels of urbanisation, literacy, security and logistics issues.

## SVEEP II (2013-2014)

Strengthening the initiatives of SVEEP I, this phase of SVEEP involved a planned strategy for a targeted approach towards meeting the various gaps. A structured framework was adopted including steps like identifying 10% of the lowest turnout polling stations, polling station-wise situation analysis, planning of interventions and implementation, followed by evaluation and review at regular intervals. It also included content development for neo-literate and non-literate groups. There was a pronounced emphasis on supply side of SVEEP, particularly in developing facilities at polling stations and on the polling day. The Lok Sabha Election 2014 was a major landmark in the history and learning of SVEEP as it also happened to be the focus of SVEEP II.

## SVEEP III (2015-present)

After drawing learnings from the historic General Elections to the Lok Sabha 2014, a more robust and in-depth plan has been undertaken for the third phase of SVEEP. Integration of electoral education with academic curriculum and as an activity in co-curriculum and extra-curriculum, greater synergy with partners, micro surveys are some of the key components of SVEEP III. Focus on groups like Service Voters (who vote through postal ballots), non-resident Indians, persons with disabilities, prospective voters has been added besides continuing to target women, youth, urban voters and the marginalised sections. Enhanced interaction with the citizens through social media, online contests and voters' festivals and use of ICT tools for outreach, form essential part of this phase.



3D sculpture on voter awareness, Karnataka

## Widening the Focus

It is the right to vote that guarantees an equal status to all citizens. SVEEP educates the uninformed, includes the marginalised, stirs the complacent and lends support where needed for enhanced electoral participation. Women, urban population, tribal communities, people in difficult regions and extremism affected areas, migrant groups, senior citizens, differently abled persons, homeless population and especially the youth in all these groups form the key areas of our focus, though universal participation remains our aim.

## Building Synergy

Our efforts are strengthened through our partners like Central & State Government Departments like the Departments of Health, Education, Women & Child Development, Cooperatives, Welfare, National Service Scheme (NSS), Nehru Yuva Kendra Sangathan (NYKS), National Cadet Corps (NCC), National Literacy Mission Authority (NLMA), Public Broadcaster like Doordarshan and All India Radio, Private Media Houses, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Corporate Houses & Federations, Civil Society Organisations & Non-Governmental Organisations, Renowned Personalities as National & State Icons, Associations and Individuals.

# Multiplying Interventions

## Meeting Gender Gap

- ✓ Seating arrangement, toilets, crèches and token system made available at many polling stations to facilitate women's participation
- ✓ Women centric messages and advocacy material in mass media
- ✓ Voter education taken up as a part of adult education through a partnership with NLMA and also through specific voter edutainment material
- ✓ Women centric activities and competitions like *Rangoli*, folk art and music organised to engage women
- ✓ Door-to-door information and motivation carried out through functionaries of the State Government like ASHAs, *Anganwaadi Workers*, *Shiksha Mitras*
- ✓ Popular faces of women empowerment and achievement like MC Mary Kom, Saina Nehwal have been appointed as National Icons to motivate women

## Connecting with the Youth & Prospective Electors

- ✓ ECI Campus Ambassadors to facilitate fellow students
- ✓ Registration forms made available with college admission forms
- ✓ Drop boxes for registration forms at strategic locations
- ✓ Mock Registration and Polling at educational institutions
- ✓ Voter edutainment material- Animation Films, Cartoon Strips, Picture Book, Computer Game, Board Game and Radio Programme used to educate youth and children
- ✓ Stories build upon the theme of ethical and informed voting and importance of the right to vote published in popular children's magazines
- ✓ Incorporating voter education and electoral literacy as a part of adult education programme

## Intensifying Inclusion

- ✓ Separate queues, seating arrangements, wheel chairs, ramps, assistance at polling stations, conveyance facility to reach polling stations for senior citizens and persons with disabilities
- ✓ Special confidence building measures, inter personal communication and voter education for inclusion of tribal groups and other inaccessible communities
- ✓ Structured approach, continuous motivation, improved security measures, polling stations in proximity to include people in difficult/ extremism affected areas
- ✓ Unique efforts for enrolment of migrants, especially labourers, and homeless people, special registration drives and awareness campaigns
- ✓ Registration Counters in weekly village markets; minor forest produce collection centres
- ✓ Fairs and festivals used for information dissemination and facilitation; Coordination with NGOs
- ✓ Special registration drive for enrolment of people under the category 'Others' or 'Third Gender'

## Bringing in Service Personnel

- ✓ Nodal officers from Armed forces for enrolment, capacity building & awareness
- ✓ Use of Technology – Intranet of armed forces for electoral education and awareness
- ✓ Special camps in coordination with Chief Electoral Officers
- ✓ Inclusion of electoral literacy as a theme in annual day programmes and events
- ✓ Electoral literacy as part of regular courses for soldiers and officers
- ✓ Internal Newsletters and magazines to carry voter awareness content
- ✓ Sensitisation of Embassies and officials abroad on service voting rights
- ✓ Inclusion of electoral literacy modules on postal ballots/ service voters in all training and skill development programmes of the Ministry of External Affairs
- ✓ Ensuring that Indian Missions abroad make available relevant forms to their employees on their postings as Service Voters

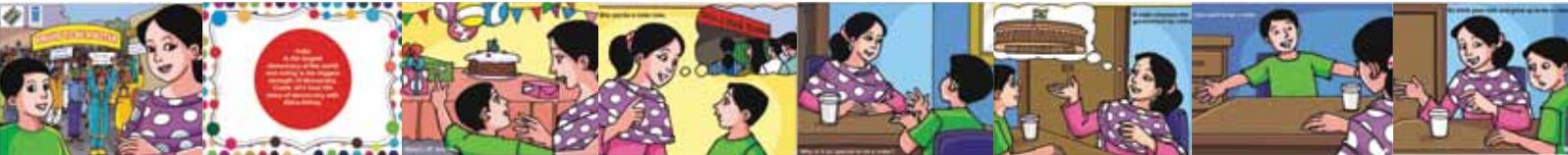
## Strengthening Facilitation

- ✓ Basic Minimum Facilities (BMF) - ramps, toilets, electricity, sheds and drinking water at every Polling Station
- ✓ Upscaling Model Polling Stations - waiting halls, queue time announcement, medical attendance, play area for children
- ✓ Voter Facilitation Centres for information and services
- ✓ Toll-free Voter Helplines for addressing queries
- ✓ Voter Slips for every voter delivered at residence before polling day
- ✓ Extension of Poll hours
- ✓ Polling day reminders through SMS and on radio, television and Public Address Systems
- ✓ EVM familiarisation camps
- ✓ Enrolment forms at prominent places including banks and post offices, colleges etc

## Mass Mobilisation

- ✓ Pledging to Vote: *Sankalp Patras*/ Pledge letters for parents through school students, Pledge taking functions, Signature campaigns, Democracy Walls
- ✓ Invitation to Vote: Invitation letters to people to vote from senior election officials, Invitation message in newspapers, Tying up fairs and festivals and rituals like *Peela Chaawal* for inviting people to vote
- ✓ Events: Marathons, human chains, human formations, Sports events like cricket matches, *Kabaddi* matches, Innovative activities like bike rallies, kite flying, laser light shows
- ✓ Competitions: Folk art competitions targeting rural women , Music concerts, Debates, declamations, essay writing contests

A story from the Picture Book 'Proud to be a Voter' developed as a part of Voter Edutainment Material



## Augmenting use of ICTs & Social Media

- ✓ National Voters' Service Portal for authentication, correction, registration and search facility
- ✓ Interactive voter friendly websites and SVEEP portal
- ✓ Extensive Search facility for name on voter list - website, SMS, helplines, locating PS on the Internet
- ✓ Online contests themed on elections and democracy
- ✓ Interaction and information dissemination through social media and networking sites like Facebook and Twitter
- ✓ Dedicated YouTube channel and Digital Library for access to audio-visual creatives on elections and voting

## Interactive Knowledge Exchange

- ✓ Consultations with CSOs/NGOs for greater understanding of problems and solutions
- ✓ Workshops with members of other Election Management Bodies across the globe for knowledge sharing
- ✓ Review meetings and symposia with functionaries of the election machinery for learnings and exchange of best practices
- ✓ Capacity Building and Training Sessions with various stakeholders for mutual goals of strengthened democracy

*Snapshots from animated voter education short films based on Warli folk paintings, Gujarat*

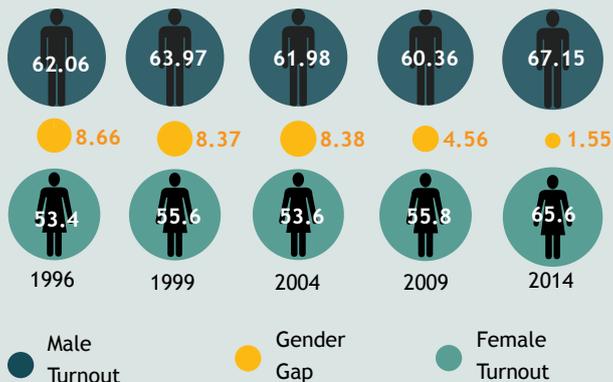


# Measuring Success

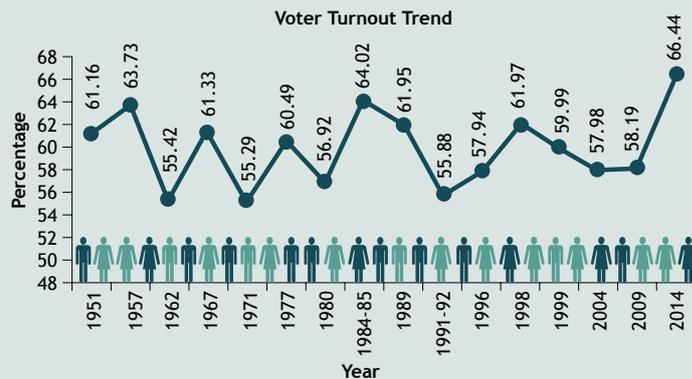
In addition to a significant rise in the interest, awareness and partake of citizens in the electoral process, we achieved record-breaking turnout of 66.44 per cent in the last General Elections to the Lok Sabha 2014. The electorate rose to 834 million in 2014. Around 117 million more than that in 2009, while the gender gap stood reduced at 1.55 from the previous 4.42. Also, 16 states/ UTs recorded a higher women turnout and among these, women voters surpassed men for the first time ever in any Lok Sabha elections in nine states/ UTs.

The momentum of this enthusiastic engagement has been sustained in the following Assembly elections and ever since.

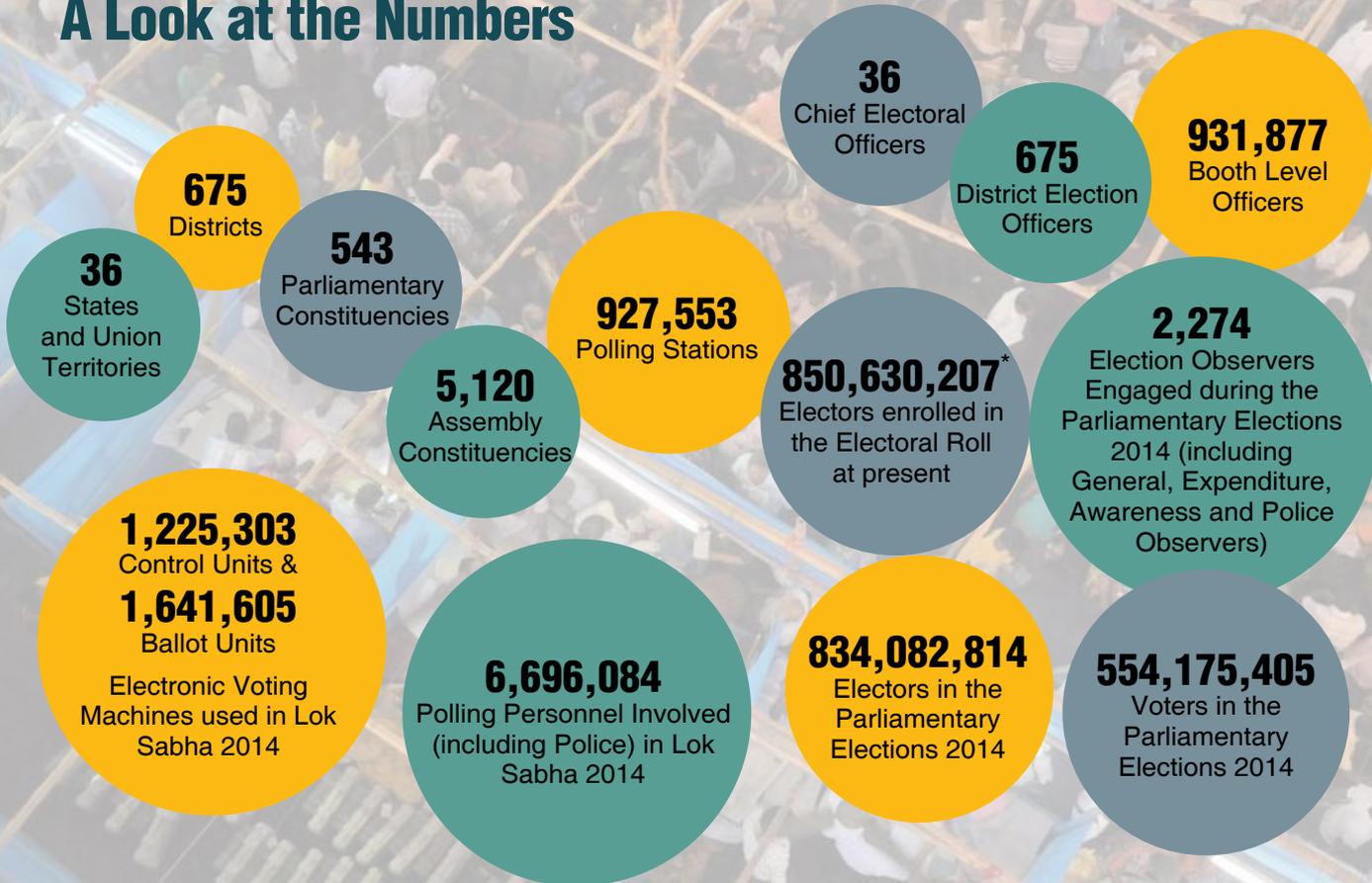
### Gender Gap in Voter turnout in national elections in India (%)



### Voters turnout in Lok Sabha election (%)



# A Look at the Numbers



\* As on 30th July, 2015



We are looking forward to greater synergy from CSOs, Media and Corporate Houses and even greater participation, queries and suggestions from individuals.

## **Election Commission of India**

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