

**CEPPS Quarterly Report: January 01, 2019 – March 31, 2019**

**SRI LANKA: Improved Election Management Program (IEMP)  
USAID Associate Cooperative Agreement No. AID-383-LA-15-00001 under the Leader  
Cooperative Agreement No. DFD-A-00-08-00350-00**

**Project Dates: September 29, 2015 – September 30, 2019**

## **I. PROGRAM OVERVIEW**

### *Problem Statement*

Sri Lankan voters delivered a clear mandate in the January 2015 presidential election and the August 2015 parliamentary elections for change from ‘rule by force’ to ‘the rule of law’. Throughout the year, despite complex political roadblocks, Sri Lanka made significant achievement such as the passage of the 19<sup>th</sup> amendment to the Constitution, which reduced presidential powers; the appointment of the Independent Election Commission (EC); and the launch of a constitutional reform process. With the establishment of the new EC, transfer of knowledge and competencies from the Department of Elections (DoE) leadership to the EC is of utmost importance to maintaining Sri Lanka’s renewed democratic momentum. Additionally, existing competencies must be expanded in order to comprehensively address electoral integrity challenges within Sri Lanka’s democratic system and further institutionalize fair and inclusive elections. This includes ensuring that the EC has the institutional knowledge necessary to implement the new electoral system that is being proposed as part of the constitutional reform process underway in Sri Lanka.

### *Theory of Change and Critical Assumptions*

The Government of Sri Lanka’s openness to reform efforts creates an opportunity for CEPPS/IFES to provide targeted assistance to improve the EC’s management of the electoral process. Drawing from the capacity of the former DoE, CEPPS/IFES works with the EC to enhance its knowledge of best practices in institutional capacity building, election administration, strategic planning, voter education, and ensuring electoral and political rights of women and people with disabilities, in order to strengthen the foundation for credible and inclusive elections.

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

- The EC is willing to engage with CEPPS/IFES and, at a minimum, agrees to conduct the already planned activities.
- The EC accepts the support of international experts provided by CEPPS/IFES to provide guidance on selected election-related reforms and planning, and the environment exists where laws and procedures can be strengthened.
- The EC is receptive to input from civil society and other electoral stakeholders in the development of strategic and voter education plans.
- The political environment allows government officials, civil society, media, and other stakeholders to speak openly regarding electoral vulnerabilities and policies and procedures.
- EC officials are able to travel internationally to participate in a study tour.
- The EC demonstrates the capacity to incorporate a new, upgraded system into its current voter register system.
- Journalists trained through the IEMP are willing to take a post-training knowledge-based survey.
- The security, political, and legal situation in Sri Lanka permits CEPPS/IFES to operate freely and openly.

### *Objectives*

CEPPS/IFES' overall programming goal is to assist Sri Lanka's election management body (EMB) in its transition to an independent public commission, build the EMB's institutional capacity to administer credible and inclusive elections in Sri Lanka, and improve the content and efficacy of voter education programs. IEMP will address the following USAID objectives:

- I. Assist the Sri Lankan election management body to develop a multi-year strategic plan and transition to an independent election commission**
- II. Strengthen the capacity of the election management body to administer credible and inclusive national, provincial, and local elections in Sri Lanka**
- III. Improve the efficacy of voter education programs**

### *Political Update Relevant to Program Implementation*

During this quarter, the Chairperson of the Appeals Committee on Boundary Delimitation (Delimitation Committee) announced that most discrepancies in the delimitation of electoral wards had been addressed. While the Ministry of Local Government and Provincial Councils initially indicated that it expected the Delimitation Committee to submit its report in October, clearing a major benchmark that would enable local government elections, the Delimitation Committee's deadline was subsequently extended from August 31 to October 31 and no firm timeline for local elections has yet been established. Election Commission (EC) Chairperson Mahinda Deshapriya noted that "serious errors" in the Local Elections Act (2012) must be amended before local elections can be held, and that to date, the delays have been outside of the EC's control. Despite the uncertain timeline for the local election, some political parties have begun taking steps in preparation. In July, both the United People's Freedom Alliance (UPFA) and the Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) indicated that they were reviewing applications and potential candidates for local elections, while the United National Party (UNP) and SLFP announced a decision to maintain their unity government through 2020 and develop a strategy to contest the local government elections together.

The EC began its annual revision of the electoral register on July 1, and on September 7, the EC announced that preliminary work on the enumeration process was complete. From September 1 to 28, the draft register was displayed at district secretariats, provincial councils, divisional secretariats, local authorities, and Grama Niladhari offices to provide citizens with an opportunity to check their details and submit objections or clarifications through district election offices. The EC also launched a platform to allow voters to check their registration details online.

On August 26, government representatives announced that the constitutional drafting language had been fast tracked with the goal of presenting a draft Constitution before the next budget cycle begins in mid-November. The Steering Committee (SC) tasked with drafting the constitution increased its frequency of meetings in response to the November deadline. On September 17, Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe confirmed that the new constitution will require public approval through a referendum after it is passed by Parliament.

During this period, the People's Action for Free and Fair Elections (PAFFREL) submitted a letter to the Prime Minister calling for campaign finance legislation that would limit electoral spending. PAFFREL underscored the importance of implementing this legislation prior to local elections to promote a more level playing field among candidates. Subsequently, the Minister of Provincial Councils and Local Government requested PAFFREL's support to develop a draft bill on "Campaign Finance Upper Limitation for Elections" to present to the Cabinet by mid-October. This bill would establish a ceiling on the amount that can be spent by political parties and candidates during campaigns; require parties and candidates to open separate bank accounts for all campaign funds; adopt requirements for parties and candidates to disclose sources of funds; and require that parties and candidates submit an audit report to the EC at the end of each election. If such regulations are passed, provisions should also be made to ensure that the EC has the resources it needs to carry out its regulatory mandate.

In September, the Minister of Provincial Councils and Local Government announced that legislation will soon be introduced to establish a 25% quota for women in Provincial Councils. The mechanism for implementing the quota has not yet been determined, but it will likely be a reserved seat system similar to the quota established for local government. In his announcement, the Minister emphasized the need to “train women to take up leading roles in politics,” while Deputy Chief of Staff to the Prime Minister, Rosy Senanayake, noted that women candidates will need party and financial support to successfully conduct campaigns.

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

- CEPPS/IFES facilitated the 7<sup>th</sup> meeting on the Disability Inclusive Elections in Sri Lanka- Technical Working Group (DIESL-TWG) in order to plan the presentation to the EC that will highlight the key outcomes and findings from the accessibility data collection pilot. Members representing the DOJF, My Rights and Enable Lanka were present at the meeting and as part of the presentation, members agreed to prepare a series of informational resources for the EC, including the DIESL-TWG’s terms of reference in all three languages, as well as key priorities identified by the DIESL-TWG related to address psychosocial disabilities in electoral processes.
- CEPPS/IFES at the request of the Election Commission (EC), conducted a Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) training for district election officials representing the Kandy and Kegalle district offices on January 22, in supporting the EC in monitoring progress of its strategic planning goals. The training included an introduction to the key indicators in the EC’s Participatory Strategic Plan (PSP), the responsibilities of each district EC office as relates to monitoring the PSP progress, and capacity building around the utilization of data collection forms and strategies.
- CEPPS/IFES and the EC partnered to form a youth steering committee (YSC) which held its first formal meeting on January 30 to finalize the YSC’s terms of reference, and to agree on a strategy for the Committee to provide technical support to the EC. Going forward, the now institutionalized YSC will have regular meetings with the EC to identify ways to partner on youth-focused voter and civic education outreach, and to leverage networks of young people in democratic initiatives.
- CEPPS/IFES in partnership with the Disability Inclusive Elections in Sri Lanka Technical Working Group (DIESL-TWG) met with the Chairman and senior officials of the EC to present from the accessibility data collection pilot, as well as recommendations for improving electoral accessibility for voters with disabilities on February 6. This being a critical requirement given that to date there is no systematic method for collecting information on persons with disabilities in a way that would enable the EC to identify the provisions needed to make elections more accessible for all Sri Lankan voters. CEPPS/IFES’ National Disability and Program Advisor co-presented – along with DIESL-TWG members Ms. Rasanjali Pathirage (Convener) and Mr. Prasanna Kuruppu.

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• CEPPS/IFES worked with the DIESL-TWG to conduct a session in Colombo on the electoral rights of persons with disabilities for 38 of the EC's newly recruited Office Employee Service (OES) staff, including 15 women on February 7. The training program was conducted by the Convener of the DIESL-TWG and IFES' National Disability and Program Advisor.

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• CEPPS/IFES conducted a session on countering disinformation, hate speech and incitement to violence in elections for 20 EC senior staff on February 8. The session was led by IFES' Regional Director for Asia-Pacific and following the presentation, participants worked together to identify priority actions the EC can take to address hate speech and disinformation in the upcoming elections. IFES will work with the newly formalized Youth Committee and EC to advance recommendations outlined by the EC.

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• CEPPS/IFES to support the EC in monitoring the progress of its strategic planning goals, worked with the EC monitoring and evaluation (M&E) officer to review and update the EC's Participatory Strategic Planning (PSP) dashboard, February 13 and 15. These updates will better enable the EC's Planning Director to develop accurate and timely reports on the EC's progress in meeting its PSP objectives, which can be shared with all district offices and other government agencies as relevant.

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• CEPPS/IFES worked with the EC to conduct a two-day Train the Facilitator (TtF) workshop in Gampaha with a total of 24 participations. At the request of the EC, the training built participants' capacity to conduct voter and civic awareness programs in their respective districts, with a focus on voter education outreach that occurs throughout the electoral cycle. At the end of the training, participants engaged in interactive lesson plan development, giving them an opportunity to solidify new training skills through practical design and implementation of a model session. The training was led by two Assistant Commissioners from the EC, with facilitation support from IFES' Program Officer and Inclusion Manager.

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• CEPPS/IFES worked with the EC to organize an "Electoral Systems Awareness Week" from September 8 to 13, bringing together election administrators, political parties, government officials, members of civil society organizations, academics, students, and other stakeholders. Dr. Andrew Reynolds, IFES senior international expert on electoral system design, led a series of events to raise awareness about nuances within the mixed-member proportional (MMP) electoral system and its likely impact on the representation of women and ethnic minorities.

- ~~CEPPS/IFES worked with the EC to launch #YouthVoteSL. The #YouthVoteSL campaign utilized print, television, and social media to promote civic and voter education messages encouraging youth to register to vote and participate as active stakeholders in the electoral process. CEPPS/IFES facilitated a series of activities, led by a youth steering committee and in collaboration with the EC, including a “Kites for Rights” voter awareness event where more than 300 youth participated in a polling and counting simulation led by the EC Chairperson.~~
- ~~CEPPS/IFES and the EC co-sponsored a voter education Building Resources in Democracy, Governance and Elections (BRIDGE) training to develop the EC’s voter education strategy and strengthen participants’ ability to design and facilitate voter education trainings. In addition to the fifteen participants from Sri Lanka, the EC sponsored ten participants from other South Asian election management bodies, providing a unique regional exchange that broadened participants’ understanding of different approaches to voter education.~~
- ~~CEPPS/IFES Senior Election Technology Specialist Michael Yard led a series of consultations with the EC on its voter registration system, the election technology related objectives in its Strategic Plan, and the EC’s disaster recovery management site. Mr. Yard also briefed EC staff and civil society representatives on key considerations and challenges for adopting election technology.~~

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

- By bringing together more than 200 academics, civil society representatives, EC staff, government officials, and women’s rights advocates, CEPPS/IFES’ and the EC engaged a diverse group of electoral stakeholders who have been marginalized from the electoral reform dialogue. Following the Electoral Systems Week activities, women’s rights advocates participated in a march for women’s political, economic and social rights in the Constitution, and members of the LGBTI community approached CEPPS/IFES for technical support in working with the EC to enhance voting rights of transgender individuals.
- CEPPS/IFES’ BRIDGE training was co-facilitated by two Assistant Commissioners from the EC, who, as a result of this training, received accreditation as BRIDGE facilitators. The accreditation further promotes local ownership and EC capacity to deliver its own high quality trainings based on international standards and best practice from the region, using interactive adult learning techniques.
- The #YouthVoteSL campaign resulted in youth’s proactive engagement in legal reform efforts, which is likely to positively impact the inclusivity of Sri Lanka’s elections. In August and September, for example, youth groups circulated a nationwide petition calling for changes to address issues in Sri Lanka’s annual voter registration enumeration process.

The petition garnered over 200,000 signatures from citizens of all ages. Additionally, the Association for Friendship and Love (AFRIEL) filed a complaint with Sri Lanka's Human Rights Commission calling for reforms to the legal framework governing the voter registration process. If adopted, this legal reform would allow previously disenfranchised 18-year-olds to vote.



*Youth participants and the EC display their #YouthVoteSL signs in Vavuniya*

## 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**

*Intermediate Result 1.1: Increased awareness among the Election Commission and other electoral stakeholders of vulnerabilities in the electoral process*

#### Activity 1.1.1: Conduct an Electoral Integrity Assessment (EIA)

*Completed* – In May 2016, CEPPS/IFES completed its Electoral Integrity Assessment (EIA). The EC integrated many of the key findings into its draft strategic plan, identifying goals and objectives that, once implemented, will help deter and mitigate election fraud, malpractice, and manipulation.

#### Activity 1.1.2: Disseminate the report and inform key stakeholders on the integrity assessment report findings

One of the vulnerabilities in Sri Lanka’s electoral process identified through the EIA is the fact that, due to the annual enumeration process for the voter registry, thousands of 18-year-olds were disenfranchised from electoral participation in 2015. This undermines the right to universal franchise that is enshrined in Sri Lanka’s Constitution. Drawing on the findings from the EIA, CEPPS/IFES worked with the EC and a youth committee to inform youth about the findings through the #YouthVoteSL campaign and identify other advocacy opportunities to promote changes to the law (See activity 3.1.2).

*Intermediate Result 1.2: Electoral process is strengthened through targeted planning to address vulnerabilities in the electoral process*

#### Activity 1.2.1: Assist the Election Commission to develop a multi-year strategic plan

##### *Development of Draft Strategic Plan*

Following a series of public consultations and two strategic planning workshops with the EC conducted in the previous quarter, CEPPS/IFES delivered an updated draft of a four-year strategic plan to the EC Chairperson on July 5. IFES’ Chief of Party gave a presentation to the Chairperson and EC senior staff prior to the official handover, thanking the EC for its partnership and emphasizing the strategic plan as an opportunity to target reforms that will enable the EC to further institutionalize electoral integrity ahead of the next round of national elections in 2020.

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*Until now our strategic plan was only inside my head. With IFES support we have it on paper now.*

- *Mahinda Deshapriya, EC Chairperson*

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The latest draft of the strategic plan includes nine goals and more than one hundred objectives to strengthen the EC's work in awareness raising, legal and advocacy work, institutional development, and research and information sharing. Implementation of this plan will enable the EC to inform legal reforms on campaign finance, election dispute resolution, and other areas that enhance the overall credibility of the electoral process. The strategic plan also reflects findings from IFES' EIA (see IR 1.1), integrating nearly three-quarters of the 42 EC-specific recommendations identified in the EIA report. These include establishing dedicated training, legal and inclusion units; expanding training to focus on institutional capacity building; increasing efforts to register internally displaced Sri Lankans; developing a comprehensive voter education strategy; and ensuring stricter enforcement of campaign disclosure requirements.

#### *Electoral Systems Awareness Week*

As part of its efforts to contribute to the electoral reform process, CEPPS/IFES worked with the EC to organize an "Electoral Systems Awareness Week" (ESAW) to bring together election administrators, political parties, government officials, members of civil society organizations, academics, students, trade union leaders, and other stakeholders. In preparation for the ESAW, CEPPS/IFES first facilitated a series of consultation meetings on September 7 between IFES' electoral systems specialist and local experts. These included:

- 1) Kumudini Samuel, Researcher at Women and Media Collective
- 2) Asoka Obeyesekera, Executive Director of Transparency International Sri Lanka (TISL)
- 3) Paikiasothy Saravanamuttu, Executive Director of Centre for Policy Alternatives (CPA)
- 4) Jagath Liyanaarachchi, Legal Manager of TISL
- 5) Yuresha Fernando, Additional Secretary of the Constitutional Assembly, and M.A. Sumanthiran, Member of Parliament.

From September 8 to 13, Dr. Andrew Reynolds, IFES senior international expert on electoral system design, led a series of events to raise awareness about nuances within the mixed-member proportional (MMP) electoral system and its likely impact on the representation of women and ethnic minorities. A full agenda is included as Attachment A.

Working with the EC and local civil society partners, CEPPS/IFES' key events included:

- *Gender and Electoral Systems Symposium*: On September 8, CEPPS/IFES launched the ESAW with a Gender and Electoral Systems Symposium, which brought together fifty women's rights advocates and civil society and political party representatives to highlight opportunities to strengthen women's representation through electoral reform. Dr. Reynolds presented on gender-related provisions in the MMP electoral system, and two members of parliament and a women's rights advocate led a panel discussion on barriers to women's electoral participation within the current political context. Following these presentations,

IFES Regional Director for Asia-Pacific and representatives from the Women and Media Collective led a smaller group discussion with twenty advocates from the North, East, and South – representing Tamil, Muslim, and Sinhalese communities – to identify advocacy strategies for increasing electoral women’s representation in an MMP system.



*A participant in the Gender Symposium highlights the need for greater women’s representation*

- *Civil Society and Academia Roundtable Discussions:* CEPPS/IFES held three roundtables with various segments of civil society:
  - Members of the March 12<sup>th</sup> advocacy movement on September 8, in partnership with TISL. The event was co-facilitated by Asoka Obeyesekere, TISL Executive Director.
  - Colombo-based academics from Jayawardenepura University and Colombo University’s faculties of political science and law on September 9, in partnership with the Centre for Monitoring Election Violence (CMEV). The event was co-facilitated by CMEV national coordinator Manjula Gajanayake.
  - Trade union representatives on September 12, in partnership with Verité Research. Verité’s research coordinator, Janeen Fernando, co-facilitated the session.

Each of these roundtable events highlighted key electoral design principles and considerations in an MMP system. These included the need for a closed-list system to reduce party infighting; discussions on challenges with Sri Lanka’s bonus seat system; the need to establish a national threshold level and the impact this would have on smaller parties; the likely impact of an MMP system on the representation of ethnic groups; and promoting women’s political participation through gender mechanisms. Participants highlighted additional ongoing challenges in Sri Lanka’s electoral process, including the absence of campaign and political finance provisions, intra-party competition, questions over the legitimacy of “cross-over” candidates who are nominated through the National List after losing an election; and widespread intra-party and electoral violence.

- *Sessions with EC and Government Officials:* On September 9, CEPPS/IFES held a session that included both EC participants and government officials, co-facilitated by Dr. K. Thawalingam, Chairperson of the Boundary Delimitation Commission. At the request of the EC, Dr. Reynolds focused on principles of an MMP system and case studies of its implementation in other countries. On September 10, Dr. Reynolds conducted a second session with a targeted group of EC participants to identify technical and administrative considerations for elections implementation under an MMP system. The session, which

was co-facilitated by Mr. Ashoka Abeygunawardana – Chairperson of the Strategic Enterprise Management Agency – and Mr. Vasu Mohan, IFES Regional Director for Asia-Pacific, included a review of ballot options, country case studies of MMP systems, and the EC’s potential role in enforcing stronger political finance provisions and thresholds for representation of women on proportional representation lists. Speakers and other participants highlighted concerns with the ongoing delimitation process, considerations related to ethnic makeup and population density, and the need for political finance mechanisms and voter education to improve accountability and legitimacy of elected representatives.

- *Sessions with Students and Youth:* On September 13, CEPPS/IFES organized a discussion with 20 members of the Association for Friendship and Love (AFRIEL), a grassroots youth group from the Northern province, as well as a university lecture in partnership with the



*Members of AFRIEL, a grassroots youth organization, attend an ESAW session in Kandy*

International Centre for Ethnic Studies (ICES) and the Faculty of Arts at the University of Peradeniya in Kandy. The lecture focused on electoral design principles, the need for targeted mechanisms to increase women’s national-level representation, and issues related to the representation of ethnic and religious minorities. The event was led by Dr. Reynolds with presentations from Dr. Kamala Liyanage, a political science professor and expert in women’s political representation, and Manjula Gajanayake, CMEV national coordinator. Following the presentations, the 24 university participants (8 women) highlighted the need for academics to engage in the promotion of affirmative measures to increase women’s representation, advocacy for representation of doubly-marginalized groups that might not be helped by the MMP system alone, and adoption of political and campaign finance measures.

In preparation for the above sessions, CEPPS/IFES developed a matrix of Sri Lanka’s election-related laws (Attachment B) as well as a brief on women’s political participation in Sri Lanka (Attachment C), which was made available to the Gender Symposium participants.

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

*Intermediate Result 2.1: Increased professional and management expertise among EC commissioners and staff*

### Activity 2.1.1: Building electoral leadership

#### *Voter Education BRIDGE Training*

A well-conceived voter education program that is designed to reach diverse groups is critical to the success of an election, especially when there are fundamental changes to the electoral process such as the introduction of a new electoral system, ballot design or voting technology. Providing voter education programs that are strategically designed to target diverse audiences with tailored messaging and media is therefore a critical component of an election administration's mandate. From July 20 to 25, CEPPS/IFES and the EC co-sponsored a voter education Building Resources in Democracy, Governance and Elections (BRIDGE) training to develop the EC's voter education strategy and strengthen participants' ability to design and facilitate voter education trainings. This training was organized to support the EC's objective in its strategic plan of increasing citizens' awareness of their rights and obligations in the electoral process through broad-based voter and civic education programs and begin to address the absence of a systematic voter education strategy, which CEPPS/IFES' EIA identified as a critical vulnerability in Sri Lanka's recent elections.

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*I didn't know that curriculum development is such a long and systematic process. Now I understand the importance of developing a thorough curriculum.*

- Sri Lanka EC Participant

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BRIDGE facilitators Ross Attrill, who currently serves as IFES Voter Education Advisor in Myanmar, and Radhika Regmi, IFES Senior Program Manager and training specialist in Nepal, worked with the training participants to strengthen their ability to independently design and facilitate innovative voter education programs. In addition to the two lead BRIDGE facilitators, two EC assistant commissioners also co-led the training and received accreditation as BRIDGE facilitators. Through interactive sessions, the training equipped participants with the skills needed to develop their own voter education curriculum targeting marginalized groups, conduct needs assessments to inform voter education strategies, and systematically monitor impact of program outreach. The training was enriched by the participation of fifteen Sri Lankan representatives from both the EC and civil society as well as ten representatives from election management bodies in Bhutan, Pakistan, Nepal, the Maldives and Bangladesh.



*Participants at the BRIDGE training on voter education*

*Developing and sharing technical resource materials with electoral stakeholders*

CEPPS/IFES provided numerous resources to bolster the EC’s capacity to effectively reach out to diverse electoral stakeholders. These included a glossary of electoral terminology, which was translated into Sinhala and Tamil (Attachment D); a sample voter education strategy from Myanmar; and language related to youth’s rights to participate in the political process, which informed the #YouthVoteSL petition (Attachment E). In addition to sharing these resources with the EC, CEPPS/IFES also shared research on out-of-country voting (Attachment F).

Activity 2.1.2: Facilitate regional study tours for EC commissioners and staff

*Leadership in Electoral Administration Program*

CEPPS/IFES supported the participation of the EC Chairperson and two commission members in IFES’ Leadership in Electoral Administration Program (LEAP) from August 26 to 27 in Bali, Indonesia. A total of twenty-two election commissioners from Cambodia, Indonesia, Myanmar, Nepal, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Sri Lanka, and Timor-Leste, as well as a former Chief Commissioner from India, participated in the event. IFES Regional Director for Asia-Pacific, Vasu Mohan, led in the planning and delivery of the



*LEAP attendees take part in a polling simulation demonstrating the challenges faced by voters with disabilities*

two-day program, which covered topics including leadership frameworks, institutional strategic planning, organizational assessments and capacity planning, external stakeholder outreach and communications, good practice examples of regional leadership, and inclusion of women and persons with disabilities. LEAP also included an innovative pilot crisis management simulation on electoral security. The EC Chairperson served as a panelist for the session on Institutional Strategic Planning and Capacity Building and a resource person for the electoral security simulation.

CEPPS/IFES supported the EC’s participation in LEAP as part of the IEMP’s commitment to facilitate cross-country exchanges to strengthen the EC’s electoral leadership. In connection with this objective, at the Asia Electoral Stakeholder Forum that immediately preceded LEAP, the EC signed a five-year Memorandum of Understanding with Indonesia’s General Elections Commission (KPU) to promote exchanges of knowledge on principles of



*Sri Lankan EC and Indonesian KPU sign a five-year MoU*

effective electoral administration and collaboration on education and training programs in electoral management.

*Intermediate Result 2.2: Increased performance and stability of Sri Lanka's electronic voter registry*

Activity 2.2.1: Support establishment of an electronic national voter register that meets international standards

From July 18 to 27, IFES technology specialist Michael Yard met with the EC to review ongoing upgrades to Sri Lanka's Automated Electoral Rolls System (AERS) and advise the EC on steps necessary to transition to a centralized database and develop a web-based system to increase data accessibility. During his visit, he conducted an evaluation of the upgrades made to-date, reviewed the EC's operational plan as it relates to information technology (IT) goals and activities, provided input into the EC's draft Data Sharing Policy, and assessed the EC's disaster recovery management site. Additionally, at the request of the EC, Mr. Yard discussed the benefits and drawbacks of utilizing IT approaches to develop an election violence early warning system.



*EC representatives attend a briefing on election technology*

Key findings and recommendations from Mr. Yard's assessments include the following:

- Centralization of the voter registration system and the creation of a web-based application for updating the registry enable rapid changes to the system that are immediately propagated to all users throughout Sri Lanka. This eliminates the need to maintain smaller databases at the district level, reducing the maintenance overhead and response time when issues arise.
- The EC should remain focused on fully implementing the benefits made possible by this centralization, including screening for duplicate entries at the national level, not only within Electoral Divisions; eliminating the need for voters who move across Electoral Divisions to visit the old Electoral Division to be deactivated before registering in their new Division; enabling remote registration, including for internally displaced persons to register in their home Polling District; and increasing the ability of stakeholders to scrutinize the single national register.
- The EC has already begun plans for a Disaster Recovery Site (DRS) to ensure that the centralization of data does not result in a critical loss of data from any disasters that impact the primary Data Center. This should be seen as a mission-critical activity, and until the

DRS is fully functional, the EC should at a minimum implement mirroring of the voter register database and regular backups of the data stored offsite.

- Before finalizing decisions about the DRS, the EC should create a comprehensive disaster recovery plan that covers issues of both availability and recovery. Availability involves designing systems and networks to prevent down time from failures, while recovery deals with recovering from failures, including failures caused by natural disasters. The EC should also provide redundant communication channels or a contingency plan that allows field offices to access and update data in the event of network outages.
- The EC could consider conducting regular internal audits of the voter register to detect issues before they escalate into more serious problems and enable the EC to measure progress against strategic objectives on voter registration. Mr. Yard noted that IFES has developed methodologies that have been followed to conduct audits of several voter registers around the world and could be applied in the case of Sri Lanka.

Mr. Yard also held two briefings on international standards for election technology for EC staff and civil society representatives. The briefings covered a broad range of topics, including the benefits and drawbacks of new election technologies such as online voter registration, biometric identification, and electronic results transmissions systems; examples of international successes and failures in the application of election technology; cost considerations and security risks associated with technology upgrades; and issues related to transparency and accountability.

### **Objective 3: Improve the efficacy of voter education programs**

*Intermediate Result 3.1: Improved knowledge and application of voter education best practices*

#### Activity 3.1.1: Conduct an evaluation of past voter education systems including research and evaluation of the rejected ballots issue

In September, CEPPS/IFES released a Request for Quotations to prospective organizations to conduct a survey on voter education in Sri Lanka. The purpose of this survey will be to evaluate citizens' understanding of the voting process, citizens' confidence in the electoral process, and attitudes toward political participation, among other political and electoral issues. The survey will also identify factors behind the high rates of rejected ballots in some areas of Sri Lanka and identify and analyze the differential needs of women, persons with disabilities, and other marginalized groups. The survey is expected to cover all 22 electoral districts in Sri Lanka and reach 7 percent of Grama Niladari Divisions and 100 percent of the Divisional Secretary areas. CEPPS/IFES will review applications and select an organization in the upcoming quarter. The information collected through the survey will provide data for the EC to inform and expand its voter education strategy.

#### Activity 3.1.2: Strengthen EMB leadership on voter education through support to the development of a comprehensive voter education strategy

## *Youth Engagement*

As the next generation of political leaders, Sri Lanka's youth have a critical role to play in bolstering an inclusive democratic process that is responsive to all of its citizens. One of the goals in the EC's draft strategic plan is to strengthen civic and voter education, including through the launch of a public awareness campaign on the voting rights of youth. To support this goal, CEPPS/IFES organized a series of activities to foster collaboration between the EC and youth organizations to raise awareness of issues facing young voters – including provisions in the voter registration law that result in the disenfranchisement of voters who are of voting age on Election Day – and mobilize youth to become more engaged in the electoral process.

On July 14, IFES facilitated a meeting between the EC and leaders of youth organizations to discuss collaboration on activities to commemorate International Youth Day (August 12). Participants in the meeting agreed to organize a broader social media campaign, #YouthVoteSL, which would encourage youth-led organizations and networks to organize events, design materials, and publish videos that promoted messages related to youth civic engagement. The #YouthVoteSL campaign was formally launched at a July 28 press briefing, led by the EC Chairperson, with coverage of the event by several television and print news outlets (Attachment G).

Follow-on #YouthVoteSL activities included an awareness raising session in the north, where the Association for Friendship and Love (AFRIEL) and the EC jointly organized an event in Vavuniya with more than 300 young adults from across the northern province; circulation of a petition – which garnered over 200,000 signatures from citizens of all ages – calling for changes to address issues in Sri Lanka's annual enumeration process; and broadcasting of videos through social media. Additionally, AFRIEL filed a complaint with Sri Lanka's Human Rights Commission calling for reforms to the legal framework governing the voter registration process. From August 7 to 15, the #YouthVoteSL social media campaign reached over 134,000 users through Twitter and Facebook, and throughout the campaign, CEPPS/IFES continued to play a facilitating role by hosting several meetings between EC staff and youth leaders and advising them on strategies for effective outreach.

The #YouthVoteSL social media drive culminated in a "Kites for Rights" event on August 12, which CEPPS/IFES coordinated with the EC and 40 youth organizations. Approximately 315 young adults representing Sinhala, Tamil and Muslim communities from the North, East, Up-country, South and Colombo came together for the event in Galle. The full-day event included polling and counting simulations led by the Chairperson of



*The EC Chairperson leads a polling and counting simulation as part of the Kites for Rights event in Galle*



the EC and concluded with participants flying kites designed and decorated with messages promoting youth's right to vote.



*Participants of Kites for Rights 2016*

*Intermediate Result 3.2: Improved public understanding of electoral processes and reforms*

Activity 3.2.1: Conduct media training on how to report on elections with special focus on electoral reforms

Activities related to media training are scheduled in the second year of the program.

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

As part of its ESAW, CEPPS/IFES worked with the Canadian High Commission to hold a closed-door session on September 10 with members and allies of the LGBTI community. Dr. Reynolds presented on the legal and political rights of LGBTI, drawing on international examples and data collected through the [LGBTQ Representation and Rights Research Initiative](#) to highlight opportunities to improve their political representation. The meeting provided participants with an opportunity to share personal challenges they face when trying to exercise their right to vote or engage in political discussions such as the constitutional reform dialogues.

Following this meeting, LGBTI advocates discussed these issues in greater detail, including widespread political discrimination against transgender individuals who face challenges in casting their vote due to the designated gender on their national identity card. The LGBTI representatives

are preparing a paper outlining these issues to deliver to the Human Rights Commission and the EC. Specific paper recommendations are likely to include civil society efforts to implement a public awareness campaign about new provisions that allow citizens to update/correct their identity cards and adaptation of the registration form to include a third gender, as is done in Nepal.

#### *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**

- Support the launch of the EC's finalized strategic plan. The public launch will provide an opportunity for the EC to model best practices of transparency and public accountability while building ownership among Sri Lanka's diverse electoral stakeholders over institutionalizing electoral integrity in the local, provincial and national elections.

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

- Organize a session with EC representatives on principles of election dispute resolution and key issues in Sri Lanka, as identified through the EIA. The half-day session will be led by IFES' expert on election adjudication. As part of this effort, CEPPS/IFES will translate and distribute key chapters in its Guidelines for Understanding, Adjudicating, and Resolving Disputes in Elections (GUARDE) resource.
- Compile resources and research on political and campaign finance and EMB organizational assessments for the EC.
- Coordinate a Train the Facilitator (TtF) training to strengthen EC staff's training and facilitation skills in preparation for the local government elections.
- Sponsor one member of the EC to attend IFES' bi-annual U.S. Election Program (USEP) in Washington, D.C. IFES' flagship USEP brings together senior election officials, parliamentarians and diplomats from around the world to discuss elections and voting from comparative international perspectives and will provide a unique opportunity to engage the Commissioner in knowledge sharing on electoral best practice.

#### **Objective 3: Improve the efficacy of voter education programs**

- Pilot a series of voter awareness programs for persons with disabilities in Monaragala and Badulla. The programs will be carried out in partnership with the EC and Provincial Councilor Senarath Attanayake – the only elected representative with a disability in Sri Lanka – and will include a presentation by CEPPS/IFES' national inclusion advisor on international standards related to the political rights of persons with disabilities.
- Develop and share draft civic and voter education resources with the EC, to be shared with students across Sri Lanka.

- Select a Sri Lankan research organization to conduct an evaluation of past voter education efforts, implement the nationwide study, and share findings with the EC.
- Conduct a roundtable session with EC representatives on key considerations for implementing an out-of-country voting system.
- Prepare training materials for electoral reform-focused media trainings, expected in early 2017.
- Work with the EC and the youth steering committee to coordinate an awards ceremony for #YouthVoteSL participants.

### 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**

*Indicator 1.1: Number of categories from integrity assessment incorporated into five-year strategic plan*

Strategic Plan fully or partially incorporates 29 of 42 EC-specific EIA recommendations, covering 16 of the 17 categories of risk assessed in the EIA.

*Indicator 1.2: Number of consultations with interest groups of electoral stakeholders to solicit feedback for Strategic Plan*

None – CEPPS/IFES completed its consultations with interest groups during the previous quarter’s activities related to the development of the strategic plan.

#### **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: Number of electoral administration procedures and systems strengthened with IFES support*

Two procedures and systems strengthened with CEPPS/IFES’ support, including 1) input into the centralized online database of electors and 2) establishment of a youth advisory committee to support the #YouthVoteSL initiative, which is expected to be formalized into an EC youth action committee in the following quarter.

*Indicator 2.2: Number of election officials trained with USG assistance*

In total, CEPPS/IFES trained 46 *unique* election officials this quarter through two events: 10 participated in the Voter Education BRIDGE (excluding civil society participants); and 42 participated in the briefing on electoral reforms, as part of CEPPS/IFES’ ESAW.

*Indicator 2.3: Degree to which BRIDGE trainings impact daily operations of the EC*

Not measured in this quarter.

*Indicator 2.4: Number of laws or amendments to ensure credible elections drafted with USG technical assistance*

Although no laws or amendments to ensure credible elections have yet been drafted with USG technical assistance, CEPPS/IFES support of the #YouthVoteSL campaign led to development and circulation of a petition that calls for reform of the annual enumeration process to ensure that all voters who are eighteen on Election Day are able to cast a ballot. The petition has garnered over 200,000 signatures nationwide and is expected to be delivered to the EC in the upcoming quarter. Additionally, on July 25, EC Chairperson Deshapriya announced the need to adopt ceilings on campaign finance expenditures, and that if political parties did not adopt appropriate measures, mechanisms to monitor and audit campaign finance should be introduced.

*Indicator 2.5: Number of reform initiatives/approaches identified as suitable for consideration in Sri Lanka through study tours and acted upon by the EMB*

Two initiatives identified as suitable for consideration through study tours and acted upon by the EC: 1) out-of-country voting and 2) campaign/political finance work. During the May 2016 study tour to the Philippines, the three EC participants were exposed to OCV practices, a timely focus given that Sri Lanka recently formed a Parliamentary Select Committee to explore implementation of OCV in Sri Lanka. Upon his return from the CEPPS/IFES-sponsored Philippines study tour, EC Assistant Commissioner Nalaka Hemantha was appointed as the EC focal point for OCV-related activities, which include conducting stakeholder meetings to explore challenges and opportunities related to implementing an OCV system and preparing a report for the Parliamentary Select Committee outlining the EC's position on adopting an OCV system.

A second initiative is the EC's strengthened focus on campaign finance work, which was a key topic during the Philippines study tour. Following the Philippines study tour, the EC began discussion on the need for greater campaign finance regulations and is identifying opportunities to contribute to discussions on legal reforms, including through potential input into PAFFREL's draft bill on "Campaign Finance Upper Limitation for Elections". Finally, the Philippines study tour – combined with presentations by IFES' Election Technology Specialist – underscored the challenges with implementing electronic voting and have encouraged the EC to consider both benefits and challenges of implementing such systems in Sri Lanka.

*Indicator 2.6: Number of milestones achieved for electronic national voter register*

One – The EC has completed the centralization of the voter registration system – Strategic Objective 8.1 in its draft Strategic Plan – which enables it to create and maintain a single national voter registration database. This includes establishment of a web-based, centralized application for maintaining the database, enabling the EC to make changes quickly and propagate them to all users throughout the country.

IFES technology specialist advised the EC on a series of recommended next steps that, if achieved, would assist the EC to utilize the benefits of centralization and mitigate the risks it poses:

- Completion of the EC's plans for a Disaster Recovery Site, and in the meantime, mirroring of the voter register database and regular backups of data stored offsite
- Creation of a comprehensive disaster recovery plan to cover issues of data availability and recovery
- Provision of redundant communication channels, or a contingency plan that allows field offices to continue to access and update data in the event of network outages
- Implementation of data sharing and data security measures to prevent unauthorized alteration of data and limit exposure of data to non-sensitive data to minimize the damage that could be caused by a data breach
- Institutionalization of an internal audit process to help measure progress against the strategic objectives on voter registration

*Indicator 2.7: Number of participants in gender-focused workshops held to support laws, policies, or procedures that promote gender equality*

89 participants including 49 in CEPPS/IFES' Gender and Electoral Systems symposium on September 8; 24 at CEPPS/IFES' lecture at the University of Paradeniya, which focused on mechanisms to increase women's political representation; and 16 at CEPPS/IFES' closed door session on the political and electoral rights of LGBTIQ individuals, including transgender women and men whose voting access is restricted by the gender identity on their national identity cards.

*Indicator 2.8: Number of gender sensitive actions taken by the EC as a result of IFES support*

Two – In preparation for the Voter Education BRIDGE, the EC co-facilitators proactively recruited women participants from civil society and international delegations to ensure greater gender balance throughout the training; the EC designated an Assistant Commissioner as the EC gender focal point.

*Indicator 2.9: Extent to which the gender action plan developed through the strategic planning has been implemented*

To be reported following development of a gender action plan.

*Indicator 2.10: Number of actions taken by the EC to improve inclusion of persons with disabilities in electoral processes*

One – On July 15, the EC called on Assistant Election Commissioners to examine polling stations in their districts and make recommendations on how the accessibility of Sri Lanka's more than 10,000 polling stations could be improved for senior citizens and voters with disabilities. Following the accessibility assessment, the EC plans to set up model polling centers in select districts to highlight the importance of voting accessibility.

*Indicator 2.11: Extent to which the action plan on inclusion of persons with disabilities in electoral processes has been implemented*

To be reported following development of action plan on inclusion of persons with disabilities.

**Objective 3: Improve the efficacy of voter education programs**

*Indicator 3.1: Degree to which input or feedback from stakeholders is considered by the Election Commission during the development of voter education plan*

To be reported upon launch of the development of a voter education plan.

*Indicator 3.2: Number of journalists trained on electoral processes and objective reporting*

No journalist trainings held during this quarter.

*Indicator 3.3: Percentage of trained journalists demonstrating an increase in knowledge of electoral processes*

No journalist trainings held during this quarter.

*Indicator 3.4: Percentage increase in Sri Lankan voters with at least a 'fair amount' of information on the electoral process*

To be reported following post-campaign survey.

*Indicator 3.5: Number of public awareness/advocacy tools or activities developed to improve women's civic and political participation as a result of IFES support*

One – Following a strategy session as part of the Gender and Electoral Systems symposium, women's rights advocates participated in a march in Colombo to raise awareness about the importance of women's political, economic and social rights in Sri Lanka's ongoing constitutional reform process.

**IV. FOREIGN ASSISTANCE INDICATORS**

<b>Indicator</b>	<b>Baseline</b>	<b>Target</b>	<b>FY2016 Quarter 1 (Oct- Dec 2015)</b>	<b>FY2016 Quarter 2 (Jan- Mar 2016)</b>	<b>FY2016 Quarter 3 (April – June 2016)</b>	<b>FY2016 Quarter 4 (July – Sept 2016)</b>	<b>FY2016 Total <i>(Unique numbers only)</i></b>
<b>USG Indicator GJD 2.3-2.2: Number of election officials trained with USG assistance</b>	0	25	30	25	32	46	65
<b>Disaggregated by:</b>							
<b>Gender</b>							
Female	n/a	n/a	3	2	4	8	8
Male	n/a	n/a	27	23	30	38	57
<b>Official Type</b>							
Member (Commissioner)	n/a	n/a	3	3	3	3	3
Staff	n/a	n/a	27	22	31	43	62
<b>USG Indicator 2.3-2.6: Number of laws or amendments to ensure credible elections drafted with USG technical assistance</b>	0	3	0	0	0	0	0



## V. ANALYSIS

### *Progress toward achieving objectives/impact*

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

The EC has begun implementing priority initiatives identified through EIA briefings and the strategic planning development process, even as the strategic plan is in a final draft stage at the time of reporting. As part of its inclusion pillar, for example, the EC worked with CEPPS/IFES to implement the #YouthVoteSL campaign and engage youth groups in advocacy for legal reforms that will promote universal franchise for all qualified eighteen-year-olds. Other recent initiatives include the EC's public call for greater campaign and political finance regulations as part of a more transparent electoral process, launch of polling station accessibility audits at the district level as another step toward improving voters with disabilities' ability to vote, and establishment of a youth steering committee to engage regularly with the EC on electoral priorities. The EC has also requested CEPPS/IFES' assistance in implementing a Train the Facilitator session next quarter in order to institutionalize better training practices, and developing youth-focused civic and voter education materials to be distributed through schools. Each of these initiatives contributes to specific priorities and objectives identified in the draft strategic plan.

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

CEPPS/IFES conducted several initiatives with the EC during the quarter that provided EC senior and technical staff with training, expertise, and resources on international standards and best practice on election administration. This included the participation of international and regional experts in the implementation of the voter education BRIDGE training, the Electoral Systems Awareness Week, and briefings on election technology. In addition to the in-country capacity building trainings, CEPPS/IFES provided the EC Chairperson and Members with an opportunity to participate in the Leadership in Electoral Administration Program in Bali, strengthening their understanding of electoral leadership and management approaches and connecting them with other election administrators from the region.

#### **III. Improve the efficacy of voter education programs**

CEPPS/IFES and the EC's collaboration on the Voter Education BRIDGE training marked a significant step in addressing the EC's lack of a strategic, systematic and multi-stakeholder approach to voter education. The BRIDGE training was co-facilitated by two Assistant Commissioners from the EC, who, as a result of this training, received accreditation as BRIDGE facilitators, further promoting local ownership and building the EC's capacity to deliver its own high quality trainings based on international standards and best practice from the region. While

this curriculum development capacity is an important first step toward institutionalizing systematic voter education programs, the absence of any strategies to-date necessitates CEPPS/IFES' continued emphasis on and technical support toward development of concrete strategies and manuals that will enable EC staff in all districts to conduct high-quality and methodical trainings.



*Participants display their BRIDGE certificates of completion*

### ***Constraints/Challenges***

One of the primary programmatic challenges during the reporting period was determining the most effective way to implement the Electoral Systems Awareness Week activities so that awareness raising efforts bolstered and enhanced, rather than undermined, the ongoing electoral reform process. The political context in Sri Lanka reflects continued skepticism around perceived foreign engagement in legal and electoral reform, necessitating careful engagement in the electoral reform dialogue. In order to address this issue, CEPPS/IFES worked closely with local civil society partners – including Verité Research, TISL, CMEV, the International Centre for Ethnic Studies (ICES), and the Women and Media Collective (WMC) – on implementation of the activities. This collaboration enabled CEPPS/IFES to provide technical support while responding to sensitivities regarding local ownership over the electoral reform process.

### ***Lessons Learned***

- The EC's launch of the #YouthVoteSL social media campaign marked an innovative and sustainable effort to educate youth about their right to vote and demonstrated the role that youth can play in identifying creative initiatives that resonate across ethnic divides to actively promote a more resilient and fair democratic process. Following on the #YouthVoteSL campaign, for example, youth groups already requested the EC and CEPPS/IFES' support in developing training manuals to provide young people with the skills they need to conduct their own civic and voter education outreach. CEPPS/IFES will explore these and other initiatives with the EC as well as its newly established youth steering committee, and look for ways to merge youth engagement activities and workplan activities as relevant.
- CEPPS/IFES' voter education BRIDGE training demonstrated the importance of exposure to regional experiences in order to strengthen national best practice in election management. For the training, the EC sponsored ten officials from Forum of

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*Normally when we do trainings, we talk only to others in our own country. This was an unusual chance to learn from other election administrators about their experiences.*

*- Pakistan EC participant*

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Election Management Bodies of South Asia (FEMBoSA) countries, and interactive presentations and sessions throughout the five-day training enabled a regional exchange that broadened participants' voter education programming the region. As indicated by the participants, this comparative experience will enrich development of voter education curricula in each country context, providing a richer outcome than would have happened with only Sri Lankan participants.

### ***Gender Integration***

CEPPS/IFES is committed to ensuring that men and women engage equally as citizens and elected leaders in a country's political process. As part of the IEMP, CEPPS/IFES is supporting the institutionalization of gender equality as a key priority in electoral operations, including electoral reform. In this quarter, based on feedback from consultations with local partners that underscored the critical need to promote adoption of gender-positive provisions in Sri Lanka's reform process, CEPPS/IFES integrated a focus on women's rights and gender equality throughout its ESAW and sought to equip participants with the necessary knowledge to promote gender-positive mechanisms in electoral reform dialogues. During the gender symposium, for example, participants from the north, east and south identified strategies to strengthen women's representation under the MMP system, such as directly advocating to the parliamentary steering committee to promote adoption of gender positive mechanisms in the new Constitution, and participating in a September 20 march for women's political, economic and social rights. In each of the sessions, participants also identified the need to establish and enforce asset declarations and other campaign finance provisions, address the high rates of intra-party competition, and reduce electoral violence, all of which disproportionately impact women's representation.

In addition to the electoral reform events, CEPPS/IFES' engagement with the LGBTIQ community underscored the barriers that transgender men and women face when trying to access the polling stations, as their own gender orientation conflicts with the designated gender on their National Identity Card. Drawing on international best practice, CEPPS/IFES is identifying targeted interventions that could be adopted by the EC or in the legal framework to guarantee the rights to universal franchise for all qualified voters.

## **VI. LIST OF ATTACHMENTS**

- Attachment A: Electoral Systems Awareness Week Agenda
- Attachment B: Matrix of Sri Lanka's election-related laws
- Attachment C: Brief on women's political participation in Sri Lanka
- Attachment D: Electoral glossary in English, Tamil and Sinhala
- Attachment E: Youth petition for legal reform
- Attachment F: IFES Out-of-Country Voting paper
- Attachment G: Media brief on #YouthVoteSL coverage