

**CEPPS Quarterly Report: January 1, 2018 to March 31, 2018**

**SRI LANKA: Improved Election Management Program (IEMP)  
USAID Associate Cooperative Agreement No. AID-383-LA-15-00001 under the Leader  
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**Project Dates: September 29, 2015 – September 30, 2019**

**I. PROGRAM OVERVIEW**

***Problem Statement***

Sri Lanka's national unity government, inaugurated in 2015, committed itself to an ambitious good governance reform agenda. However, the continued lack of progress on many of the promised reforms – including those related to advancing pluralism, devolution, accountability and reconciliation – has led to growing public discontent with the government. If managed well, the democratic process can provide numerous opportunities for citizens to interact with elected leaders and election administrators and strengthen momentum behind a publicly-owned mandate for the good governance agenda.

The leadership within the Election Commission (EC) has demonstrated its capacity to run elections effectively. At the same time, the upcoming electoral cycles could introduce significant challenges that necessitate elevated technical capacity at all levels of the EC staff and amongst a broader group of electoral stakeholders. These challenges include introduction of a mixed member proportional (MMP) electoral system as well as implementation of Sri Lanka's first ever women's quota. Successful management of these challenges will further solidify the EC as an independent, accountable and highly trusted public body with the institutional capacity to effectively address electoral challenges, thus serving as a model for other public institutions in Sri Lanka, as well as election management bodies (EMBs) across the region. Alternatively, any perceived issues with the integrity of the elections will contribute to voters' disenchantment with the electoral process. Beyond the EC, Sri Lanka's citizens must also participate actively throughout the electoral cycle – including as good governance and women's rights advocates, voters, candidates and community leaders – in order to hold the government accountable to commitments to transparency and human rights. In addition to voting, civil society can advance advocacy campaigns for legal reforms, more transparent political processes and greater political representation of women and youth that build further pressure on political leaders to act on promised reforms. Absent such civil society engagement, Sri Lanka's upcoming elections could result in a backward slide in democratic rights. Additionally, a lack of transparency fuels misinformation which threatens the ability of the national government to fulfill the platform upon which it was elected. The Joint Opposition and other opposing parties have seized on the public frustration with the unity government's performance on the economy and progress on its reform agenda, espousing nationalist rhetoric that threatens to further impede reform efforts. As several key electoral and political events are

expected in the upcoming year, including provincial government elections and potentially a constitutional referendum, a rigorous and comprehensive communications plan is needed to inform constituents of the content and merits of the government's policy positions and reform initiatives. Government and civil society outreach and communications efforts must also take into account and balance the unique priorities, concerns and expectations of Sri Lanka's diverse ethnic and religious groups.

Finally, Sri Lanka's parliament also has an important role to play in advancing citizen-oriented reforms and open government policies, including through design and implementation of an open parliament plan. If designed well, an open parliament plan can provide opportunities to improve transparency and accountability in government while also delivering on peace, reconciliation, and sustainable development goals. Similarly, an open parliament plan could advance progress toward passage of specific laws or conduct of parliamentary oversight to ensure greater accountability, transparency, inclusion or responsiveness on key issues of public concern.

### *Theory of Change and Critical Assumptions*

**If** the Election Commission institutionalizes best electoral practices and professional capacity at all levels of its structure and effectively administers the upcoming elections; **and** political parties, Parliament, youth, civil society, women, and media are engaged as democratic stakeholders with information and skills needed to proactively participate as voters, candidates and advocates for good governance, transparency and accountability **then** the upcoming electoral cycle and reform processes will realize gains in government accountability to human rights, anti-corruption, inclusion and transparency commitments.

CEPPS' activities are contingent upon the willingness of national partners to receive technical assistance and support. In particular, IEMP planned activities are based on the following assumptions:

- The local government election and provincial council elections are held within the program period.
- The political environment enables passages of legal reforms – especially political finance regulations, election dispute resolution and parliamentary reforms.
- The EC and parliament continues to be willing to engage CEPPS partners and, at a minimum, agree to conduct the planned activities, especially as they relate to operationalization of the EC's strategic plan and parliament's reform plan.
- The EC and parliament accepts the support of international experts provided by CEPPS partners, respectively, to provide guidance on selected election-related and parliamentary reforms and planning, and the environment exists where laws and procedures can be strengthened and reformed.
- The political environment allows government officials, civil society, media and other stakeholders to speak openly regarding electoral and parliamentary vulnerabilities and

policies and procedures.

- EC officials and parliamentarians are able to travel internationally to participate in a study tour.
- The security, political, and legal situation in Sri Lanka permits CEPPS to operate freely and openly.
- The national government and parliament are willing to receive training on strategic communications and public engagement and accept guidance on how to reform their communications strategies.
- CEPPS national surveys are shared with select government, parliament and political leaders

### ***Objectives***

The Improved Election Management Program (IEMP) program addresses the following objectives:

**Objective 1:** Assist the national election management body to develop a multi-year strategic plan to plan the transition to an independent election commission

**Objective 2:** Strengthen the capacity of the election management body to administer credible and inclusive national, provincial, and local elections in Sri Lanka

**Objective 3:** Advance transparency and public information related to elections and political processes in Sri Lanka

### ***Political Update Relevant to Program Implementation***

On February 10, Sri Lanka held its long overdue local government election to elect 8,325 members to 340 local authorities. The election marked the country's first implementation of a mixed member proportional (MMP) system, in which 60 percent of the seats were elected through first-past-the-post (FPP) and 40 percent through open-list proportional representation (PR), as well as the first application of a women's quota. One of the most significant outcomes of the election was the strong showing for the Sri Lanka Podujana Peramuna (SLPP), which won 45 percent of FPP ward-level seats nationwide. Electoral gains by the SLPP, which is closely aligned with former President Mahinda Rajapaksa, sparked concerns among some civil society about a possible backsliding from recent democratic progress. While the election results for the PR seats had not been announced as of the end of the reporting period, it is notable that women won 537 (10.5 percent) of the 5,092 ward-level seats, which is slightly over the 10 percent anticipated by the quota. The gender breakdown for the PR compensatory seats will be available next quarter.

The extent of election violence was mixed. While the People's Action for Free and Fair Elections (PAFFREL) reported that the 2018 Election Day itself was more peaceful than the 2015

presidential and parliamentary elections, election-related violence rose in the post-election period. In the three days following the election, PAFFREL noted dozens of incidents that included grievous assaults, intimidation and threats, and damage to immovable property. PAFFREL also reported that most of the violence was perpetrated by winning members. In addition to post-election violence, the Centre for Monitoring Election Violence (CMEV) noted numerous instances of election violence against women including physical assault, sexual exploitation, severe intimidation, instances of political party leaders demanding sexual favors from potential women candidates, and widespread character assassinations. There were also examples of Muslim clerics recording videos speaking out against Muslim women candidates which went viral on social media.

Another continued issue is the delay in announcement of election results as well as delays in the formation of local government authorities, due in part to political parties and independent groups requiring additional time to announce their chosen representatives in light of the new electoral system. At the time of reporting, nearly two months after the election, dozens of the 340 local government bodies still faced a “hung result,” meaning no party or independent group had a majority of seats. According to Sri Lanka’s local government law, in the case of a hung result, newly elected members must choose the mayor and deputy mayor of the respective local government body during their first meeting. In a briefing, the Executive Director for the Campaign for Free and Fair Elections (CaFFE) warned of [vulnerability to corruption](#) as local government leaders reportedly give money or promises of political favor in exchange for votes for the mayoral position.

On March 5, [Minister of Provincial Councils and Local Government Faiszer Musthapha presented the provincial council delimitation commission report](#), prepared by a five-member delimitation committee, to Parliament. Once approved by Parliament, Sri Lanka will begin preparing for the first in a series of provincial council elections which could begin as early as September 2018. However, while the boundary delimitation report would help pave the way for the elections, a group of political parties are reportedly calling for a reversion to the old PR system at the provincial level, despite the fact that Parliament approved a shift from the PR system to an MMP system in September 2017. Reverting to the old PR system would likely delay holding the Provincial Council elections, as would failure of Parliament to act on the delimitation commission report.

The reporting period was overshadowed by a disturbing escalation of violence against Muslims, particularly in Kandy, and the Government’s subsequent declaration of a nationwide 10-day state of emergency. The cycle of violence began with the death on 3 March of a Sinhalese Buddhist man, ten days after being attacked by four local Muslim men. While it the attack on the Sinhalese Buddhist man was not believed to be racially driven, his death sparked a violent response by Buddhist groups. Government officials and journalists alike have highlighted that the perpetrators of violence were brought in from other parts of the country in a seemingly coordinated effort to incite tension. On March 6, the Prime Minister (PM) made [statements](#) against the attacks, noting “it is clearly seen that false and misleading information creating hatred among communities is being spread using social media in an organized manner.” In the wake of the violence, the Government blocked all social media sites from March 7 to March 17 and highlighted the need to [set up an institution to monitor social media usage](#) in an effort to prevent posts that provoke ethnic or religion-based hate speech.

In the wake of the local government election, questions remain about whether the poor showing for the SLFP, led by President Sirisena, will pressure the national level government to cater more to the Joint Opposition (JO) in Parliament, which is largely aligned with the SLPP. Demonstrating increased confidence, during the reporting period, parliamentary members of the JO brought a no-confidence motion against the Prime Minister. The no-confidence motion contained [14 allegations](#) related to perceived mishandling of the Treasury bond scam, failure to arrest the rising cost of living, and inability to contain the recent communal riots. Ultimately, the no-confidence motion was defeated by a vote of 122 to 76 on April 4.

### ***Key Activities this Quarter***

- CEPPS/IFES worked with the National Committee on Women (NCW) to organize a voter education training for 48 women community leaders in Kalutara District to build women participants' capacity to communicate key election information to the thousands of women in their communities.
- CEPPS/IFES launched IFES' White Paper on "Countering Hate Speech in Elections: Strategies for Electoral Management Bodies" in Colombo on January 5. IFES' White Paper provides election administrators and other stakeholders with the information needed to better understand issues surrounding hate speech and possible strategies for addressing it. Joining CEPPS/IFES, an Election Commission (EC) Member and the Executive Director of Sri Lanka's National Peace Council also provided remarks.
- On January 8 and 9, CEPPS/IFES organized a two-day media training on principles of election reporting for 37 journalists across the country. Key sessions included a review of the new legal framework for local elections; principles of election coverage; considerations for gender sensitive reporting; and an interactive crisis simulation that introduced journalists to challenges in regulating and reporting on hate speech.
- CEPPS/IFES coordinated a Strategic Planning Retreat with 48 EC Staff, including the EC Chairman and a Commission Member, to review lessons learned from the local government election, assess progress on the strategic planning objectives, and identify areas where CEPPS/IFES can support the EC to meet its objectives and inform planning for the provincial council and national-level elections.
- CEPPS/NDI provided guidance to parliamentary stakeholders on open government practices and the role of a parliamentary point-of-contact (PPOC).
- CEPPS/NDI met with CSO counterparts to discuss future actions for development of the second Open Government Partnership (OGP) National Action Plan (NAP).
- CEPPS/IRI finished drafting the questionnaire and pre-testing for the national public opinion survey to be put into the field April 2018.



*Journalists present during the election simulation*

- CEPPS/IRI in partnership with People’s Action for Free and Fair Elections (PAFFREL) conducted a domestic election observation mission for the February 10 Local Authorities Elections.

### ***Key Results/Achievements***

- CEPPS/NDI PPOC committed to creating a dedicated parliamentary caucus to develop a parliamentary openness plan and commitments.
- CEPPS/IFES’ voter education programs, carried out in partnership with the EC, directly reached over 1,600 people including women community leaders and women development officers, youth, persons with disabilities and plantation workers. In order to meet the needs of these target populations, CEPPS/IFES adapted each session including by providing sign language interpretation for people who are deaf, producing five voter education videos with sign language interpretation that were disseminated through social media, and designing and sharing voter information posters that could be used by session participants to conduct their own community-based outreach (Attachment I).
- Applying lessons learned from CEPPS/IFES’ ongoing technical support under IEMP, the EC demonstrated an improved focus on inclusion-oriented voter education throughout the local government election. This shift was evidenced by a range of activities, from the EC’s distribution of polling station accessibility posters designed and printed by CEPPS/IFES, to its proactive engagement of youth through a series of youth-focused voter education programs. For the first time, the EC also requested that district-level commissioners proactively identify and select the most accessible polling station locations for Election Day.
- The technical working group on accessible election (TWG), established by CEPPS/IFES and a coalition of disabled persons organizations (DPOs), made inroads in their first quarter working with the EC and civil society on disability-focused electoral initiatives. Ahead of the election, for example, the TWG formally requested that national observer groups include persons with disabilities in their election observation teams. Following this request, CMEV formally recruited 22 observers with disabilities. Additionally, TWG members met with senior EC staff to identify key accessibility priorities and work together to develop an improved enumeration form that will enable collection of disability disaggregated data as part of the annual voter registration process.
- CEPPS/IRI deployed 30 domestic long-term election observers and 31 election district officers during the February 10 Local Authorities election.

## **II. ACTIVITY IMPLEMENTATION**

### **Objective 1: Assist the Sri Lankan election management body to develop a multi-year strategic plan and transition to an independent election commission**

All activities under Objective 1 have been completed.

### **Objective 2: Strengthen the capacity of the election management body to administer credible and inclusive national, provincial, and local elections in Sri Lanka**

*Result 2.1: Strengthen election administrative capacity through EC-focused training*

### Activity 2.1.1. Conduct leadership, ethics and crisis management trainings

CEPPS/IFES did not conduct activities related to 2.1.1 in the reporting period.

### Activity 2.1.2. Conduct Training of Trainers

*Voter education program for women community leaders:* On February 2, CEPPS/IFES worked with the National Committee on Women (NCW) to organize a voter education training in Kalutara district for 48 women community leaders. The selected participants were all part of women's community federations ('*Kantha Bala Mandala*') from the Western and Southern provinces.<sup>1</sup> The objective of the program was to build the participants' capacity to communicate key election information to the more than 2,000 women members making up the community federations in Kalutara. Key topics included: the role of local government authorities; identification documents required for voting; how to vote on Election Day and other voting procedures; and accessibility measures in polling stations. During the program, the participants identified voter education activities that could be run through the women's community federations in partnership with the NCW. These included using posters – which were provided by CEPPS/IFES in partnership with the EC – to conduct voter awareness programs for people with low literacy and organizing local level educational meetings with small community groups. Following the training, participants reported conducting approximately a dozen outreach activities including leading sessions on voting rights and responsibilities during their community federation meetings, as well as engaging local community-based organizations in conducting voter education programs. The training in Kalutara complemented similar trainings CEPPS/IFES conducted with the NCW in 2017, which taken together, built the capacity of 313 women to conduct their own voter education activities ahead of the local government election.



*Women community leaders review voter education posters during the NCW training*

### Activity 2.1.3. Conduct trainings for electoral stakeholders on election roles and responsibilities

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<sup>1</sup> *Kantha Bala Mandalas* are village level organizations established by the Ministry of Women and Child Affairs to engage women in local social empowerment initiatives

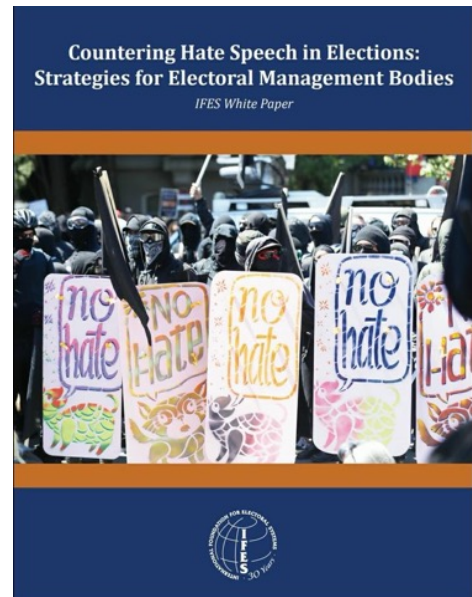
*Partnering with the EC to launch IFES’ global White Paper on “Countering Hate Speech in Elections”*: Hate speech and incitement to hatred is a global issue that most democracies confront around the world. During election periods, election stakeholders – including election management bodies, government actors and media – must weigh the desire to respond to hate speech while also protecting the democratic rights to freedom of expression. The pre-election period in Sri Lanka saw a disturbing rise in nationalist campaign rhetoric and hate speech, leading electoral stakeholders to begin to identify the importance of clarifying Sri Lanka’s legal framework around hate speech.

Contributing to this conversation, on January 5, CEPPS/IFES worked with the EC to launch IFES’ latest White Paper, “Countering Hate Speech in Elections: Strategies for Electoral Management Bodies.” IFES’

White Paper provides election management bodies and other stakeholders with the information needed to better understand issues surrounding hate speech and possible strategies for addressing it. During the event, IFES’ technical lead on election, conflict and security (and lead author of the paper) provided a review of best practices and key considerations for addressing hate speech in elections. Additionally, the Executive Director of Sri Lanka’s National Peace Council presented the historic forms of hate speech in Sri Lanka and some current examples of how miscommunication can exacerbate the potential for hate speech to occur. EC Member Hoole provided opening remarks.

As part of the event, CEPPS/IFES facilitated a roundtable discussion with 19 participants representing civil society groups, the Bar Association of Sri Lanka and the Press Institute to understand the different ways that each stakeholder could mitigate the use of hate speech. The participants identified the need to enforce media regulations; advocate for hate speech laws in Sri Lanka; and raise public awareness about its impact on elections. The White Paper is available in English, Sinhala and Tamil (Attachment II).

*Media training on Principles of Election Reporting*: In the lead up to the local government election, political campaign utilized nationalist rhetoric that created potential for heightened ethnic tensions during the election. As key election stakeholders, journalist can play an important role in strengthening the democratic process by facilitating political discourse. As key election stakeholders, journalists can play an important role in facilitating political discourse, fostering transparency and information sharing, and serving as an effective forum for public debate, all of which strengthens the democratic process. In order to fulfill their role as responsible election stakeholders, journalists must be equipped with the skills needed to advance accurate election reporting, as well as awareness about their responsibilities to mitigate hate speech that too often arises in election environments.



*IFES global White Paper on “Countering Hate Speech in Elections”*



On January 8 and 9, CEPPS/IFES organized a two-day media training on principles of election reporting for 37 journalists across the country (17 Sinhalese, 9 Tamils and 10 Muslims). IFES' technical lead for election, conflict and security and a senior media specialist led the training. The training is part of CEPPS/IFES' efforts under IEMP to educate stakeholders about their roles and responsibilities during election periods. During the training, participants:

- Reviewed the new legal framework for local elections and practiced calculating how quota provisions will translate into actual seats within different areas.
- Explored principles of election coverage including the importance of citizen-oriented journalism, the responsibility to present impartial information, media codes of conduct that limit hate speech and provocation of violence towards both men and women by providing clear guidelines for regulation and reporting mechanisms, and media rights and freedoms that are protected in national and international legal frameworks. Working in groups, the journalists located examples of their own election stories within the electoral cycle and analyzed the potential impact of their messages on the election.
- Examined key considerations for gender sensitive reporting, including by comparing actual media coverage about men and women candidates from Sri Lanka and around the world to identify biases and stereotypes in reporting about women.

The training also introduced journalists to challenges in regulating hate speech as well as the ethical dilemmas journalists face in deciding how and when to report on candidates' inflammatory statements. Building on these knowledge gains, the training culminated in IFES' flagship election crisis simulation, during which participants assumed the roles of security actors, election administrators, civil society, and political representatives and juggled the desire to mitigate electoral violence associated with a candidate's rhetoric against responsibilities to protect freedom of speech. All groups gained a new appreciation for the difficult decisions each institution must make during an election as well as the importance of working with different stakeholders.

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*The election simulation “helped me better understand the roles played by different actors during the elections. I now realize that complaining about the Human Rights Commission for lack of efficiency is not fair, and they are bound by certain rules and regulations. It is up to us to make people aware of what is happening and who they should approach in that case.”*

- Media Training participant

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*Media training participants engage in the hate speech crisis simulation*

Following the training, participants published over twenty-five articles in Sinhala, Tamil and English in local online and print newspapers that highlighted lessons learned from the training. These included an article on the local government system and the power of the EC to hold free and fair elections as well as the duty of the civil society and observers to act as watchdogs. Other articles highlight the legal provisions related to the quota system under the new electoral system; public perceptions on the women's quota and the importance of increasing women's representation in politics; the need to address the lack of legal framework governing hate speech and how it contributes to continuous attacks against minorities; and an article on preventing increasingly prevalent character assassinations of women candidates.

#### Activity 2.1.4: Support the EC with establishing functional units within the commission

*Technical Working Group on Disabilities:* In December 2017, following a Colombo-based workshop on the electoral rights of persons with disabilities, CEPPS/IFES, CMEV and eight disabled persons organizations (DPOs) established a disability rights working group that is working directly with the EC to strengthen election accessibility. The initiative contributes to the EC's strategic planning commitments related to increasing electoral participation among voters with disabilities. On January 17, the "Disability Inclusive Elections in Sri Lanka - Technical Working Group"



*The TWG holds its first meeting at the EC*

(TWG) held its first formal meeting to identify a lead working group coordinator, discuss the draft terms of reference for the working group, and identify key activities that the DPO members could conduct in partnership with the EC and other election stakeholders ahead of the election. As part of the meeting, TWG members requested that national observer groups include persons with disabilities as election monitors in their observation work and as a result, CMEV – a working group member – hired 22 observers with disabilities to participate in Election Day monitoring. At the TWG's nomination, CEPPS/IFES is serving as primary group facilitator with CBM-Sri Lanka and MyRight Sri Lanka as co-facilitators.

On February 7, members of the TWG had their first coordination meeting with the EC Chairman and senior EC leadership. During the meeting, TWG members delivered a list to the EC of key priorities, which included the assurance that all polling stations have convenient access to persons with disabilities, creating awareness among persons with disabilities on the newly introduced electoral system and holding a media conference regarding the available facilities for persons with disabilities for future elections. Additionally, in March, the TWG delivered a letter to the EC with targeted recommendations for how to collect and disaggregate disability data on the voter registration form. The TWG letter highlighted that the lack of disability disaggregated data causes the exclusion of persons with disabilities from the electoral process, and that the availability of

data would better enable the EC to adopt targeted measures to respond to the specific electoral needs of persons with disabilities in each electoral division. The TWG letter referenced best practice examples from the Washington Group on Disability Statistics, as well as a sample voter registration form from the Philippines which has been used to collect supplementary data on persons with disabilities and older persons. Due to the advocacy letter, the EC is adjusting its voter registration format and committed to work with the TWG to include a focus on deaf voters and voters with intellectual disabilities as part of its future voter education outreach.

*Strategic Planning and Post-Elections Lessons Learned Retreat with the EC:* From March 18 - 20, CEPPS/IFES organized a Strategic Planning Retreat with 48 EC Staff, including the EC Chairman and a Commission Member, to review lessons learned from the local government election, assess progress on the strategic planning objectives, and identify areas where CEPPS/IFES can support the EC to meet its objectives and inform planning for the provincial council and national-level elections. Key session topics were as follows:

- **Session 1** - Lessons learned from the local government election - The local government election underscored gaps that must be addressed for the EC to meet the demands of the provincial council and national-level elections. During the Retreat, EC staff identified the need to: revise the process of issuing election results to ensure accuracy; take steps to address issues in the implementation of the women's quota, namely lack of commitment by political parties and the subsequent delays in announcing election results because of issues with calculations of results; and establish a reliable online system that would deal with all stages of the election, from verification of candidate nominations to release of election results.
- **Session 2** - Setting Strategic Plan priority activities - Drawing on issues identified in the lessons learned session, CEPPS/IFES' Senior Chief of Party presented a draft operational plan for joint CEPPS/IFES and EC activities through 2019. The proposed operational plan – which was further developed through breakout groups - helped prioritize activities that support achievement of the EC's Strategic Plan while also providing a template for planning for key activities within a busy election cycle. The results of the discussion are summarized in Chart 1 (below). In addition to an operational plan, CEPPS/IFES developed a voter education report to provide key data about and documentation of the voter education initiatives implemented by CEPPS/IFES in partnership with the EC during the local government election (Attachment III). The report was presented to the EC during the Retreat and will inform the EC's data collection efforts around its voter education work.



*EC participants identify priority activities in preparation for the provincial-level elections*

EC Strategic Planning Goal	Key activities identified
Goal 1: Electoral management officials are active, more competent and more professional in each district	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Conduct leadership, ethics and crisis management trainings second tier EC staff</li> <li>2. Conduct Training of Trainers (ToT) to train a cadre of district-level staff who are responsible for key election activities. Key topics would include electoral laws, regulations and procedures and practices</li> </ol>
Goal 3: A well planned mechanism is established to ensure that all candidates submit income sources for their campaigns and limit all expenditure to the legally prescribed ceilings.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Convene a technical working group on campaign finance that is equipped to develop legal framework and introduce mechanism to trace the expenditure of candidates and parties</li> <li>2. Engage the technical working group in training stakeholders to report and investigate violations of campaign finance and provide support for inquiries and judicial process.</li> <li>3. Establish a technical working group on election dispute resolution (EDR)</li> <li>4. Strengthen the EC's complaint format for reporting and investigating election incidents and establish a communications pathway for good case management system.</li> <li>5. Develop awareness-raising materials on Sri Lanka's EDR system</li> <li>6. Provide EDR trainings to police, EC district officers and legal bodies</li> </ol>
Goal 4: Improve the quality of the electoral list (IT)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Introduce an electronic voting system</li> <li>2. Introduce online voter registration</li> <li>3. Use Geographic Information System (GIS) technology to prepare polling center maps</li> <li>4. Develop online systems for nomination verifications and postal voting registration and verifications</li> <li>5. Develop an online election results releasing system</li> </ol>
Goal 5: All citizens in marginalized sectors of society engage in electoral processes confidently	<p><u>Persons with disabilities:</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Strengthen data collection procedures on voters with disabilities during the voter education process</li> <li>2. Introduce braille ballot sleeves and share voter information through accessible formats, such as sign language interpretation</li> </ol> <p><u>Women:</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3. Establish gender advisory committee to provide technical assistance to the EC on gender inclusive programming</li> <li>4. Hold district-level dialogues with women local government councilors to identify ways to improve gender sensitivity for women candidates in the upcoming elections.</li> <li>5. Address voter registration and voting issues for migrant workers in Sri Lanka's Free Trade Zone, the majority of whom are women</li> <li>6. Conduct more voter education for plantation sector workers with a focus on women's political participation</li> <li>7. Coordinate VAWIE-focused voter education</li> <li>8. Conduct lessons learned study on the implementation of the women's quota to inform future quota legislation</li> </ol> <p><u>Youth:</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. One-day training program for newly elected young local government councilors on youth civic engagement</li> <li>2. Establish a "democracy youth delegates program"</li> </ol>
Goal 7: A Research Unit is actively functioning	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Conduct a disability survey to identify number of voters with disabilities and a database reflecting the survey outcome.</li> <li>2. Establish a knowledge management (KM) research &amp; training unit. The first activity of the KMI and research unit will be the mapping of training needs of all EC staff.</li> </ol>

*Training on Monitoring and Evaluation at SP Retreat:* The EC’s Strategic Plan includes commitments related to establishing a “strong monitoring and evaluation (M&E) mechanism,” including by developing key performance indicators, improving availability and quality of M&E reporting formats, and enhancing the M&E tracking system. To support strengthened M&E efforts, in November 2017, IFES’ Senior M&E Specialist worked with EC staff to design an online M&E system (i.e dashboard) that enables EC staff from district offices as well as headquarters to track indicators related to their strategic plan. During the Retreat, CEPPS/IFES’ M&E officer presented the M&E database to EC staff and reviewed the data collection forms to ensure that the district and headquarters staff can work with their teams to complete timely data entry. At the request of the EC, during the session all participants completed a pilot training needs assessment (Attachment IV) to inform the EC’s development of a training need assessment database. Based on feedback from the participants, CEPPS/IFES is updating the training needs assessment for dissemination among EC staff at the district level, in keeping with strategic planning objective 6.6.1.

*Intermediate Result 2.2. Vulnerabilities in the voter registration system are mitigated*

Activity 2.2.1. Mitigate against vulnerabilities in the EC’s centralized voter registration management system

CEPPS/IFES did not conduct activities related to 2.3.1 in the reporting period.

*Intermediate Result 2.3. Electoral complaints and adjudication process is strengthened*

Activity 2.3.1. Convene an expert working group to develop a regulatory framework

During the reporting period, CEPPS/IFES met with the EC Additional Commissioner to obtain a summary of the election complaints received during the local government elections. The compiled information will be used to inform recommendations for legal reform. During the next quarter, CEPPS/IFES will review the complaints and present findings in a roundtable event with the EC and other stakeholders.

Activity 2.3.2. Advise on improvements to the EC’s Election Incident Tracking System to allow for effective management of complaints and disputes

CEPPS/IFES did not conduct activities related to 2.3.2 in the reporting period.

Activity 2.3.3. Train stakeholders on EDR roles and responsibilities

CEPPS/IFES did not conduct activities related to 2.3.3 in the reporting period.

*Intermediate Result 2.4. Inclusive civic and voter education strategy is implemented by the EC*

Activity 2.4.1. Convene a voter education working group

CEPPS/IFES did not conduct activities related to 2.1.2 in the reporting period. All voter education activities are captured under activities 2.4.2 and 2.4.3.

#### Activity 2.4.2. Develop multilingual and accessible voter education materials

*Voter education programming for voters who are deaf:* On February 3, CEPPS/IFES worked with the Sri Lanka Central Federation of the Deaf (SLCFD) to organize a voter education session for 57 people who are deaf. The voter education session responded to the fact that many of the voter education information resources in Sri Lanka are inaccessible to voters who are deaf because the materials are distributed over radio and television. In order to address this gap in voter knowledge, the program utilized simultaneous sign language interpretation and resulted in production of [five voter education videos](#) with sign language for wider distribution on social media sites. Modules focused on raising awareness about key voter topics including: how to cast a ballot, the responsibilities of a local government official, citizens' rights to secret ballots, and the documentation needed to vote on polling day. Additionally, CEPPS/IFES also worked with the EC to develop voter education posters outlining voting procedures for persons with disabilities.



*Chrysalis, CEPPS/IFES and the EC deliver voter education to plantation workers*

*Voter education programs for Plantation Sector Voters:* In January and February, CEPPS/IFES worked with the EC and local partner Chrysalis to conduct voter education programs for plantation sector voters in the Nuwara Eliya District, with Chrysalis leveraging its existing community forums to gain access to the plantation communities. CEPPS/IFES' 2016 Electoral Integrity Assessment identified disproportionately high rates of invalid ballots in the plantation sector, and its voter education survey found that plantation workers demonstrate amongst the lowest levels of voter awareness, necessitating targeted outreach to this community. Due to the low literacy level of the plantation communities, the programs relied on visual aids, including voter education posters developed by CEPPS/IFES in partnership with the EC. The program focused on the role of local government authorities; identification documents required for voting; how to vote on the Election Day, the design of the ballot; and accessibility measures taken by the EC. IFES and Chrysalis

reached 1,113 plantation workers through these programs, an estimated 700 of whom were women (See analysis section for more information on plantation outreach).

### Select quotes from plantation sector workers

*“This program was very useful. I didn’t know that I was casting my vote wrong all this time.”*

*“All this time our community had little care for disabled people, especially when it comes to voting. We never valued their importance. This program made me realize the importance of inclusive voting and voting rights.”*

*“Before, I had no idea what the local government does. Today’s program taught me the importance of having a good local government and the services we could get.”*

### Activity 2.4.3. Organize youth events

*Youth voter education events:* Under IEMP, CEPPS/IFES is working with the EC to strengthen the participation of first-time voters in the electoral process. To support this effort, CEPPS/IFES held five youth voter education events during the reporting period reaching 453 people, 434 of whom were under 30 years of age (see chart below). The half-day sessions covered the new local government election laws, roles and responsibilities of local government officials, citizens’ rights and responsibilities to vote, the



*Youth participants in Batticaloa*

rights of voters with disabilities, and the process for casting a ballot on Election Day. Additionally, participants divided into groups and developed role-plays and presentations to explain key lessons learned from the sessions to further solidify their understanding and prepare them to echo the information to their family and friends. Also during the Colombo-based session, a youth committee member facilitated a “power play” game with the participants to raise awareness about power structures in politics. As one participant in Batticaloa noted, “the voter information shared with us today is very important. I have never heard about any of this!”

Youth voter education training							
Date	Location	Sinhalese	Tamil	Muslim	Male	Female	Total
Jan 23.	Monaragala (Buttala)	37	-	-	27	10	37
Jan 26	Colombo	45	-	-	45	-	45
Feb 02	Trincomalee	-	7	50	42	15	57
Feb 06	Batticaloa		285		171	114	285
Feb 01	Anuradhapura	25	-	4	9	13	29
<b>Totals</b>		<b>107</b>	<b>293</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>294</b>	<b>152</b>	<b>453</b>

*Presentation to Girl Talk youth conference:* From December 27 to 28, CEPPS/IFES’ Inclusion Advisor participated in a series of panels for the Girl Talk 7.0 Global Conference, which engages

young women from Sri Lanka and around the region in workshops designed to enhance civic participation and democratic leadership. CEPPS/IFES' Inclusion Advisor presented on Sri Lanka's electoral system – highlighting the opportunity to increase women's representation through the women's quota – and highlighted lessons learned from CEPPS/IFES and the EC's youth engagement initiatives, such as #YouthVoteSL which contributed to legal reform efforts in Sri Lanka. The panel presentations are part of IFES' commitment under IEMP to strengthen youth's engagement in the democratic process.

*In addition to the above outlined activities, other voter education-related work included the voter education workshops with the NCW, as highlighted under activity 2.1.2.*

### **Objective 3: Advance transparency and public information related to elections and political processes in Sri Lanka**

*Intermediate Result 3.1: Open parliament commitments and plans for their implementation are developed to promote transparency and empower citizens*

Activity 3.1.1: Open Parliament Assessment  
Completed.

Activity 3.1.2: Supporting the Designation of Open Parliament Point of Contacts and a Working Group

During the reporting period, CEPPS/NDI continued to communicate with key stakeholders on next steps for advancing Sri Lanka's commitments to promote parliamentary openness under country's OGP NAP (2015 - 2017). Prior to the Sri Lankan local authority election, which was held on February 10, 2018, CEPPS/NDI met with the PPOC, Secretary General (SG) Dhammika Dasanayake, and his secretariat. During the meeting, with regard to examples for best practices shared by the program in earlier discussions, SG Dasanayake shared that the legislative body intends to create a parliamentary caucus dedicated to developing the Open Parliament Plan. The SG requested CEPPS/NDI's support in securing buy-in for the initiative from political leaders, helping them better understand the OGP and the country's commitments under the platform. CEPPS/NDI also met with representatives of CSOs to discuss the way forward for developing the OGP NAP; CSOs agreed to hold the first workshop in the next quarter.

Political tensions following the aforementioned local elections and ethnic strife have hindered progress of program activities (see Constraints/Challenges section for more details).

Activity 3.1.3: Public Consultations

CEPPS/NDI did not complete activities related to 3.1.3 during the reporting period

Activity 3.1.4 MP and Civil Society Exchange to Sri Lanka

CEPPS/NDI did not complete activities related to 3.1.4 during the reporting period



#### Activity 3.1.5: Best Practices Dialogues

In meetings with CEPPS/NDI, the Speaker of Parliament, Karu Jayasuriya, continued to express an interest in hosting a visit with Georgian parliamentary peers to inform the NAP process. In the next quarter, CEPPS/NDI will hold more detailed discussions with the speaker regarding the visit.

#### Activity 3.1.6. Georgian MP and Civil Society Exchange

CEPPS/NDI did not complete activities related to 3.1.6 during the reporting period

#### Activity 3.1.7 Development of Parliamentary Openness Commitments and Open Parliament Plan

CEPPS/NDI did not complete activities related to 3.1.7 during the reporting period

*Result 3.2: SL Parliament plans for implementation of milestones to fulfil commitments in NAP government*

#### Activity 3.2.1: Parliamentary Openness Action Plan Launch and Implementation

CEPPS/NDI did not complete activities related to 3.2.1 during the reporting period

#### Activity 3.2.2: Civil Society Oversight Capacity Building

CEPPS/NDI did not complete activities related to 3.2.2 during the reporting period

*IR 3.3. Constituent outreach and communications are improved by national government*

#### Activity 3.3.1. Government leaders are briefed on national survey findings

In March 2018, CEPPS/IRI finished drafting the questionnaire and pre-testing for the first of two CEPPS national public opinion surveys. While fieldwork was originally scheduled for March 2018, CEPPS/IRI delayed the start of field work to re-evaluate the questionnaire due to the religious violence in Digana. The first survey will go into the field in April 2018 and will gauge citizen opinion on key policy and reform issues.

#### Activity 3.3.2. Comprehensive review of government communications

In March, CEPPS/IRI met with Director General of Department of Information, Sutharshana Gunawardhana, to plan for IRI's strategic communication review and potential cooperation with the Ministry of Mass Media and Information. During the meeting the Director General expressed a willingness to work with IRI and mentioned that that the Ministry could use assistance on various aspects of strategic communication and would follow up with priority areas in April. USAID is currently supporting the Ministry of Mass Media and Information on communication and implementation of the Right to Information Act. CEPPS/IRI plans to attend the next USAID coordination meeting with Ministry scheduled for May 7.

### Activity 3.3.3. Targeted communications strategies are developed

CEPPS/IRI did not conduct activities related to 3.3.3 in the reporting period.

### Activity 3.3.4. Training on communications techniques

CEPPS/IRI did not conduct activities related to 3.3.4 in the reporting period.

*IR 3.4: Election process is effectively monitored and reported on by domestic stakeholders*

### Activity 3.4.1 Long-Term Election Observation

During the quarter, CEPPS/IRI and PAFFREL deployed 30 long-term election observers and 31 district officers in 25 district offices throughout Sri Lanka to observe the February 10<sup>th</sup> domestic elections. The LTOs deployed two weeks before and two weeks following the local government elections. PAFFREL has provided preliminary metrics on violence against women in elections (VAWIE), which will be included in a final Election Observation Report to be published in April 2018.

CEPPS/IRI and CEPPS/IFES coordinated efforts to ensure that incident reporting of Violence Against Women in Elections (VAWIE) forms developed by CEPPS/IFES were incorporated into PAFFREL's election observation monitoring efforts. The VAWIE incident reporting form ensures that when observers note an incident of electoral violence against women, he or she can categorize what type of VAWIE occurred. The categories include physical violence, sexual violence, psychological violence and economic violence. The need for these tools was identified through CEPPS/IFES's 2017 VAWIE assessment, which noted pervasive levels of electoral violence against women, as well as the fact that election observers are rarely collecting gender sensitive data.

*IR 3.5. Frameworks and enforcement of political finance and abuse of state resources are strengthened*

### Activity 3.5.1. Convene an expert group to advance political finance reforms

CEPPS/IFES did not conduct activities related to 3.5.1 in the reporting period.

### Activity 3.5.2. Support enforcement and awareness of new political finance laws and abuse of state resources (ASR)

CEPPS/IFES did not conduct activities related to 3.5.2 in the reporting period.

*IR 3.6. Women's political engagement in Sri Lanka's democratic process is strengthened*

Activity 3.6.1. Conduct She Leads SL to train a cadre of women leaders contesting for local government and provincial council elections

CEPPS/IFES did not conduct activities related to 3.6.1 in the reporting period.

Activity 3.6.2. Establish an advisory council to address violence against women in elections

The local government election underscored pervasive instances of VAWIE that inhibit women's ability to or interest in participating in the political process. In the weeks following the election, CEPPS/IFES continued to engage the Forum Against Gender Based Violence to identify the most prevalent instances of electoral violence against women. In the upcoming quarter, CEPPS/IFES will co-facilitate a panel discussion on VAWIE in Sri Lanka with the Forum members and work with the Forum members and other key stakeholders to establish a VAWIE advisory council. Additionally, in June 2017, CEPPS/IFES will work with researchers from the University of Uppsala to conduct a nationwide assessment of VAWIE against elected women leaders. While the initiative is funded by the University of Uppsala, collected data will inform development of targeted recommendations for legal reforms and advocacy initiatives to be taken up by the VAWIE advisory council. In March 2018, CEPPS/IFES obtained the EC's support for this initiative. In March 2018, CEPPS/IFES obtained the EC's support for the establishment of an advisory council and is now in the process of working with the gender focal point at the EC to hold the first advisory committee and develop the terms of reference for the group.

***Collaboration with Other USAID Projects or Other Donor Agencies***

*Women's Political Participation (WPP) Coordination Meeting:* On January 30, IFES' Senior Chief of Party and Program Officer attended the Women's Political Participation (WPP) Coordination Meeting. USAID, PAFFREL, Search for Common Ground (SFCG), the Centre for Monitoring Election Violence (CMEV), The Asia Foundation (TAF), and DAI also participated. The regular meetings provide an opportunity to strengthen coordination among key gender program implementers and during the meeting, participants discussed key challenges to obtaining the women's quota and what can be done to educate the public; key issues around the high rates of election-related violence against women; and the need to coordinate post-election trainings for newly elected local government leaders.

***Activities Next Quarter***

**Objective 1: Assist the Sri Lankan election management body to develop a multi-year strategic plan and transition to an independent election commission**

*This objective is complete*

**Objective 2: Strengthen the capacity of the election management body to administer credible and inclusive national, provincial, and local elections in Sri Lanka**

- Conduct a series of trainings on Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) data collection tools for district level EC staff (CEPPS/IFES)
- Conduct train the facilitators sessions for district-level EC staff (CEPPS/IFES)
- Work on voter registry audit and data security (CEPPS/IFES)
- Coordinate a roundtable event with the expert working group on strengthening the EDR regulatory framework (CEPPS/IFES)
- Brief members of the governing coalition, parliament, and government ministries on the results of the first CEPPS national public opinion survey. (CEPPS/IRI)
- Conduct a comprehensive review of communications capacities and structured mechanisms for outreach on key reform issues by the government. CEPPS is seeking to finalize the timing of the review with its Government of Sri Lanka counterpart. (CEPPS/IRI)

**Objective 3: Advance transparency and public information related to elections and political processes in Sri Lanka**

- Assist Parliament in organizing the creation of a parliamentary caucus for the open parliament plan (CEPPS/NDI)
- Coordinate roundtable with CSOs to identify thematic and sectoral priorities for the open parliament plan (CEPPS/NDI)
- Organize an exchange of Georgian MPs and civil society to Colombo to share best practices and provide guidance on the coordination and drafting of Sri Lanka's open parliament plan (CEPPS/NDI)
- Coordinate youth-focused National Voter's Day events, in partnership with the EC (CEPPS/IFES)
- Work with the University of Uppsala to conduct a nationwide assessment of election violence against women candidates, which will inform target recommendations for VAWIE-related reforms (CEPPS/IFES)
- Lead panel discussion on VAWIE in Sri Lanka, in partnership with the Gender Based Violence Forum and other stakeholders interested in forming a VAWIE advisory council (CEPPS/IFES)
- Establish VAWIE advisory council (CEPPS/IFES)

**III. RESULTS**

**Objective 1: Assist the Sri Lankan election management body to develop a multi-year strategic plan and transition to an independent election commission**

*Completed & Retired*

**Objective 2: Strengthen the capacity of the election management body to administer credible and inclusive national, provincial, and local elections in Sri Lanka**

*Indicator 2.1: Percent of electoral stakeholders surveyed who agree or strongly agree that the EC is effective in administering elections.*

CEPPS/IFES will report on annual indicator 2.1 in quarter 3.

*Indicator 2.1.1: Number of internal and organizational procedures and systems strengthened by the EC with USG assistance*

**Three (3)**

- The EC incorporated the M&E data management system (“dashboard”), developed by IFES, into its regular operations, developed by CEPPS/IFES and, as part of this effort, established new M&R focal points to track data at the district level.
- For the first time, the EC instructed district-level election commissioners to proactively identify and select the most accessible public buildings as polling stations.
- Based on technical inputs from CEPPS/IFES’ SPO curriculum development training in October 2017, the EC mainstreamed a focus on the voting and political rights of persons with disabilities into its SPO trainings.

*Indicator 2.1.2: Number of training and knowledge products developed to support knowledge sharing and trainings*

**Eleven (11)**

- CEPPS/IFES worked with the EC to develop five easy-to-read voter education posters in English, Tamil and Sinhala which were utilized for voter education programs and distributed nationwide prior to the election. The posters covered numerous topics including valid voting documents, the right to a secret ballot, polling station procedures, the roles and responsibilities of local government officials, and provisions for accessible voting.
- CEPPS/IFES developed five sign language voter education videos which were distributed via social media platforms and viewed an approximately 3,000 times.
- CEPPS/IFES developed a video on polling station accessibility for senior presiding officers.

*Indicator 2.2.1: Number of actions taken by EC improve voter registration system.*

**One (1)**

- A series of discussion were conducted with the EC and Technical Working Group on Disability to develop a supplementary data form to capture data on voters with disability and older persons. The data form is expected to be formally adopted in the upcoming quarter.

*Indicator 2.2.2: Number of voter registration system audits carried out by EC IT unit.*

- No activities were conducted during the reporting period.

*Indicator 2.3.1: Number of actions taken by EC to strengthen electoral complaints and adjudication process*

- In response to concerns around high incidents of electoral violence against women, the Election Commission made a formal announcement on national television that any women facing electoral violence should file a complaint with the EC.

*Indicator 2.3.2: Number of EDR stakeholders trained on EDR roles and responsibilities*

- No activities were conducted during the reporting period

*Indicator 2.4.1: Number of individuals receiving civic education through USG- assisted programs*

- **1,663 people**, including women, youth, plantation workers, and persons with disabilities, were reached through community voter education programs held during the pre-election period. The breakdown includes 944 women and 719 men, of which 434 are youth and 57 are persons with disabilities.

*Indicator 2.4.2: Percent of youth engaged in civic education initiatives following participation in youth camps*

- Throughout the project period 34% of youth who participated in the youth camp engaged in civic and voter education initiatives.
- During the reporting period, 23% of youth participated in civic voter education and political initiatives.

### **Objective 3: Advance transparency and public information related to elections and political processes in Sri Lanka**

*Indicator 3.1: Percent of electoral stakeholders surveyed who agree or strongly agree that elections are transparent.*

- Indicator 3.1 was not measured in this quarter

*Indicator 3.1.1: Number of parliamentary members and government officials engaging with civil society to develop open parliament commitments*

- Working group meetings with CSOs and Parliaments have not been initiated this quarter.

*Indicator 3.1.2: Number of CSOs engaging with Parliament to develop open parliament commitments*

- Working group meetings with CSOs and Parliaments have not been initiated this quarter.

*Indicator 3.1.3: Number of commitments with concrete milestones developed in National Action Plan (NAP) by working group*

- The NAP was not developed this quarter.

*Indicator 3.1.4: Number of parliamentary members, civil society organizations and government officials exposed to OGP and Open Parliament best practices*

- CEPPS/NDI did not coordinate any exchanges this quarter.

*Indicator 3.1.5: Number of CSOs exposed to mechanisms and tools for civil society oversight on Open Parliament commitments*

- CEPPS/NDI did not hold workshops for CSOs on civil society oversight on Open Parliament commitments this quarter.

*IR 3.2 – SL Parliament plans for implementation of milestones to fulfil commitments in NAP government*

*Indicator 3.2.1: Extent to which open parliament milestones are planned for implementation in an action plan*

- No activities were conducted during the reporting period

*Indicator 3.2.2: Number of CSOs exposed to capacity building for civil society oversight on open parliament commitments*

- No activities were conducted during the reporting period

*IR 3.3 – Constituent outreach and communications are improved by national government.*

*Indicator 3.3.1: Percent of government staff trained that demonstrate increased understanding of best practices in communications and public engagement*

- No activities were conducted during the reporting period

*Indicator 3.3.2: Number of public engagement activities, strategies or procedures developed or enacted by government staff.*

- No activities were conducted during the reporting period

*Indicator 3.3.3: Number of officials from the government and parliament briefed on CEPPS-supported public opinion research*

- Due to the political uncertainty surrounding the no-confidence vote and religious violence, CEPPS/IRI delayed the start of activities. As a result, there are no results to report for this quarter. CEPPS/IRI plans to commence activities under this intermediate result in April 2018.

*IR 3.4 - Election process is effectively monitored and reported on by domestic stakeholders*

*Indicator 3.4.1: Number of domestic non-partisan election observers deployed with USG-assistance*

- During the quarter, CEPPS/IRI deployed 30 (4 female) domestic long-term election observers who were deployed across 25 district offices throughout Sri Lanka. In addition to the observers, CEPPS/IRI also deployed 31 district officers (6 female) to manage district election offices to collect complaints of election incidents and provide information resources to voters.

*IR 3.5 - Frameworks and enforcement of political finance and abuse of state resources are strengthened.*

*Indicator 3.5.1: Number of laws or amendments to ensure credits elections drafted with USG technical assistance*

- No laws or amendments were drafted during the reporting period

*IR 3.6 – Women’s political engagement in Sri Lanka’s democratic process is strengthened*

*Indicator 3.6.1: Percent of women trained who make take steps to advance their political engagement*

**Thirty-three (33) percent**

- In September 2018, CEPPS/IFES trained 31 women through its She Leads SL training program in Batticaloa. Of these 31 women, 7 gained nominations to contest for office and 2 were successfully elected as local councilors. In addition to these 7 women, 5 others demonstrated that they took steps to advance their political career, including by participating in party meetings, working to bolster the women’s wing of their party and mobilizing support among other women in their communities, among other activities.



*Indicator 3.6.2: Number of gender sensitive actions taken by the EC as a result of CEPPS/IFES support*

**Two (2)**

- The Election Commission recruited 4 new women assistant commissioners to its staff, accounting for more than half of its new hires at the assistant commissioner level. Previously, none of the assistant commissioners were women.
- The Election Commission proactively recruited women as SPOs. While there is no data on the total number of women SPOs hired, the Election Commission reported that women made up a record 60 percent of the Colombo-based SPO trainees.

*Indicator 4.1: Percent of election commission officials trained who demonstrate an increase in knowledge*

- Given the local government election that shifted the focus of CEPPS/IFES' engagement with the EC, CEPPS/IFES did not measure this indicator during the reporting period. Instead, CEPPS/IFES' workshops, including around lessons learned from the local government election, prioritized action planning for the upcoming election cycles.

*Indicator 4.2: Number of election officials trained with USG assistance*

- 33 senior election officials including 6 women were trained on the use of M and E data base developed by IFES for the Election Commission.

#### IV. Foreign Assistance Indicator

Indicator	Baseline	Target	FY 2018 Quarter 1 (Oct-Dec 2017)	FY 2018 Quarter 2 (Jan-Mar 2018)	FY 2018 Quarter 3 (Apr-Jun 2018)	FY 2018 Quarter 4 (Jul-Sep 2018)	Project Total <i>(Unique numbers only)</i>
<b>USG Indicator GJD 3.2.1: Number of election officials trained with USG assistance</b>	0	0	31	48			168
<b>Disaggregated by:</b>							
<b>Gender</b>							
Female			4	6			37
Male			27	42			131
<b>Official Type</b>							
Member (Commissioner)			1	3			3
Staff			30	45			165
<b>USG Indicator 2.3-2.6: Number of laws or amendments to ensure credible elections drafted with USG technical assistance</b>			1 <sup>2</sup>	0			2
<b>USG Indicator (DR. 3.2-4) Number of individuals receiving voter education through USG-assisted programs</b>			369 <sup>3</sup>	1663			2059 <sup>4</sup>
<b>Disaggregated by:</b>							
Female			200	944			1276
Male			29	719			748
Youth			35	434			469
People with disabilities			6	57			63

<sup>2</sup> The identified legislation relates to an amendment to the Registration of Electors Act (1980) to enable the Election Commission (EC) to prepare a supplementary electoral register for new voters before elections. Once implemented, the supplementary electoral register will enable thousands of newly-eligible voters to cast their ballots.

<sup>3</sup> 150 individuals signed a petition against VAWIE and attended an awareness session on electoral violence and women's political participation as part of the December "Elect Her. End Violence" campaign. Disaggregated data was not collected on the petition.

<sup>4</sup> The 2,059 figure includes an additional 27 women who participated in CEPPS/IFES and the NCW's voter education workshop in August 2017, which was part of the previous program year.

## V. ANALYSIS

### *Progress toward achieving objectives/impact*

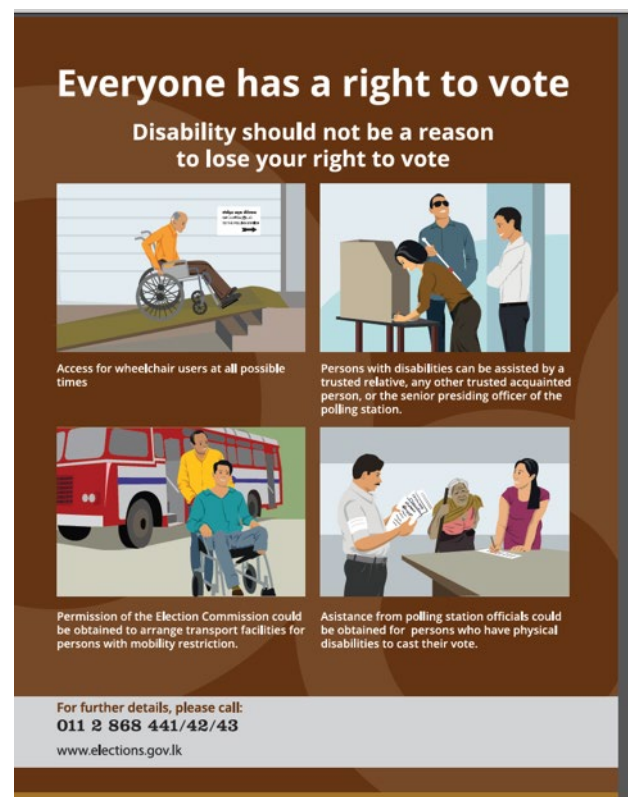
#### **Objective 1: Assist the Sri Lankan election management body to develop a multi-year strategic plan and transition to an independent election commission**

CEPPS/IFES achieved Objective 1 in Year 2 of the IEMP.

#### **Objective 2: Strengthen the capacity of the election management body to administer credible and inclusive national, provincial, and local elections in Sri Lanka**

The February 2018 local government election marked the first electoral event that the EC oversaw since its establishment as an independent commission in November 2015. As such, the local government election introduced an important opportunity to witness the EC's application of best election management practices that it has been exposed to through CEPPS/IFES' ongoing technical support under the IEMP. Key positive examples include:

- The Election Commission's commitment to promoting inclusion-oriented voter education materials, which included distribution of polling station accessibility posters designed and printed by CEPPS/IFES. The easy-to-read posters highlighted messages about the universal rights of all eligible voters to cast a ballot as well as the specific provisions available to persons with disabilities in order to improve accessibility. Coupled with this emphasis on inclusive voter education, for the first time, the EC called on its district-level commissioners to select accessible public spaces as polling stations for the local government election.
- Proactive engagement of youth through a series of youth-focused voter education programs that, working in partnership with CEPPS/IFES, reached hundreds of first-time voters.
- The EC's engagement in CEPPS/IFES' voter education programs for the plantation sector workers. The Assistant Election Commissioner from Nuwara Eliya led the training of trainers for civil society facilitators.
- The EC's willingness to co-facilitate an event with CEPPS/IFES on mitigating hate speech in elections. The issue of hate speech is emerging as a critical priority in democracies worldwide and the solutions are challenging as they require an election management body to carefully weigh freedom of expression against speech that incites violence, which can undermine



political participation. The EC's demonstrated enthusiasm for pursuing hate speech issues in Sri Lanka highlights its commitment to adapting to emerging challenges in order to protect democratic rights.

- Throughout the quarter, the EC continued to engage with CEPPS/IFES and the NCW on delivering voter education sessions to women community leaders. Building on previous quarters, the engagement demonstrates a new and solidified partnership between the EC and another government body.

In addition to this election-related preparation, the EC's initiative to organize a strategic planning retreat following the election demonstrates its continued institutional commitment to achieving the strategic planning objectives, a significant improvement considering that the EC has never before had a strategic plan. With CEPPS/IFES' support, the EC focused on lessons learned from the election, conducting a more systematic and intentional evaluation than had previously been done. Additionally, the EC proactively engaged not just headquarters' level staff, but also district level staff in the lessons learned workshop. This emphasis on building the capacity of district-level staff so that the EC further institutionalizes high capacity at all levels – regardless of leadership – is one of the focuses of IFES' IEMP. Finally, during his opening remarks at the Retreat, the EC Chairman underscored the EC's commitment to promoting women's electoral rights and emphasized that “the EC was able to employ more women for election duties in the local government elections as a result of IFES advocacy initiatives.”

CEPPS/IRI has finished pre-testing of the National Public Opinion Survey which it expects to put into the field in April 2018. The Communications Review has been delayed due to political uncertainty, but CEPPS/IRI has continued to liaise with the Department of Government Information under the Ministry of Mass Media and Information to identify priority areas to review during the assessment. CEPPS/IRI believes that the unexpected results of the local elections have generated renewed interest by the Ministry of Communications to incorporate evidenced-based success stories and policy proposals to bolster the case for a now weakened Unity Government.

### **Objective 3: Advance transparency and public information related to elections and political processes in Sri Lanka**

The PPOC's decision to create a parliamentary caucus for developing the Open Parliament Plan has been a result of NDI/CEPPS efforts to share best practices and emphasize the importance of involving all political parties in the parliamentary reform process. The creation of a multiparty platform would enable a collaborative process for establishing an agenda and plan of action for enhancing greater transparency in parliamentary processes. Furthermore, the decision also demonstrates key stakeholders' commitment to advancing reforms for greater transparency and accountability to citizens.

In the lead up to the election, CEPPS/IFES worked with the EC and local partners to implement targeted voter awareness sessions focused on educating first time voters, women, plantation workers and persons with disabilities about new voting procedures. CEPPS/IFES' 2017 voter education survey identified these groups as some of the most marginalized from the voting process. Key examples of targeted voter education included outreach programs to train hundreds of women community leaders and women development officers on how to conduct voter education within

their own communities; a voter awareness session with sign language interpretation for people who are deaf; production of five voter education videos with sign language interpretation that were disseminated through social media; a series of district-level events to educate over 450 youth on the responsibility to vote; and estate-based voter education programs for 1,100 plantation workers, the majority of whom are women.

Taken together, these and other initiatives educated an estimated 1,600 people directly on voting procedures, giving them the information needed to be able to cast a ballot. Equally important, the voter education sessions encouraged participants to educate others within their communities, thus expanding the education outreach. Participants highlighted numerous examples. A. Silvamalar, a 39-year-old tea plantation worker, had never before attended a voter education program and did not plan to vote in the election; he neither knew how to mark a ballot nor understood what a local government representative does. Following the training, Silvamalar said he would vote in the election and even shared his voter knowledge – including information about what documents are needed to vote and how to mark a ballot paper – with his family and friends. Jeevalathan, a student at the University of Jaffna, indicated that prior to the CEPPS/IFES session, he did not understand the new election system or what rights voters with disabilities have in order to participate in elections. After the program, he used voter awareness posters to conduct his own awareness raising session within his youth organization, noting that “having posters with illustration was helpful to explain the message clearly.”

CEPPS/IFES’ voter education programs responded to the unique needs of the target groups while contributing to the EC’s strategic planning objectives of implementing inclusive voter education. Sign language interpretation, educational graphics and poster, and interactive training techniques were a few of the strategies utilized to ensure that the information resonated with targeted audiences. As a result, individuals not only voted themselves but also recognized their responsibility to educate others within their communities about the importance of voter engagement.



*Plantation workers participate in voter education sessions led by CEPPS/IFES, the EC and Chrysalis*

### ***Constraints/Challenges & Lessons Learned***

Both CEPPS/IFES' electoral integrity assessment as well as its 2017 voter education survey identified plantation workers as among the most marginalized from the political process. This is due to a number of factors, including high rates of illiteracy, long working hours that limit access to outside voter education and civic engagement opportunities, prohibitively long distances to polling stations, and, perhaps most critically, the restrictive nature of the tea estates. In particular, Pradeshya Sabhas Act of 1987, section 225(2) stipulates that plantations do not fall under the administrative purview of the local government authorities, which enables plantation owners to restrict what services and information enter their areas and makes it difficult for voter educators to gain access to those within the estates. As a result, the EC had less opportunities to conduct voter education outreach to this critical group of citizens.

To address this issue, CEPPS/IFES identified a local partner – Chrysalis – to co-facilitate the voter education sessions. While Chrysalis had never before implemented voter education sessions, as an organization, it has established Community Development Forums in the plantation sector in Uva and Central Provinces that have previously been used for information gatherings on a variety of issues ranging provision of microcredit and livelihood information to health services. These Community Development Forums provided a unique opportunity to leverage existing platforms and connections with community leaders within the plantations to deliver the voter awareness sessions. To further bolster credibility, CEPPS/IFES also requested letters of support from the EC and engaged local EC staff in the delivery of the voter education. Taken together, the local partnership with Chrysalis combined with formal support from the Election Commission helped minimize estate owners concerns around voter education information, enabling CEPPS/IFES and partners to reach over 1,100 citizens ahead of the election.

In February and March, the attention of the Sri Lankan political and CSO community was occupied by the political tensions following the local authority elections and dramatic events in Muslim minority communities in Kandy. CSO counterparts also were occupied by proposed controversial draft amendments to the Voluntary Social Service Organizations (Registration and Supervision) Act No.31 of 1980. The proposed amendments include stricter monitoring of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). These developments slowed down the pace of activities on the formulation of the open parliament plan as Parliament and CSOs expressed that they had limited time to devote to the program.

This quarter CEPPS/IRI found that the government of Sri Lanka faced several periods of political uncertainty surrounding the no-confidence vote and religious violence. This created logistical challenges in finalizing the design and timing of the communications review. To respond to this issue, CEPPS/IRI has remained in consistent contact with potential government counterparts to ensure that the communications review can proceed as soon as possible now that the Unity government is expected to continue.

### ***Gender Integration***

CEPPS is committed to ensuring equal participation of both men and women as citizens and elected leaders in Sri Lanka's political process. Under the IEMP, CEPPS/IFES supports the

institutionalization of gender equality as a key priority in the EC's electoral operations and consistently integrates a focus on principles of women's rights into training curriculum, developed resource materials and other areas of technical support. During the reporting period, for example, CEPPS/IFES piloted a crisis simulation with journalists that included a focus on the specific types of gendered hate speech that women candidates are likely to confront, and the responsibility of journalist to counter negative gender stereotypes and promote women as political decision makers. Additionally, CEPPS/IFES worked with the EC to conduct voter outreach to women in the plantation sector – who face multiple marginalization as poor women in rural areas – to enhance their electoral participation. Additionally, modeling gender inclusion in its materials, CEPPS/IFES' voter education posters consistently depict women as leaders and key electoral stakeholders, and CEPPS/IFES proactively recruited women as facilitators for voter education outreach and other program initiatives.

As demonstrated through the joint EC and CEPPS/IFES lessons learned workshop, the EC continues to take new actions to expand women's political participation. Following the election, the EC Chairman credited IFES for its emphasis on increasing gender knowledge and sensitivity within the EC and highlighted the EC's latest initiatives to recruit more women at all levels of the institution. During the reporting period, for example, the EC recruited 4 new women assistant commissioners to its staff, accounting for more than half of its new hires at the assistant commissioner level. Previously, none of the assistant commissioners were women. The EC also proactively recruited women as senior presiding officers (SPOs), with women making up a record 60 percent of the Colombo-based SPO trainees. In a statement to the EC, the Chairman also highlighted the need to more proactively address VAWIE in future electoral cycles – an area that it had previously not engaged in. Taken together, these initiatives demonstrate the substantial progress that CEPPS/IFES has been able to make as it continues to work with the EC in promoting a more gender inclusive democratic process.

During the quarter, CEPPS/IRI and CEPPS/IFES worked with PAFFREL to incorporate incident reporting of VAWIE in election observation monitoring. While final results will be fully reported on in the next report after publishing the Election Observation Report, domestic election observers recorded 33 incidents of violence against women candidates during the entire election observation period compared to 39 acts of violence reported just in the first half of the election observation period, (from 1 December 2017 to 11 January 2017) and 72 allegations of electoral misconduct against women candidates, compared to 228 allegations against all candidates reported in the first half of the election observation period.

## **LIST OF ATTACHMENTS**

Attachment I: CEPPS/IFES and Election Commission Voter Education Posters (English version)

Attachment II: IFES White Paper on Countering Hate Speech in Elections: Strategies for Electoral Management Bodies

Attachment III: CEPPS/IFES Voter Education Report on IFES and EC Pre-Election Activities

Attachment IV: CEPPS/IFES Pilot Training Needs Assessment for the Election Commission