

CEPPS Quarterly Report: January 1, 2020 to March 31, 2020

**SRI LANKA: Improved Election Management Program (IEMP)
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I. PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Problem Statement

After decades of civil war and widespread corruption, Sri Lankans elected a National Unity Government in 2015, which – committed itself to an ambitious reform agenda that included promises of good governance, economic development and reconciliation. However, nearly five years later, the government faced challenges delivering on its promises as well as a constitutional crisis with the then-president Maithripala Sirisena in late 2018. Public discontent with the National Unity Government factored into the election of Sri Lanka Podujana Peramuna (SLPP) candidate Gotabaya Rajapaksa in the November 2019 presidential election.

Exacerbating an already challenging political situation, on April 21, 2019, a series of coordinated bombings in Sri Lanka hit places of worship and high-end hotels, killing 253 people and injuring hundreds more. In the immediate aftermath of the bombings, mobs retaliated against the Muslim community, burning dozens of Muslim-owned shops, homes and mosques and killing at least two people. Within this context, polarizing campaign rhetoric that perpetuates hate speech and disinformation, especially targeting Muslims, proved an effective tactic for voter mobilization in the presidential election. Taken together, the interconnected issues of leadership challenges, rising communal divisions, high-profile arrests and detentions, and lack of public trust in the government injected high levels of uncertainty and potential for political turmoil during the presidential election, and will continue to do so ahead of the parliamentary election period.

Despite underlying tensions, it should be noted that President Gotabaya Rajapaksa’s election has largely been met with satisfaction on the part of the Sinhala-Buddhist majority. By contrast, the United National Party (UNP) – which is seen as the primary opposition to the now dominant SLPP – faced its own leadership challenges throughout the presidential election, as reflected in its delayed selection of a presidential candidate. This combined with the abdication of the UNP-led

cabinet helped pave the way for the appointment of the President's brother as the new Prime Minister, thus solidifying the SLPP's role in Parliament.

As a result of the novel Coronavirus (COVID-19), the next parliamentary election, which was expected to occur in April after Parliament was dissolved on March 2, has now been postponed. There are still questions about the feasibility of holding the election on June 20 as currently planned, given that the country was still under lockdown at the time of this report submission. Sri Lanka's nine Provincial Council elections are also due, although numerous issues, including approval of a boundary delimitation report as well as determination of the provincial level electoral system, and now mitigating the ongoing health crisis must first be addressed.

Regardless of the election order, the upcoming electoral cycle will be critical as it could reinvigorate momentum toward national goals of accountable and inclusive government. The EC has an important opportunity to advance such positive momentum through the effective management of the electoral process, which can bolster public confidence in democratic systems as the best platform for addressing citizens' concerns. Furthermore, following the outbreak of COVID-19 in Sri Lanka, misinformation, disinformation and hate speech have heightened through various social media channels, particularly targeting Muslims.

While the EC, as one of the few highly trusted public bodies, is well placed to effectively address electoral challenges, the shifting electoral schedule combined with rising anti-minority and anti-democratic sentiments, as well as accusations of foreign interference, pose challenges in basic electoral preparations. Such challenges demand a flexible programmatic response that focuses on further enhancing the EC's capacity to plan for and respond efficiently to electoral developments in order to maximize the integrity of the election process. Other stakeholders, such as the local advocacy groups that worked throughout the 2019 election to encourage social media and information technology companies to implement regulations to stop the spread of hate speech, can also play a key role in promoting an inclusive election process.

In addition to the EC's critical role in election management, in order to maintain democratic momentum for legal reforms, Sri Lanka's citizens must also participate actively throughout the electoral cycle as voters, advocates, election observers and candidates; this is all the more challenging due to COVID-19. There are several opportunities to leverage in the upcoming year which includes both anticipated parliamentary and provincial elections. Although there are concerns about the potential shrinking of democratic space, as in other countries, Sri Lanka's parliament is an important venue where reformers can challenge the status quo to push through pro-reform and open government policies. Parliament also is one of the few avenues for cross-party and interethnic dialogue. If designed well, an open parliament plan can provide opportunities to link democratic reform issues, peace and reconciliation, and issues of concern to constituents,

as well as enhance greater accountability, transparency, inclusion and 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, the Improved Election Management Program (IEMP) planned activities are based on the following assumptions:

- The security, political, and legal situation in Sri Lanka permits CEPPS to operate freely and openly.
- The political environment enables passages of legal reforms – especially election dispute resolution and parliamentary reforms.
- The EC and parliament continue 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 election preparations, and parliament's reform plan.
- The EC and parliament accept the support of international experts provided by CEPPS partners 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 study tours.
- 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.
- Presidential and general elections are held during the program period.
- The outbreak of COVID-19 is mitigated in Sri Lanka and government lifts current COVID-19 related restrictions, permitting CEPPS to operate safely and securely.

Objectives

The IEMP addresses the following objectives:

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

Objective 2: Capacity of the Election Commission to address critical election system vulnerabilities in Sri Lanka Strengthened

Objective 3: Citizen Engagement and multi- stakeholder commitment towards transparent elections and political processes improved

Political Update Relevant to Program Implementation

On January 3, newly elected President Gotabhaya Rajapaksa [inaugurated](#) Parliament following its one-month prorogation that began December 2, 2019. During the opening parliamentary session, the President [presented](#) the Government’s new national [policy framework](#), ‘Vistas of Prosperity and Splendor,’ which outlines a proposed focus on national security, efficiency, eradication of corruption, and economic development. The President also reiterated the necessity for electoral and constitutional reform to make Sri Lanka a “progressive state.” The United National Party (UNP), now the country’s opposition party, has stated that it will [support](#) the framework and work to fulfill its objectives. The government has thus far failed to promote inclusivity within the Sri Lankan government, as evidenced by there being only one woman representative and no Muslim representatives in Rajapaksa’s caretaker cabinet. The president has also forged a close relationship between the military and the executive branch and withdrew from UN Resolution 30/1 that Sri Lanka co-sponsored, which diminished any chances for reconciliation efforts.

On March 11, Sri Lanka announced its [first case of coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#), which affected a 52-year-old tour guide who had come in contact with a group of Italian tourists. By the end of March, Sri Lanka had reported 146 positive COVID-19 cases, with 21 recovered and 2 deaths. As a first

response to the COVID-19 outbreak, Sri Lanka's government announced a [three-day holiday period](#) from March 17 to March 19, excluding essential services. The Government went on to implement additional measures aimed at curbing the virus' spread, including issuing an island-wide curfew, reducing the price of some essential goods, and implementing tax relief measures, among others. Additionally, the Government has set up a [National Operation Center for Prevention of COVID-19 Outbreak](#), headed by Army Commander Shavendra Silva. A [Presidential Task Force](#) has also been established to address and combat COVID-19 impact in Sri Lanka. The president's brother, Basil Rajapaksa, has been appointed as the Chairman of this Task Force. [The President also requested international donor agencies to provide a debt moratorium](#) or a debt deferment facility to all vulnerable developing nations based on the growing COVID-19 risk, including Sri Lanka. At the time of this report submission, all [establishments](#), including places of worship, schools, and universities, remained closed with the exception of essential services.

Some civil society has criticized the perceived [militarization](#) of the COVID-19 response, as evidenced by the use of soldiers to serve as first responders conducting health screening and, as noted above, directing the NOCPCO. Perhaps most worryingly, there have been reported violations of citizens' freedom of expression with the [cracking down](#) on 'anti-establishment' messages on [social media and other media outlets](#). Overall, however, public sentiment seems to be in favor of the Government's COVID-19 response to date, with over 73 percent of respondents in a recent survey indicating that they are "[very satisfied](#)" with how the Government is trying to control the COVID-19 pandemic

COVID-19 has had immediate impacts on the timeline for the parliamentary election. On March 2, 2020, President Gotabaya Rajapaksa dissolved Parliament, citing provisions laid out in Article 70(1) of the Constitution which allows the President to dismiss Parliament and call for elections any time after the Parliament has completed a minimum term of four-and-a-half years.¹ Based on the March 2 dissolution, a Presidential [Gazette](#) originally set the election date for April 25, 2020, with the newly elected Parliament expected to meet on May 14, 2020. This timeline was also in keeping with constitutional provisions, specifically Article 70 (5)(a) which establishes that the first Parliamentary meeting must occur within three months of the date of Parliament's dissolution, which in this case, would equate to any date before June 1, 2020.

While the underlying aim of these provisions is to prevent indefinite postponement of elections, the COVID-19 situation has presented unprecedented challenges to meeting this three-month timeline. Indeed, at the time of the Parliament's dissolution on March 2, there were no confirmed COVID-19 cases within Sri Lanka. Since then, the number of COVID-19 infected persons has rapidly increased. While the EC continued to receive candidate nominations for the previously set nomination period (March 12 to March 19), on March 21, the EC – citing concerns around the

¹ If Parliament had not been dissolved ahead of schedule, then it would have completed the full term of five years on September 1, 2020.

pandemic and authorization from Section 24 (3) of the Parliamentary Elections Act² – disseminated a [Gazette Extraordinary](#) postponing the election.

This move reflected similar sentiments from [political parties](#), [independent groups](#) and [election monitoring bodies](#), many of which called on the President and the EC to postpone the April 25 parliamentary election. The Gazette did not identify a new election date and on March 30, the EC requested that the President seek a Supreme Court determination³ on the possibility of fixing a date for the election. However, in a response from the Secretary to the President, the President has maintained that the date for the election should be set by the EC as per the Parliamentary Elections Act. With the election date now set for June 20, several party leaders in the opposition have [called for Parliament](#) to be reconvened in order to comply with the constitutional provisions governing the legislature, and [increase](#) the nation’s debt ceiling, part of a plan to provide critical economic stimulus packages in light of the escalating COVID-19 pandemic.

Key Activities this Quarter

- CEPPS/IFES’ conducted a three-day Training of Trainers (ToT) for EC Assistant Commissioners, members of the Youth Committee on Elections (YCE) and CEPPS/IFES program staff on IFES’ People Against Violence in Elections (PAVE) program.
- CEPPS/IFES in coordination with the Gender and Elections Working Group (GEWG) – which it co-convenes – organized a nationwide event aimed at promoting women’s representation ahead of the upcoming parliamentary election. Over 150 women and men from across the country representing Sinhalese, Tamil and Muslim communities took part in the event.
- As health concerns associated with the outbreak of COVID-19 increase in Sri Lanka, CEPPS/IFES provided support to the EC on procurement of hygiene kits (including hand sanitizers, hand wash, paper towels and hygiene messages) and delivered kits to the EC Secretariat as well as to all 25 EC district offices.
- Throughout this quarter, CEPPS/NDI held consultations with the secretary general of parliament to discuss the implementation of the Open Parliament Plan (OPP). While CEPPS/NDI was scheduled to conduct three workshops on the OPP for parliament secretariat staff on March 13, 20 and 27, these activities and further implementation of the OPP were postponed due to the COVID-19 outbreak.

² Section 24(3) of the Parliamentary Elections Act No. 1 of 1981 empowers the EC to postpone the election to another day where due to any emergency or unforeseen circumstances the poll for the election in any electoral district cannot be taken on the day specified in the notice relating to the election published under subsection (1), the Commissioner may, by Order published in the Gazette, appoint another day for the taking of such poll, and such other day shall not be earlier than the fourteenth day after the publication of the Order in the Gazette.

³ Article 33(1)(a) and (d), obliges the President to uphold the Constitution and on the advice of the EC, ensure the creation of proper conditions for the conduct of free and fair elections.

- CEPPS/NDI local partner People's Action for Free and Fair Elections (PAFFREL) conducted two training sessions for long term observers (LTO) and one training session for field coordinators in the lead up to the parliamentary elections.
- Under CEPPS/NDI programming, in February, PAFFREL engaged a local vendor to develop a database to standardize data collection, data management, analysis and reporting of the election observation data. The database is 70 percent complete and is expected to be finalized next quarter.
- During the reporting period, CEPPS/IRI conducted nine MPYD programs in eight districts for a total of 550 participants (132 female and 418 male). The MPYDs focused on developing the youth participants' leadership skills and identifying effective approaches to mitigating and addressing issues in their communities.

Key Results/Achievements

- CEPPS/IFES worked with the EC to develop nine voter education posters and one leaflet which will be distributed nationwide before the parliamentary election, in addition to a PowerPoint presentation covering voter education information and role and responsibilities of the EC.
- CEPPS/IFES in coordination with the GEWG presented an advocacy paper collectively drafted by the GEWG to promote women's participation in the parliamentary election to the Chairman of the EC. The Chairman expressed full support and cooperation to lead advocacy efforts of the GEWG and arranged to discuss with political parties to include more women in leadership roles within the political party and advocate for more women to be included in the nomination list ahead of the parliamentary election.
- During a CEPPS/IFES nationwide event aimed at promoting women's representation, the GEWG launched a [public awareness campaign](#) to sign a pledge calling on the EC and political party leaders to adopt targeted, gender-specific measures, gathering over 100 signatures that were subsequently delivered to the 70 registered political parties and the EC.
- Under CEPPS/NDI programming, using the lessons learned from the presidential election in November 2019, PAFFREL updated and finalized its reporting checklists and manuals for observers and coordinators.
- In March, PAFFREL trained 97 long-term observers (LTOs) (87 men and 10 women) and 24 local coordinators (22 men and two women) in preparation for the parliamentary elections, under CEPPS/NDI programming.
- CEPPS/NDI received commitments from PAFFREL to incorporate recommendations from CEPPS/NDI's evaluation of its observation work into its observation work in the parliamentary elections.
- Following the success of CEPPS/IRI's first MPYD held last quarter in Habarana, prominent SLPP and United National Party (UNP) members, including the former UNP presidential candidate and current leader of Samagi Jana Balawegaya (SJB) Sajith

Premadasa, and SLPP Chairman G.L. Peires requested that CEPPS/IRI organize follow up MPYDs at the district level. In response to this request, CEPPS/IRI conducted eight district level workshops. CEPPS/IRI noted an average 20 percent increase in the number of women participants at each of these district level workshops.

II. ACTIVITY IMPLEMENTATION

Throughout the past quarter, CEPPS has taken steps to prioritize the health and safety of staff, partners and beneficiaries in response to the global COVID-19 pandemic while reviewing how to adjust programming to continue providing support. In March, CEPPS submitted a notification to USAID with information regarding operational and programmatic adjustments currently underway. An updated contingency plan matrix including activities for the next two quarters (April through September) can be found in Attachment I, and additional information about the impact of COVID-19 on program implementation this quarter is provided below.

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

Strategic Planning Review: On January 17, CEPPS/IFES and the EC hosted an event to review and celebrate the EC's 2017-2020 Participatory Strategic Plan (PSP), and held a discussion on the development of a PSP for the next four years. The EC is now planning to hold a formal internal review process of the current PSP and requested CEPPS/IFES support in conducting district-level reviews of the EC Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Dashboard in order to inform whether or not the PSP goals have been met. The EC has also requested the technical support of CEPPS/IFES in organizing a workshop with the district Assistant/Deputy Commissioner and high officials of the EC Secretariat to review the current PSP and discuss lessons learned to inform drafting of the new PSP. Due to the existing health crisis, many of these discussions will be conducted remotely or in small groups. CEPPS/IFES will also provide recommendations for integrating risk management and mitigation efforts related to unforeseen emergencies in the EC's new PSP.

Objective 2: Capacity of the Election Commission to address critical election system vulnerabilities in Sri Lanka Strengthened

Intermediate Result (IR) 2.1.: EC's administrative systems strengthened for implementation of the strategic plan

Activity 2.1.1. Conduct leadership, ethics and crisis management trainings

Development of Risk Management Resources: Due to the widespread outbreak of COVID-19, the Sri Lankan government has imposed strict measures and regulations to prevent large scale public gatherings. During this reporting period, CEPPS/IFES postponed several activities originally scheduled ahead of the parliamentary election and shifted some of its efforts to provide timely

crisis management support to the Election Commission (EC). One such area of focus was preliminary development and dissemination of risk management resources. On March 13, CEPPS/IFES disseminated hygiene kits (including hand sanitizers, hand wash, paper towels and hygiene messages) to the EC Secretariat as well as to all 25 EC district offices. Additionally, CEPPS/IFES developed and shared a brief on “Mitigating Electoral Risks during the COVID-19 Pandemic: Lessons learned from the Liberia Ebola Crisis and 2014 National Elections” (Attachment II), the summary of which has been translated into Sinhala and Tamil. Due to the evolving and uncertain health and electoral climate, CEPPS/IFES will continue to provide technical assistance to the EC that includes development of tools needed to bolster risk management and safeguard health, particularly in the event that the election is held during a pandemic period.

Activity 2.1.2. Conduct Training of Trainers

No activities were conducted during the reporting period.

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

During this reporting period, CEPPS/IFES provide technical expertise during IREX’ *Parliamentary Election Reporting Workshop* designed for journalists who work in both mainstream media and social media outlets ahead of the Parliamentary Election. CEPPS/IFES Election Advisor co-facilitated with an international expert to provide in-depth electoral system knowledge for workshop participants, reaching a total of 105 journalists over the course of three separate workshops on February 24-26, February 27-28 and March 2-3. CEPPS/IFES’ Electoral Advisor led sessions on the electoral cycle and Sri Lankan election legal framework, including media guidelines.

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

Strengthen sustainability of the DIESL-TWG to continue long-term engagement with the EC’ disability focal point: On February 27, CEPPS/IFES, as the principal facilitator of Disability Inclusive Elections in Sri Lanka-Technical Working Group (DIESL-TWG), convened a DIESL-TWG meeting with participation from a total of 60 persons representing a diverse group of Disabled Peoples’ Organizations (DPOs). The outgoing Convener of DIESL-TWG provided an overview of the working group’s successes over the past two years while an EC representative – a Development Officer with a disability who supports the Disability Focal Point – provided remarks on the EC’s commitment towards inclusion.

During the meeting, participants appointed a Sub-National (District) Committee of 17 cross-disability DPOs and a National Committee of 8 national level cross-disability organizations. Enable Lanka Foundation was appointed as the new Convener of both the National and the Sub-National Committee, with co-facilitation support from MyRight Sri Lanka, CBM Sri Lanka, the

Centre for Monitoring Election Violence (CMEV) and PAFFREL. The newly appointed committees have commenced discussions on the potential activities for the next year with a special focus on opportunities to work directly with the EC on design and dissemination of inclusive voter education materials ahead of the parliamentary elections (see objective 3 for additional details). The appointment of a new convener and co-facilitators – all of which represent strong Sri Lankan organizations – is a critical step toward increasing the long-term sustainability of the DIESL-TWG.

Conduct monitoring and evaluation (M&E) training for EC officials: On February 28, IFES held a training for 49 EC officials from all districts to train them on the newly designed M&E dashboard that has better enabled the EC’s Training Unit to monitor the EC’s progress in meetings its strategic planning objectives. Each of the EC participants is responsible for M&E in their offices. The training focused on the use of a Google form for obtaining pre- program approvals. All participants were given a guide with clear instructions on the process and trained on how to access and use the forms on their computers (Attachment III). CEPPS/IFES also explained the approval process and rectified any previous issues related to the EC Dashboard.

“We are extremely happy that these processes are computerized. It helps us to keep track of all our programs and makes the approval process easy and quick.”

- EC Official, Kegalle District Elections Office



EC Officials at the M&E training

Activity 2.1.5. Support the EC in organizing the regional Asian Electoral Stakeholder Forum

CEPPS/IFES completed activity 2.1.5 in Year 3.

IR 2.2: Vulnerabilities in the voter registration system mitigated

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

CEPPS/IFES completed activity 2.2.1 in Year 3.

IR 2.3: Electoral complaints and adjudication process strengthened

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

No activities were conducted during this reporting period.

Activity 2.3.3. Train stakeholders on EDR roles and responsibilities

No activities were conducted during 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

Engage DIESL-TWG as lead voter education group:
During this reporting period, CEPPS/IFES held regular meetings with the newly appointed National Committee of DIESL-TWG, with a focus on developing a work plan for conducting voter education programs for persons with disabilities ahead of the parliamentary election. As a first point of discussion, members discussed revisions to the Term of Reference (ToR) as per the newly formed structure of the TWG and potential activities leading up to the parliamentary election. While prioritizing the development of inclusive voter education materials, as part of its ToR, the DIESL-TWG also agreed to focus on the following:



DIESL TWG, National Committee discussing potential activities leading up to parliamentary

- Conduct awareness raising on disability inclusion during one of the Party Secretaries' meetings to be convened by the EC in the run-up to the election;
- Finalize a document on disability sensitive terminology and reporting to be shared with media outlets;
- Advocate to the EC to assign a full-time sign language interpreter to the special media unit established for the elections, ensuring that all televised messages are accompanied by sign language interpretation;
- Create awareness around hate speech aimed at and/or objectifying persons with disabilities among political party officials and the media;
- Support the EC towards finalizing and testing the tactile ballot guide in a selected electoral division during the elections,
- Support the EC towards creating awareness among Grama Niladharis on the relevance and importance of the accessibility data collection format.

Some of these planned activities may need to be adjusted due to the EC’s need to focus primarily on running an election during a pandemic.

Activity 2.4.2. Develop multilingual and accessible voter education materials

Discussions with the EC on development of voter education materials and campaigns: CEPPS/IFES held regular discussions with EC senior officials on various activities in preparation for the parliamentary election. CEPPS/IFES provided technical support in the development of inclusive voter education materials (see table below) for nationwide distribution and conducting of voter and civic education programs targeting youth, women and persons with disabilities, including other initiatives to complement and bolster the EC’s preparations for the election. Due to the outbreak of COVID-19 across Sri Lanka, CEPPS/IFES will work with the EC to bolster these voter education materials by integrating online mediums that can reach people at home, as well as adding information about the health steps voters can take to mitigate risks of infection on polling day.

No.	Voter Education Product	Type	Medium
1.	Assisted voting for persons with disabilities	Poster	Sinhala, Tamil and English
2.	Transport request for persons with disabilities	Poster	Sinhala and Tamil
3.	Valid identification documents for voting	Poster	Sinhala, Tamil and English
4.	How to mark your ballot	Poster	Sinhala, Tamil and English
5.	Elections Complaints Process (EDR)	Poster	Sinhala, Tamil and English
6.	Steps to be followed at the polling center	Poster	Sinhala, Tamil and English
7.	Voting is your right	Poster	Sinhala, Tamil and English
8.	Polling center layout	Poster	Sinhala, Tamil and English
9.	Granting leave for public employees	Poster	Sinhala, Tamil and English
10.	Election information (<i>How to mark your ballot, valid IDs for voting, EC complaints process etc.</i>)	Leaflet	Sinhala, Tamil and English
11.	Voter Education Information (<i>Role and responsibilities of EC, how to register to vote, valid IDs for voting etc.</i>)	PowerPoint Presentation	Sinhala and Tamil

Objective 3: Citizen engagement and multi-stakeholder commitment towards transparent elections and political processes improved

IR: 3.1: SL parliament and civil society agrees on and adopts concrete commitments from the Open Government Partnership (OGP)- National Action Plan (NAP)

Activity 3.1.1: Open Parliament Assessment

This activity has been completed.

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

This activity has been completed.

Activity 3.1.3: Public Consultations

Due to the sensitive political environment following the presidential elections and the dissolution of parliament in March 2020, CEPPS/NDI did not engage MPs in any public events this quarter. As such, CEPPS/NDI focused its efforts on engagement with the secretariat. See Activity 3.1.5 for more details.

Activity 3.1.4 MP and Civil Society Exchange to Sri Lanka

Refer to Activity 3.1.6.

Activity 3.1.5: Best Practices Dialogues

Political transitions that result from this year's parliamentary polls in Sri Lanka will test the country's commitment to pluralism and peaceful coexistence as well as the future of its democratic institutions. Sri Lanka's parliament has an important role to play in advancing citizen-oriented reforms and open government policies, enabling opportunities to improve transparency, accountability and inclusion in government while also delivering on peace, reconciliation, and sustainable development goals.

In this context, on January 20 and 21, CEPPS/NDI's Deputy Director and Senior Program Advisor conducted meetings with key parliamentary representatives and political leaders on continued commitments to promote the OPP. NDI met with the chair of the Open Parliament Caucus (OPC), MPs from the United National Party (UNP), Sri Lanka Podujana Peramuna (SLPP), Tamil National Alliance (TNA), Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP), as well as the secretary general. These discussions focused on how the parliament, in the lead up to and after the approaching elections, could continue institutional and political support for the open government initiative. The

parliamentary representatives brought up approaches such as orientation sessions on the Open Government Plan and capacity building programs for parliamentary staff and new parliamentarians. All reiterated the importance of USAID's continued engagement with the parliament regardless of which parties end up being in the majority and minority as a result of the elections.

Building on these conversations, CEPPS/NDI held consultations with the secretary general to discuss ways in which CEPPS/NDI could support its efforts to institutionalize open parliament principles. After discussions with the secretary general, CEPPS/NDI planned to conduct a series of workshops on OPP. The series of three workshops would convene various levels of parliamentary staff to familiarize them with open government principles, discuss their roles in making parliament accessible and transparent and the potential challenges in implementing the OPP.

Each workshop would consist of 30 parliamentary staff, civil society organizations, OPC members, government officials and an international expert on open parliament. During the workshop, discussions would begin by introducing staff to the OPP, how it builds trust in parliaments as institutions and how the targets set in the plan will improve parliamentary processes. An open parliament expert would also be present to facilitate discussion on international best practices. This would be followed by an open discussion on how staff currently engages citizens and incorporates input, shares information and the steps they take to ensure that legislative drafting and budget processes are transparent. Civil society representatives would facilitate discussions to allow for deeper discussion on citizen review and input. Lastly, a core component of open government is open data. As such, CEPPS/NDI would also discuss how technology can further improve information sharing between the parliament and the public, how staff are currently facilitating these efforts to publish information and how they are educating the public on what is readily available.

The workshops were scheduled to take place on March 20, March 27 and April 3. However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, these workshops could not take place this quarter. CEPPS/NDI will explore ways in which to conduct them virtually.

Activity 3.1.6. MP and Civil Society Exchange

In continuation of efforts to encourage parliamentary and civil society engagement to strengthen electoral transparency and political processes, CEPPS/NDI was scheduled to support two parliamentary staff to attend a workshop hosted by the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) and the House of Commons of Canada in Ottawa, Canada from March 16 to 20. However, due to the public health risks associated with COVID-19, and restrictions on international travel, the conference has been postponed until further notice. When IPU announces a new date and if travel policies and

health measures allow, CEPPS/NDI will renew support to the parliamentary staff to attend the workshop.

In line with OPP targets, the workshop was scheduled to discuss parliamentary openness, specifically around open data, information technology (IT) governance, and digital archiving. The event aimed to bring together 50 senior parliamentary technical staff from around the world to assess opportunities for further inter-parliamentary collaboration and to promote IT governance concepts and practices. Parliamentary staff would have the opportunity to gain an understanding of new concepts and trends in the IT governance space and share best practices and lessons learned from the Sri Lankan secretariat. Following participation at the workshop, parliamentary staff would work with the secretary general on ways in which new IT governance concepts and practices can be promoted and implemented within the secretariat.

Activity 3.1.7 Development of Parliamentary Openness Commitments and Open Parliament Plan

No activities to report.

IR 3.2: Open Parliament Plan developed and implemented by SL Parliament

Activity 3.2.1: Parliamentary Openness Action Plan Launch and Implementation

No activities to report.

Activity 3.2.2: Civil Society Oversight Capacity Building

No activities to report.

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

Activity 3.3.1. Government leaders are briefed on national survey findings

CEPPS/IRI has no activities to report this quarter.

Activity 3.3.2. Comprehensive review of government communications

There are no activities to report this quarter. CEPPS/IRI completed a comprehensive review of government communication in a previous quarter.

Activity 3.3.3. Targeted communications strategies are developed

Following bilateral discussions with USAID in advance of the November 2019 presidential election, this activity was not implemented during the quarter.

Activity 3.3.4. Training on communications techniques

Following bilateral discussions with USAID in advance of the November 2019 presidential election, this activity was not implemented during the quarter.

IR 3.4: Electoral integrity through domestic election observation promoted

Activity 3.4.1 Long-term and Short-term Election Observation

CEPPS/NDI provided financial and technical assistance to its local partner PAFFREL to conduct post-election activities as described below.

Post-Election Review and Lessons Learned Session with the LTOs and District and Field Coordinators: On January 8, PAFFREL held its post-presidential election review session to conduct a comprehensive review of the observation activities and to draw lessons learned and incorporate them into its preparations for its parliamentary election observation efforts. Sixty-one participants (51 men and 10 women) attended the meeting including PAFFREL staff, LTOs and field and district coordinators. Participants expressed that the unexpected announcement of the presidential elections led to considerable challenges, particularly in relation to insufficient and rushed training for observers and coordinators, which resulted in data collection issues and information gaps.

Participants made the following recommendations in order to improve future observation activities:

- Orientation and training for election observers needs to be improved to include more discussions around checklists and forms, as well as better understanding of the legal framework.
- Training toolkits and the code of conduct handbook should be given to observers well in advance so that they have enough time to absorb the information before their duties commence.
- When using technology for its observation efforts, PAFFREL should engage a technical expert to provide thorough training to observers on how to use the technology.
- PAFFREL should closely coordinate with the EC to ensure all observers carry official identity cards.
- PAFFREL should establish a process to promptly communicate decisions to district observers and maintain constant communication with all those engaged throughout the observation cycle.
- Public officials, candidates and CSOs should be made aware of the legal provisions related to the elections well in advance.
- Voter education programs should be conducted throughout the country and well in-advance of the elections.

Based on these recommendations, PAFFREL revised the reporting forms for the upcoming parliamentary elections and developed a handbook on laws and regulations pertaining to the parliamentary elections in both Sinhalese and Tamil languages.

Development of Election Observation Database: This quarter PAFFREL engaged a local vendor to develop a database in order to digitize its election observation process and reporting. The database will improve PAFFREL's organization capacity by gathering data from election observers across the country in a way that can be easily extracted and analyzed. Using the information that is collected by observers, the database will store information related to voter turnout, polling center details, election environment, campaign activity, voting procedures, and irregularities among others. The database will be equipped to collect data in Sinhala, Tamil and English. At the conclusion of this reporting period, the database is 70 percent complete and is expected to be finalized in the next quarter.

Training for LTOs and Field Coordinators: On March 13 and 16, PAFFREL trained 97 LTOs (87 men and 10 women) throughout the country. PAFFREL trained LTOs not only to observe and report on violence and election law violations, but also on the performance of election agencies. In addition, on March 14, PAFFREL trained 24 field coordinators (22 men and two women). A third training session was scheduled for March 19 but was postponed due to the government restrictions imposed the same day as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Activity 3.4.2. Observation of Election Violence, Social Media and Abuse of State Resources

CEPPS/IRI's partner CMEV postponed its election observation mission as the parliamentary elections were postponed due to the COVID-19 outbreak. CMEV has developed a contingency plan to deploy its identified observers in advance of the parliamentary elections once they are rescheduled. CMEV selected 80 field staff, including 12 women, to be recruited as LTOs. CMEV conducted preliminary discussions with an additional 25 LTOs, including three women who will act as District Coordinators. CMEV additionally recruited 1,200 short-term observers (STOs) who will be deployed once the rescheduled parliamentary elections date is declared.

During this reporting period, CEPPS/IRI supported CMEV to conduct a two-day workshop in Negombo in February 2020 for LTOs promoting inclusivity in the election process and encouraging citizens to register to vote for the upcoming parliamentary elections. CEPPS/IRI provided CMEV with an election observation analysis during an Election Observation Working Group meeting last quarter. This analysis informed this workshop's content. The Commissioner General of Elections and Commissioner General of the Department for Registration of Persons were guest speakers during this event. Additionally, 20 senior EC staff members, including 11 women, were in attendance. During this workshop, it was decided that a circular would be sent to all 14,000 *Grama Niladharees* (village level government officials) and 331 Divisional Secretaries to urge them to provide persons with disabilities (PWD) with identification documents, including national identity cards, to facilitate their abilities to vote in the parliamentary elections.

CEPPS/IRI sponsored CMEV to organize a one-day workshop in Colombo with 25 district coordinators to review challenges PWDs and other marginalized groups faced during the last presidential election. The workshop participants also identified approaches that could be recommended to the EC to mitigate those challenges ahead of the parliamentary elections. Following this workshop, CMEV decided to delegate more responsibilities to district coordinators, convene weekly meetings for field monitors and incorporate lessons learned from the presidential election into future training sessions.



CMEV's and the EC's senior staff participate in CMEV's workshop on inclusive election processes and approaches to ensuring voter identification processes are completed in advance of the parliamentary elections.

CEPPS/IRI also sponsored CMEV to organize a workshop with the EC in Colombo to develop a workplan for the upcoming parliamentary elections with the Election Dispute Resolution Unit. The head of the Election Dispute Resolution Unit delivered remarks during this workshop and shared best practices on prioritizing and resolving election-related violence complaints.

In addition to these workshops, CEPPS/IRI support enabled CMEV to conduct the following activities during the reporting period:

- Sent a recommendation letter to the Election Commissioner urging the EC to postpone the parliamentary elections in response to the COVID-19 outbreak.
- Prepared infographics on nominations for the parliamentary elections. CMEV shared these infographics on its webpage and social media accounts.
- Completed the recruitment of six new staff members for CMEV's head office as Provincial and Assistant Province Coordinators. These newly recruited Coordinators are currently working remotely from Colombo.

Activity 3.4.3. Election Observations Technical Assistance

This quarter, CEPPS/NDI continued to provide technical assistance to PAFFREL to strengthen its capacity to conduct intensive and high quality long- and short-term election observation in Sri Lanka. CEPPS/NDI's international elections expert who provided technical advice to PAFFREL during the presidential elections, drafted an evaluation report based on an assessment of PAFFREL's capacity and provided recommendations. For ease of reference and to ensure greater accountability, CEPPS/NDI collated experts' feedback and developed a recommendation tracker organized by theme (long-term observation, public outreach, election violations management

system, etc.), status, priority, among others and shared it with PAFFREL. Recommendations include:

- Develop clear criteria for observer recruitment based on the development strategy and reporting modalities to increase the quality of deployed observers;
- Emphasize the reporting form and system, as well as on the practice aspects of LTO work;
- Utilize all data collected from STOs, mobile teams and counting centers observers throughout the election day and in the post-election periods in a timely manner;
- Plan and implement a precise election day communication strategy involving structured media appearances (press conferences, periodic press releases etc.) utilizing systematically collected findings; and
- Modernize PAFFREL website and secure simultaneous posting and sharing of all relevant information. Ensure consistency and continuity between information shared on all digital platforms.

PAFFREL was very receptive of the tracker and confirmed that they intend to use the tracker for the upcoming elections and assigned staff to implement and monitor the progress being made on recommendations.

CEPPS/NDI election experts also reviewed and provided technical feedback on PAFFREL's interim election observation report. In particular, experts noted that PAFFREL was very successful in collecting vast amounts of systematic, structured data via LTO and STO checklists and recommended PAFFREL to cite the data extensively throughout the report. CEPPS/NDI also recommended providing further explanation of the methodology that was used in collecting the data used in the report in order to provide greater sophistication and evidence to support PAFFREL's analysis. Furthermore, CEPPS/NDI senior associate and director of elections held a meeting with PAFFREL to discuss the challenges in providing election observation assistance during a public health emergency, possibilities for election observers to remain engaged and vigilant and share the Institute's lessons learned from similar experiences globally, such as election observation efforts in Liberia during the Ebola pandemic in 2014. PAFFREL was appreciative of CEPPS/NDI's expertise and guidance, and depending on how the situation unfolds, could update its checklists to include observing public health issues at polling stations, such as the availability of hand washing stations, sanitizer, etc.

Lastly, as described in Activity 3.4.1, PAFFREL engaged with a local partner to develop a database to collect election observer data. CEPPS/NDI election experts provided guidance on points to consider when developing the database. Key considerations include:

- Developing back-up methods for uploading data, noting that observers may have issues uploading data through smart phones
- Software capabilities to distinguish mobile versus stationary reporting
- Tracking observers that have and have not reported data

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

Activity 3.5.1. Provide technical support to an expert group to advance political finance reforms

No activities were conducted during this reporting period.

IR 3.6 Women's and Youth's political engagement in Sri Lanka's democratic process strengthened

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

Preparation for She Leads Women's Leadership training for youth: CEPPS/IFES held regular meetings with representatives from the political science department of the University of Colombo to discuss implementation of IFES' She Leads women's leadership training for students. Under IEMP's Year 5 workplan, CEPPS/IFES will conduct at least four additional She Leads women's leadership trainings for female university students. CEPPS/IFES is adapting its flagship She Leads curriculum to include a focus on advocacy skills, and the steps young female students can take to hold the government accountable to meeting the needs of women and youth in its long-term COVID response.

Activity 3.6.2. Establish a Gender and Elections Working Group (GEWG) to address violence against women in elections and other priority gender concerns

Gender and Election Working Group (GEWG) Efforts: On February 19, CEPPS/IFES in coordination with select members of the Gender and Elections Working Group (GEWG) held a consultation with Mr. Mahinda Deshapriya, Chairman of the EC and Mr. Samantha Jayasinghe, EC Gender Focal Point to present and discuss an advocacy paper that was collectively drafted by the GEWG. The advocacy papers include actionable steps that the EC, parliament, and political parties can take in order to improve women's political representation. As a result of the discussion, the EC Chairman expressed full support for the communicated initiatives and invited GEWG members to the EC's regular meeting with political party secretaries to underscore the responsibility that political parties have to advance women's representation (see "Gender Integration" below).



The Chairman of the EC with the members of the Gender and Elections Working Group (GEWG)

Additionally, on March 11, CEPPS/IFES worked with the GEWG to organize a nationwide event to promote women's representation ahead of the upcoming parliamentary election. The event drew more than 150 participants representing Sinhala, Tamil and Muslim communities, as well as participation of prominent parliamentarians such as Hirunika Premachandra and Thusitha Wijemanna from the UNP and Sudarshani Fernandopulle from the Sri Lanka Freedom Party. During the event, the GEWG relaunched a [public awareness campaign](#) to promote women's political participation ahead of the parliamentary election and disseminated a signature pledge that calls on the EC and political party leaders to adopt targeted, gender-specific measures related to increasing women's political representation. As a result, the pledge garnered over 100 signatures and CEPPS/IFES along with members of the GEWG, mailed the advocacy paper with pledge signatures to all 70 + registered political parties, the EC, President and Prime Minister.



Participants at the March 11 event (left) and panel discussion with Women's Parliamentary Caucus members

Activity 3.6.3. Organize youth events

Training of Trainers on People Against Election Violence (PAVE): From January 13-16, CEPPS/IFES' Country Director, who is also a Building Resources in Democracy, Governance, and Elections (BRIDGE) accredited facilitator, conducted a three-day Training of Trainers (ToT) for EC Assistant Commissioners, members of the Youth Committee on Elections (YCE) and CEPPS/IFES program staff on IFES' People Against Violence in Elections (PAVE) program. PAVE provides local leaders with the tools and skills needed to anticipate, mitigate and prevent violence around elections. The ToT focused on equipping a cadre of trainers with the skills needed to conduct their own trainings island-wide. While the first day of the workshop concentrated on the PAVE curriculum, the second and third day provided an opportunity for the newly trained trainers to deliver the content of the curriculum back to the audience.



Participants developing a poster to illustrate the principle of unity in diversity (left) and participants propose suggestions to change the curriculum to the Sri Lankan context (right).

IR 3.7: Transparency and accountability of political parties improved

Activity 3.7.1: Political Party election assistance

CEPPS/IRI conducted nine MPYDs in eight districts. CEPPS/IRI consulted with its local facilitator, Federation of Sri Lankan Local Government Authorities (FSLGA), to identify districts where they found lower rates of women and youth participation in the democratic process. FSLGA provided CEPPS/IRI with biographical data, including age, gender and political party affiliation of the young elected local council members from eight districts, which CEPPS/IRI used to establish criteria for participant selection.

Disaggregated Data for MPYDs:

Date	Location	Number of Participants	Political Party	Language
January 18, 2020	Kurunegala	18 (15 male, three female)	SLPP, UNP, SLFP	Sinhala
January 24, 2020	Trincomalee	59 (49 male, 10 female)	TNA, UNP, SLMC, ACMC, SLFP	Tamil and Sinhala
January 25, 2020	Batticaloa	58 (51 male, seven female)	TNA, UNP, SLMC, ACMC, SLFP	Tamil
January 27, 2020	Jaffna	62 (47 male, 15 female)	TNA, UNP, Tamil National People's Front (TNPFF), SLFP	Tamil
January 28, 2020	Mullaitivu	45 (36 male, nine female)	TNA, UNP, Tamil National People's Front (TNPFF), SLFP	Tamil
February 1, 2020	Gampaha	122 (91 male, 31 female)	UNP, SLPP	Sinhala
February 7, 2020	Galle	32 (22 male, 10 female)	UNP, SLPP, JVP, SLFP	Sinhala
February 8, 2020	Matara	83 (55 male, 28 female)	UNP, SLPP, JVP, SLFP	Sinhala
February 14, 2020	Dickwella	71 (52 male, 19 female)	UNP, JVP, SLPP	Sinhala

CEPPS/IRI ensured each MPYD workshop was comprised of participants under the age of 40, with women's representation at least 35 percent. District level political party leadership were invited to facilitate MPYD discussions on inclusive governance and women and youth representation in the democratic process. The young local councilors who participated in the MPYDs were from rural communities which historically lacked access to leadership skills trainings. The MPYDs shared best practices on effective leadership, how to promote inclusive governance at the district levels and how to identify and mitigate their communities' concerns.

CEPPS/IRI collaborated with the leaders of the major political parties and local facilitator FSLGA on topics to emphasize during the MPYDs. Following this collaboration, CEPPS/IRI organized a workshop for each MPYD called "Stepping Up Your Leadership", which emphasized the following topics:

- Personal and professional integrity
- Community engagement
- Equality and inclusion
- Staff effectiveness
- Personal resilience and development
- Effective communication etiquette
- Key leadership traits and selection of leadership style

- Strategic planning, policy facilitation and implementation
- Working in teams, team management and exercising effective team building
- Community service and service delivery
- Community trust building
- Critical thinking approaches

CEPPS/IRI administered evaluation forms and post-training questionnaires at the end of each MPYD, which were used to inform planning of subsequent MPYDs. Following each MPYD, CEPPS/IRI also held a group discussion with 27 elected women members from all political parties to understand the obstacles they faced during the political party nomination process, while campaigning and after being elected. During these discussions, the women requested CEPPS/IRI to create a closed Facebook page, which will be created next quarter, to foster a secure environment in which they could actively engage with one another across party lines.



Young local councilors and party leaders participate in MPYDs held in January and February in Gampaha.

Collaboration with Other USAID Projects or Other Donor Agencies

As the outbreak of COVID-19 surfaced in Sri Lanka, CEPPS continued its effort to coordinate with other USAID-funded projects in order to best leverage resources and minimize overlap in the new challenging environment. As an example, CEPPS partners remotely discussed operational strategies related to COVID-19 with IDEA, MEND, and SDGAP, and other implementing partners in Sri Lanka to ensure a measured operational approach. Additionally, IEMP partners and USAID are convening regularly to discuss updated plans for activities and operations in response to COVID-19.

CEPPS/IRI facilitated coordination efforts between the Canadian High Commission and CMEV team members at a U.S. Department of State-funded workshop. CEPPS/IRI coordinated with the Canadian High Commission to identify local and international election experts to share election observation technical skills with CMEV. CEPPS/IRI leveraged the feedback it received from the MPYD participants to inform U.S. Department of State-funded workshops focused on mitigating electoral threats faced specifically by women candidates.

Activities Next Quarter

Notwithstanding delays caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, CEPPS partners will implement the following activities during the next reporting period:

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

This objective is complete.

Objective 2: Capacity of the Election Commission to address critical election system vulnerabilities in Sri Lanka Strengthened

- CEPPS/IFES: Procurement of hygiene kits for the Election Commission
- CEPPS/IFES: Development of Risk Management Matric for IEMP and the EC (pending USAID approval)
- CEPPS/IFES: Voter education programs for Women Development Officers in Jaffna, Vavuniya, Trincomalee, Ampara
- CEPPS/IFES: Provide technical support to the EC on EDR review
- CEPPS/IFES: Support the EC in development of voter education materials
- CEPPS/IFES: Support EC in conducting voter education programs for PWDs
- CEPPS/IFES: Provide polling station materials to safeguard health of voters and poll workers (pending USAID approval)
- CEPPS/IFES Development of a manual for poll workers on Election Day procedures and post-election material disposal (pending USAID approval)
- CEPPS/IFES: Develop application for EC Stress Test (pending USAID approval)
- CEPPS/IFES Integrate awareness raising around COVID-19 mitigation measures into voter education outreach (pending USAID approval)

Objective 3: Citizen Engagement and multi- stakeholder commitment towards transparent elections and political processes improved

- CEPPS/IFES: Conduct focus group discussions with female university students to inform contextualization of She Leads
- CEPPS/IFES: Conduct first training of Power to Persuade advocacy program for PWDs
- CEPPS/IFES: Engage youth leaders in countering disinformation and hate speech narrative emerging around COVID-19 (pending USAID approval)
- CEPPS/NDI will redesign its planned workshops for senior parliamentary staff and conduct them on an online platform. To accommodate internet access challenges, CEPPS/NDI is examining the possibility of enabling internet access to 21 senior secretariat staff who would participate in a virtual workshop. Additionally, upon the secretary general's request, CEPPS/NDI will provide technical guidance to the secretariat's IT director on how to

establish an online platform to allow for continuous learning and training for the parliamentary staff. In doing so, it will both promote open parliament principles within the secretariat and aid parliament as an institution in establishing new business processes that will allow it to operate in a more efficient manner.

- Due to the uncertainty surrounding the parliamentary elections, PAFFREL will refocus its efforts in the next quarter on long-term observation and conduct desk research on electoral code of conduct violations. In addition, PAFFREL has been organizing weekly meetings with CMEV, Transparency International Sri Lanka (TISL), Campaign for Free and Fair Elections (CaFFE) and Mothers and Daughters to discuss observation efforts, code of conduct violations and trends, and has been publishing weekly statements on its website. CEPPS/NDI has offered to provide assistance to PAFFREL to support these efforts.
- CEPPS/NDI will continue to coordinate closely with PAFFREL on how activities can be adapted as the situation in Sri Lanka evolves. If and when elections are called, CEPPS/NDI and PAFFREL will discuss next steps to support election observation efforts.
- Pending confirmation of a date for parliamentary elections, CEPPS/IRI's domestic election observation partner, CMEV, will conduct election observation activities. CMEV's observation is also subject to whether conditions in the political environment will permit CMEV to safely deploy its observers.
- CEPPS/IRI is working with political party leaders and a local multi-party youth organization to organize a series of digital workshops to identify approaches political parties can implement to counter hate speech and anti-minority rhetoric.

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

CEPPS/IFES did not measure this indicator during the reporting period.

Indicator 2.1.2: Number of training and knowledge products developed

4:

- CEPPS/IFES developed and shared an analysis on “*Registration Requirements and Criteria for Candidates in Sri Lankan Presidential Elections*” with the EC to provide a list of potential considerations for additional candidate requirements that could be adopted in order to discourage frivolous candidacies.
- CEPPS/IFES shared a brief with the EC on “*Mitigating Electoral Risks during the COVID-19 Pandemic: Lessons learned from the Liberia Ebola Crisis and 2014 National Elections*” which the EC is utilizing to explore ways to mitigate risks ahead of the parliamentary election.
- CEPPS/IFES, in coordination with the GEWG, developed an advocacy paper, which the Chairman of the EC used to inform party secretaries of the need to increase women’s representation and participation in the electoral process.
- CEPPS/IFES developed a guide for the EC on how to obtain approval for activities as part of its support to the M&E unit.

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

CEPPS/IFES did not measure this indicator during the reporting period.

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

CEPPS/IFES did not conduct activities related to this indicator during the reporting period.

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

CEPPS/IFES did not conduct activities related to this indicator during the reporting period.

Objective 3: Improve Citizen Engagement and multi-stakeholder commitment towards transparent elections and political processes

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

There are no results to be reported this quarter.

IR: 3.1: SL parliament and civil society agrees on and adopts concrete commitments from the Open Government Partnership (OGP)- National Action Plan (NAP)

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

There are no results to be reported this quarter.

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

There are no results to be reported this quarter.

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

There are no results to be reported this quarter.

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

There are no results to be reported this quarter.

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

There are no results to be reported this quarter.

IR 3.2: Open Parliament Plan developed and implemented by SL Parliament

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

There are no results to be reported this quarter.

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

There are no results to be reported this quarter.

IR 3.3: Constituent outreach and communications 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

Communications trainings for government staff did not occur this quarter. There are no results to report.

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

The development of government communications strategies or procedures did not occur this quarter. There are no results to report.

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

There are no results to report this quarter.

IR 3.4: Electoral integrity through domestic election observation promoted

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

There are no results to report this quarter as the parliamentary elections were indefinitely postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. CEPPS/IRI's domestic election observation partner CMEV has selected 105 LTOs and 1,200 STOs who are prepared to deploy throughout Sri Lanka in advance of the parliamentary elections once they are rescheduled.

Indicator 3.4.2: Number of domestic election observers and/or party agents trained with USG assistance

This quarter, CEPPS/NDI's partner, PAFFREL, trained 24 field coordinators (22 men and two women). Similarly, PAFFREL also trained 97 LTOs (87 men and 10 women).

CMEV and CEPPS/IRI trained 80 LTOs, 12 female and 68 males, during two workshops this quarter. The first workshop focused on promoting inclusivity in the election process and encouraging citizens to register to vote for the upcoming parliamentary elections. The second workshop focused on reviewing and identifying approaches to mitigate issues faced by PWDs and marginalized groups during the presidential election. CEPPS/IRI will provide the disaggregated age data for the LTOs next quarter.

Indicator 3.4.3: Number of online views of elections observer group's findings and/or reports

This quarter, PAFFREL reported 2,730 views on its website.

Indicator 3.4.4: Percentage of increase in capacity of supported elections observer groups

There are no results to be reported this quarter.

IR 3.5: Frameworks and enforcement related to political finance and abuse of state resources strengthened

CEPPS/IFES listed this indicator as cross-cutting, see indicator 4.4

IR 3.6 Women's and Youth's political engagement in Sri Lanka's democratic process strengthened

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

CEPPS/IFES did not conduct activities related to this indicator during the reporting period.

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

I: Based on discussions with CEPPS/IFES and other members of the GEWG, the Chairman arranged to hold discussions with political parties to include more women in leadership roles within the political party and advocate for more women to be included in the nomination list ahead of the parliamentary election.

Indicator 3.6.3: Number of women trained to contract in elections or assume political leadership positions

CEPPS/IFES did not conduct activities related to this indicator during the reporting period.

Indicator 3.6.4. Number of persons trained with USG assistance to advance outcomes consistent with gender equality or female empowerment through their roles in public or private sector institutions or organizations

CEPPS/IFES did not conduct activities related to this indicator during the reporting period.

IR 3.7: Transparency and accountability of political parties improved

Indicator 3.7.1: Percentage of political party members that demonstrate increased understanding of best practices

CEPPS/IRI will be coordinating with USAID to redesign this indicator to better reflect activities planned for future quarters.

Indicator 3.7.2: Number of individuals who received USG-assisted political party training

CEPPS/IRI conducted nine MPYDs for 550 political party members (418 male and 132 female) from eight parties. These political party members are local councilors representing SLPP, UNP, Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP), Tamil National Alliance (TNA), Sri Lanka Muslim Congress (SLMC), Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna Party (JVP), All Ceylon Makkal Congress (ACMC) and the Eelam People's Democratic Party (EPDP). CEPPS/IRI will provide disaggregated age data next quarter.

Indicator 3.7.3: Number of consensus building forums held with USG Assistance

CEPPS/IRI conducted nine MPYDs in eight districts. A total of 550 political party members (418 male and 132 female) attended the MPYDs.

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

CEPPS/IFES did not measure this indicator during the reporting period.

Indicator 4.2: Number of election officials trained with USG assistance

50:

- 1 Assistant Commissioners of the EC trained through CEPPS/IFES' ToT on People Against Violence in Elections (PAVE) in Colombo;
- 49 EC district officials, (10 women and 15 youth) trained through CEPPS/IFES M&E Dashboard training in Colombo.

Indicator 4.3: Number of individuals receiving civic education through USG-assisted programs

261:

- 5 participants (1 woman, 1 youth) trained through CEPPS/IFES' ToT on People Against Violence in Elections (PAVE) in Colombo;
- 105 participants (38 women), trained through three separate IREX' election reporting workshops held on Feb 24-26, Feb 27-28 and March 2-3, to which CEPPS/IFES provided technical and facilitation support – for journalists who work in mainstream and social media outlets in Colombo;
- 151 participants (124 women, 31 youth, and 8 persons with disabilities) in the March 11 GEWG “Representation of Women in Decision Making Structures” event in Colombo.

Indicator 4.4: Number of laws or amendments to ensure credible elections drafted with USG technical assistance

CEPPS/IFES did not conduct activities related to this indicator during the reporting period.

Indicator 4.5: Percent of youth engaged in civic education initiatives following participation in youth camps

During this reporting period, two former youth camp participants participated in CEPPS/IFES' PAVE ToT. Both attendees plan to co-facilitate PAVE programs throughout districts in their communities ahead of the Parliamentary Election, if the health situation improves, allowing for in-person trainings.

Indicator 4.6 Number of individuals receiving voter education through USG-assisted programs

CEPPS/IFES developed voter education materials during the reporting period but will not disseminate them until closer to the parliamentary election.

IV. Foreign Assistance Indicators

Indicator	Target FY2018/ LOP	FY 2018 Quarter 1 (Oct-Dec 2017)	FY 2018 Quarter 2 (Jan - March 2018)	FY 2018 Quarter 3 (April-June 2018)	FY 2018 Quarter 4 (July-Sep. 2018)	FY2019 Quarter 1 (Oct-Dec 2018) FY 2018)	FY2019 Quarter 2 (Jan - March 2019)	FY2019 Quarter 3 (Apr - June 2019)	FY2019 Quarter 4 (July - Sep 2019)	FY2020 Quarter 1 (Oct-Dec 2019)	FY2020 Quarter 2 (Jan - Mar 2020)	Project Total (Unique numbers only)
USG Indicator GJD 3.2.1: Number of election officials trained with USG assistance	50/100	38	45	99	53	34	83	112	33	0	50	278
Disaggregated by:												
Gender												
Female		4	7	26	33	8	27	26	6	0	14	90
Male		33	38	66	20	26	56	86	27	0	36	180
Unknown		1	0	7	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	8
Official Type												
HQ EC Staff		38	45	99	53	34	83	112	0	0	50	242
USG Indicator 2.3-2.6: Number of laws or amendments to ensure credible elections drafted with USG technical assistance	1/2	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	3
USG Indicator 3.2-3: Number of domestic election observers and/or party agents trained with USG assistance		N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	1488	177	1488
Disaggregated by:												
Gender												

Female										229	22	229
Male										1259	155	1259
Unknown										0		0
USG Indicator (DR. 3.2-4) Number of individuals receiving civic education through USG-assisted programs	1500/3000	449	1652	304	176	480	0	116	68	227	261	3,633
Disaggregated by:												
Gender												
Female		219	970	285	143	207	0	67	14	62	163	2133
Male		9	682	19	33	186	0	49	54	165	98	1299
Gender N/A		201	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	201
Youth		15	921	248	71	393	0	63	68	131	32	1744
People with disabilities		0	60	0	22	0	0	39	2	1	8	133
USG Indicator 3.3-1: Number of individuals who received USG-assisted political party training		N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	56	550	56
Disaggregated by:												
Gender												
Female										17	132	17
Male										39	418	39
Unknown												
Youth										47		47
Party												
UNP										56		56
USG Indicator 3.1-3: Number of consensus		N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	1	9	1

building forums held with USG assistance												
Indicator 4.6: Number of Individuals receiving voter education through USG-assisted programs⁴		N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	317	0	317
Disaggregated by:												
Gender												
Female										126	0	126
Male										190	0	190
Gender N/A										1	0	1
Youth										75	0	75
People with disabilities										225	0	225
USG Indicator GNDR-8: Number of persons trained with USG assistance to advance outcomes consistent with gender equality or female empowerment through their roles in public or private sector institutions or organizations		215	73	117	101	140	0	33	0	0	0	679

⁴ This indicator was recently approved to be include during this reporting period. Based on discussions with USAID, activities associated with this indicator was originally being reporting under Indicator (DR. 3.2-4) Number of individuals receiving civic and voter education through USG-assisted programs but has been split to measure both voter and civic education separately in project reporting.

V. ANALYSIS

Progress toward achieving objectives/impact

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

Objective 1 is complete. Looking ahead, CEPPS/IFES will support the EC in development of its second strategic plan should this occur within the remaining IEMP period.

Objective 2: Capacity of the Election Commission to address critical election system vulnerabilities in Sri Lanka Strengthened

Due to the unprecedented challenges presented by the COVID-19 outbreak in Sri Lanka, the EC was attentive in understanding and responding to the immediate concerns related to holding an election in April. During this reporting period, the EC approached CEPPS/IFES for assistance and technical support in risk management and mitigation efforts as related to the election planning and safeguarding health. Also during this reporting period, the EC has shown an increased interest in conducting more voter education programs for women and marginalized groups, including women in the plantation sector and women in the North and East, and has expressed its openness to working with CSOs and members of the GEWG to more actively promote the inclusion of women electoral leaders in Sri Lanka. Regardless of when the election is planned, the EC will continue to support and advocate for the inclusion of more women representation.

Objective 3: Citizen Engagement and multi- stakeholder commitment towards transparent elections and political processes improved

The reporting period saw enhanced commitment by the GEWG members to work together to promote women's political representation, as well as steps taken by the DIESL-TWG to better ensure long-term working group sustainability, both of which CEPPS/IFES has been closely engaged. In both cases, the working groups' direct engagement with the EC underscores improved partnerships that will be critical to addressing gaps and solidifying inclusion as a key priority in election planning and implementation. The GEWG had temporarily halted in November 2019 with the President's dismissal of the Chair of the National Committee on Women – who also served as a co-convenor of the GEWG. Rising above this challenge, GEWG members from across civil society groups came together to host the March 11 event and engage in direct, high level advocacy to the EC, political parties, the women's caucus, and other parliamentary members. As noted in the gender integration section below, the impact on the EC has been substantial. Separately, the DIESL-TWG – first established in 2018 – took an important organizational step in appointing a new convening group and, at CEPPS/IFES' request, placing a local organization in a central

convening role to best ensure that the DIESL-TWG initiatives are led and fully owned by Sri Lankan civil society groups. With this restructured framework, the committed DIESL-TWG members were able to establish new ToRs and strategic priorities that underscore their commitment to and vision for working with the EC for the coming years to increase the electoral participation of all people with disabilities.

CEPPS/NDI continued to make progress in providing technical support to PAFFREL in working to strengthen the accuracy and efficiency of election observation. Efforts focused on reflecting and analyzing PAFFREL's activities from the previous quarter and providing feedback to absorb and incorporate into its parliamentary election observation efforts. Encouragingly, PAFFREL also conducted an internal review session to draw lessons learned and provide recommendations going forward. Furthermore, as the COVID-19 pandemic spread throughout the world and elections were postponed, PAFFREL remained open to and enthusiastic about CEPPS/NDI election experts' experience and guidance from similar situations. Overall, this was a quarter of learning and adapting that will guide PAFFREL in improving its election observation activities in the future.

During this reporting period, CEPPS/IRI's efforts towards achieving the stated IR and objective focused on providing material and technical support for CMEV's efforts to promote transparency and integrity during the parliamentary election cycle. CMEV urged the EC to postpone the parliamentary elections scheduled for April 25, 2020, due to the COVID-19 outbreak. CMEV's recommendations focused on two related aspects of the impact of the pandemic on the country's elections: public safety concerns that holding the election would significantly increase the spread of COVID-19 in the country, countering the government's measures to combat the outbreak; and concerns about how outbreak could negatively impact voter turnout on Election Day, as many voters would be discouraged from visiting polling stations.

Also, during this reporting period, the MPYDs fostered an environment in various districts through which members of multiple political parties were able to openly engage with one another on critical political issues. The primary objective of the MPYDs was to urge political parties to be more inclusive and transparent with the communities they represent. CEPPS/IRI chose to target young local councilors to participate in the MPYDs as they are the country's future leaders and because to a great extent, they do not carry the same political baggage as older generations of leaders. CEPPS/IRI has observed that MYPD participants are using the WhatsApp group they created to share COVID-19 information. The platform has enabled participants to reflect on each of their local government authority's responses to the COVID-19 crisis and share how they are coordinating with their respective administrative offices and district secretariats to help facilitate the delivery of relief supplies to those in need. CEPPS/IRI plans to continue to promote political party members to be transparent through its multi-party activities in the interest of preserving the integrity of Sri Lanka's elections and political processes. CEPPS/IRI's decision to convene its MPYDs in the districts increased the level of women's participation, which enabled the discussions to be more focused on political challenges women face in the democratic process. Prominent MPs' requests to continue the MPYDs demonstrate that participants and political parties value

CEPPS/IRI's intervention and the approach to focus on district levels. For example, UNP leadership, including Eran Wickramaratne, Harsha de Silva, Mangala Samaraweera and Ajith Perera along with SLPP Chairman G.L. Peiris requested CEPPS/IRI to continue the MPYDs in the upcoming quarters. These requests further demonstrate the political parties' positive perception of CEPPS/IRI's intervention.

Constraints/Challenges and Lessons Learned

The main challenge experienced during this reporting period was the unexpected outbreak of COVID-19 in Sri Lanka and across the world. This pandemic quickly changed all ongoing operations and activities planned by CEPPS for this reporting period. As the Sri Lankan government began issuing island-wide restrictions to curb the spread of the virus, the pandemic has necessitated quick program adaptations to ensure timely program delivery that meets emerging national needs.

As the Parliamentary Election has been postponed, CEPPS/IFES is working closely with the EC to determine the immediate and emerging needs, including ongoing advisory work on election risk management. One challenge for CEPPS/IFES during this reporting period was providing only remote support to the EC in preparation for various pre-election procedures, as many of the EC officials have shifted their focus to supporting COVID-19 relief efforts. If the current June 2020 election date moves forward, CEPPS/IFES will have to work quickly to provide support to the EC's related in particular to safeguarding the health of voters and polling stations. As much of the pre-election period for the upcoming Parliamentary Election may seem to require limited in-person interactions and remote support, CEPPS/IFES is adapting efforts in providing many of the traditional in-person activities, such as EC voter education programs for persons with disabilities, to online platforms for the very first time.

CEPPS/NDI had planned a number of activities with the parliament for the month of March, including public consultations and outreach to improve two-way engagement between the parliament and the constituents, and in line with the first OPP target to improve openness and transparency. This activity has been postponed and will be rescheduled when the new parliament convenes after the parliamentary elections. The COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting government-imposed curfew added additional challenges and CEPPS/NDI postponed several planned activities as a result. This includes its support for two parliamentary staff to participate in the IPU conference on open data in Ottawa, Canada, and the workshops on open parliament initiative for parliament secretariat staff.

Similarly, due to the pandemic and postponement of the parliamentary elections, CEPPS/NDI's local partner PAFFREL is unable to complete its observation efforts as planned. CEPPS/NDI is actively working with PAFFREL to refocus its efforts on long-term observation to conduct online research and limited observation at local levels, to the extent possible given the curfew and restrictions, into the pre-election environment. Despite these challenges, CEPPS/NDI and local

partners have been diligent in discovering new and creative ways to continue its goals of increasing transparent elections and improving political processes and are actively working together to identify strategies to continue support through digital mediums, as well as alternative points of entry. While internet access remains an ongoing challenge for partners and beneficiaries such as the parliamentary staff, CEPPS/NDI is coordinating with USAID to provide support.

CEPPS/IRI's domestic election observation partner, CMEV, was supposed to begin deploying observers in preparation for the parliamentary elections this quarter but has now delayed its plans to deploy its observers. CEPPS/IRI is coordinating with CMEV to ensure a contingency plan is developed so that CMEV is prepared to deploy its observers once the election date has been determined. Due to the COVID-19 outbreak, CEPPS/IRI will unlikely be able to implement additional in-person MPYDs next quarter. CEPPS/IRI is adapting its plans for MPYDs by consulting with political parties and a multi-party youth organization to facilitate online workshops. These workshops would engage youth members of political parties to identify approaches to counter hate speech and anti-minority rhetoric that is being spread primarily in social media channels.

CEPPS/IRI faced challenges convening MPs to participate in panel discussions from the districts where the MPYDs were held. CEPPS/IRI had invited nine MPs to participate, however four attended, including only one from SLPP. CEPPS/IRI had invited national level parliamentarians from UNP, SLFP and TNA to attend panel discussions focused on inclusivity, lack of women representation in governance and youth participation in the political process. Several MPs cancelled their plans to attend the MPYDs due to unforeseen constituents' events that came up at the last minute. While this initially presented a challenge, as the participants wanted to directly interact with their MPs, CEPPS/IRI successfully encouraged local government representatives and parliamentarians from the respective districts to attend the MPYDs. As a result of district-level representatives being in attendance, the participants were able to focus their discussions on everyday issues that they would not have been able to do with their MPs. CEPPS/IRI will continue to coordinate with these leaders to increase the numbers of MPs that attend future workshops.

Gender Integration

CEPPS partners continue to integrate women's rights and gender equality as a core commitment of the IEMP. During the reporting period, the GEWG's direct advocacy to the EC resulted in the EC Chairman expressing full support for the GEWG's proposed initiatives and taking steps to encourage political party leaders to the same. Indeed, during the reporting period, the EC Chairman invited select GEWG members and CEPPS/IFES to participate in a meeting with Sri Lanka's political party secretaries, and during the meeting, the EC Chairman requested all party secretaries to proactively promote women's representation, in particular by nominating more women to their district candidate lists as well as to their respective national lists during the parliamentary election. The Chairman also called on the political party secretaries to hold regular meetings with GEWG

representatives going forward. The EC's admirable action followed a February 19 meeting between the EC and GEWG member, in which CEPPS/IFES and the GEWG presented an advocacy paper to the EC and specifically requested the EC's support in encouraging political party leaders to nominate more women to their list.

CEPPS/IRI prioritized promoting inclusivity in its MPYD participant selection process in the districts to address the challenge it faced securing adequate women's participation in its first MPYD. CEPPS/IRI's local facilitator FSLGA also prioritized increasing the number of women participants in the MPYDs. MPYD programs provided a platform for several locally elected women councilors to engage in dialogue with political party leaders focusing on common challenges elected women faced while in office, despite their political party affiliation. This elevated the concerns of women party members on practices that exist within Sri Lanka's party system as a whole that discourage the meaningful participation of women as party members, candidates and elected officials. Political party leaders along with female and male participants praised CEPPS/IRI's intervention to promote discussion on the inequalities that exist in Sri Lanka's democratic process. CEPPS/IRI will build on this momentum and political party leaders' will in the upcoming quarters to continue improving the integration of women into its programs.

IEMP continues to prioritize female participants in activities supported by CEPPS/NDI, including gender parity as it relates to STOs, LTOs, mobile observers, postal voting observers and coordinators. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, all but three of PAFFREL's training sessions were delayed. CEPPS/NDI will continue to emphasize inclusion within the election observation process.

LIST OF ATTACHMENTS

Attachment I: IEMP Activity Mitigation Plan

Attachment II: *CEPPS/IFES Mitigating Electoral Risks during the COVID-19 Pandemic: Lessons learned from the Liberia Ebola Crisis and 2014 National Elections*

Attachment III: CEPPS/IFES EC M&E Dashboard Training Guide

Attachment IV: CEPPS/IRI's Success Stories