Booth Level Officer
e-Patrika

Sarvodyaya Kanya Vidyalaya

Election Commission of India

NOTHING LIKE VOTING I VOTE FOR SURE

Voters Pledge

'We the citizens of India, having abiding faith in democracy, hereby pledge to uphold the democratic traditions of our country and the dignity of free, fair and peaceful elections, and to vote in every election fearlessly and without being influenced by considerations of religion, race, caste, community, language or any inducement'.

Booth Level Officer

FORM

National Voters' Day Special Edition
Volume 9

VOTERS' PLEDGE

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National Voters' Day

25th January is celebrated as National Voters' Day which commemorates the annual celebration of the foundation of the Election Commission of India. Each year, a series of events, including public functions, are meticulously organised to mark this occasion. These gatherings serve as a vibrant and robust testament to the diverse and widespread engagement of voters, spanning from the national level down to individual polling stations, and involving all stakeholders. A Voters' Pledge is taken by the voters on the day.

In response to issues such as voter apathy and low enrolment among new voters, the Commission has undertaken an extensive initiative. This involved identifying all eligible voters turning 18 years old in every polling station area across the country. The primary objective is to swiftly enrol them and distribute their Elector Photo Identity Cards (EPICs). The overarching goal of this initiative is to instil in the youth a sense of citizenship, empowerment, and pride in electoral participation. The aim is to motivate them to actively exercise their newly acquired franchise during elections.

The theme for this year's National Voters' Day, *'Nothing Like Voting, I Vote For Sure,'* is a heartfelt dedication to voters, conveying the sentiments and aspirations of individuals towards participating in the electoral process through the impactful expression of their vote.

Glimpses of 13th NVD, 2023

BLO: An Effective Contributor
to National Voters' Day

- BLOs should proactively arrange events within their polling stations area, taking the lead in fostering community engagement.

- EPIC cards should be distributed to new voters during the NVD function at the booth.

- BLOs should widely disseminate audio\videos and other creative content (Matdata Junction, ECI Song, etc) through platforms like WhatsApp groups and social media channels, reaching out to every household and participant.

- During events, BLOs should administer the NVD pledge to all attendees. Additionally, copies of the pledge should be circulated through WhatsApp groups to ensure widespread dissemination.

A Committed Representative of the Election Management System

A BLO must possess knowledge regarding the various forms:

Form 6

The revised version of Form 6 is exclusively designed for the "registration of new voters/electors." In the updated Form-6, notable additions include the ability to provide details of a Legal Guardian in the case of an orphan or guru for individuals identifying with the Third Gender.

For electors with disabilities (PwD), mentioning the percentage of disability along with the corresponding certificate is now an optional field.

Form 6A caters to the "inclusion of names in the Electoral Roll by overseas Indian electors."

Form 7

Form 7 addresses objections to the proposed inclusion/deletion of names in the existing Electoral roll. A new provision allows for attaching a death certificate in case of death cases.

Form 8

Form 8 is designed for various purposes, including shifting of residence, correction of entries in the existing electoral roll, replacement of EPIC, and marking Persons with Disability.

Four Qualifying Dates:
Changes in the existing process

JANUARY 1 · **APRIL 1** · **JULY 1** · **OCTOBER 1**

Now there are four qualifying dates in a year namely, 1 January, 1 April, 1 July and 1 October in place of one qualifying date 1st January. In other words, the citizens who will become eligible on any of the four qualifying dates have been given a facility to file their advance application for registration, during the Annual Summary Revision, as well as after the final publication.

The forms will be segregated quarter-wise about relevant qualifying dates and disposed of by the EROs in the concerned subsequent quarters only, preferably in the first month of subsequent quarters.

The applicants who couldn't file their advance claims during the Annual Summary Revision will not be denied for filing claims in subsequent quarters. The procedure of advance claim filing during Annual Summary Revision is an additional facility provided to young voters.

Role of BLO in Cleaning and Purifying of Voter List

A BLO plays a pivotal role in the meticulous cleaning and purification of the voter list through systematic house-to-house surveys, identifying Dead, Shifted, or Duplicate (DSE/PSE) voters. The BLO diligently goes door-to-door, ensuring a comprehensive survey to validate the accuracy of voter information. This involves collecting necessary forms with appropriate signatures and supporting proofs from the residents. By undertaking this crucial task, the BLO not only contributes to the accuracy of the electoral roll but also ensures that it reflects the current and authentic demographic information of the constituency. Once these details are meticulously gathered, the BLO submits the collected forms and data to the Electoral Registration Officer (ERO), facilitating the continual refinement and enhancement of the voter list in alignment with the dynamic nature of the population.

BLO: A Smart Guide for Smart Voters

Use of IT tools for Electoral Facilitation

The BLO also plays a crucial role in spreading awareness about several mobile apps developed by the Election Commission of India that help make the election free, fair and participatory.

Voter's Service Portal

Voter's Service Portal is a one-stop solution for all election-related services. It offers a variety of services to the electors like enrollment, rectification of entries, and migration to another Assembly Constituency.

cVIGIL

cVIGIL Application for filing Model Code of Conduct Violation cases by citizens provides time-stamped evidentiary proof of the Model Code of Conduct/Expenditure Violation by empowering every citizen to click a photo or video using his or her smartphone. The application is based on GIS technology and prioritises the speedy and effective actions by authorities and promises users status reports within 100 minutes.

Know Your Candidates

Know Your Candidates (KYC) is a dedicated app for informing about the "Criminal Antecedents" status of candidates. This allows citizens to browse candidates with/ without Criminal Antecedents and empowers the citizens to know the criminal antecedents of the candidates.

Voter Helpline App

Voter Helpline App (VHA) helps citizens access various services such as applying for a voter ID card, applying online for corrections in voter's card, viewing details of Polling booths, Assembly Constituency and Parliamentary constituency, and getting the contact details of BLO, ERO among other services.

Saksham App

Saksham App is meant for Persons with Disabilities (PwD). The PwD elector can make requests for marking them as PwD, request for new registration, request for migration, request for correction in EPIC details, and request for a wheelchair. It utilises the accessibility features of mobile phones for voters with blindness and hearing disabilities.

All the above applications are available on the Google Play Store and Apple App Store.

DID YOU KNOW?

Planning at the Booth Level: TIP Plan

Purpose: A recent initiative, the Turnout Implementation Plan (TIP) outlines specific strategies at the Assembly Constituency level to effectively communicate with and engage voters.

This innovative approach represents a substantial shift in electoral strategies, prioritising targeted solutions to address grassroots challenges. By adopting a bottom-up approach, the Election Commission of India aims to elevate democratic participation at the constituency level, ensuring that every eligible voter exercises their fundamental right to vote.

In this context, the role of BLOs becomes pivotal, as they play a crucial part in implementing and monitoring the strategy at their respective booth levels and serve as a guide towards:

Major gap analysis

Media consumption habits

Apathetic groups including youth and urban segments

Other segments requiring specific attention

Key messages to be prepared to encourage voters to come to vote on Poll Day

Making Election Accessible:
# A Genuine Facilitator

BLO plays a vital role in keeping citizens well-informed about the Assured Minimum Facilities available at each polling station, contributing to ECI endeavours of "Inclusive and Accessible elections." Following are some election facilitation for Persons with Disabilities (PwDs) and Senior Citizens at each polling booth:

- All polling stations are accessible to the road.

- To provide targeted and need-based facilitation to differently-abled voters, all persons with disabilities and senior citizens in an Assembly Constituency are to be identified and tagged to their respective Polling Stations.

- Identified PwD and senior citizens electors are assisted by volunteers.

- Differently, abled electors & senior citizens are given priority for polling booths, through a separate queue, designated parking spaces close to the entrance of polling station premises and special facilitation extended to electors with speech and hearing impairment.

- Coordinating transport facilities for PwD and senior citizen electors in their polling stations is also ensured on the day of the poll.

- Spreading information about Dummy Ballot Sheets in Braille facilities at Polling Stations.

Voter Facilitation Posters:

To provide accurate and relevant information for voter awareness and information at each polling station, BLO needs to ensure that uniform and standardised Voter Facilitation Posters (VFP) [total of FOUR (4) kinds of Posters i.e. 1. Polling Station Details, 2. List of Candidates, 3. Do's and Don'ts and 4. Approved Identification Documents & How to Vote] is prominently displayed at all Polling Stations.
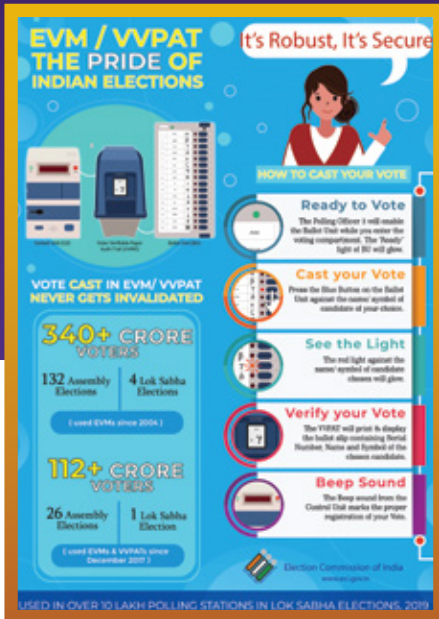
Voter Assistance Booths (VAB):

Voter Assistance Booths are set up for every polling station location where Booth Level Officers/officials assist voters to correctly locate her/his polling booth number and serial number in the electoral roll of that concerned polling booth. The VABs are set up with prominent signage and in such a manner that it is conspicuous to the voters as they approach the polling premise/building to enable them to seek required facilitation on poll day.
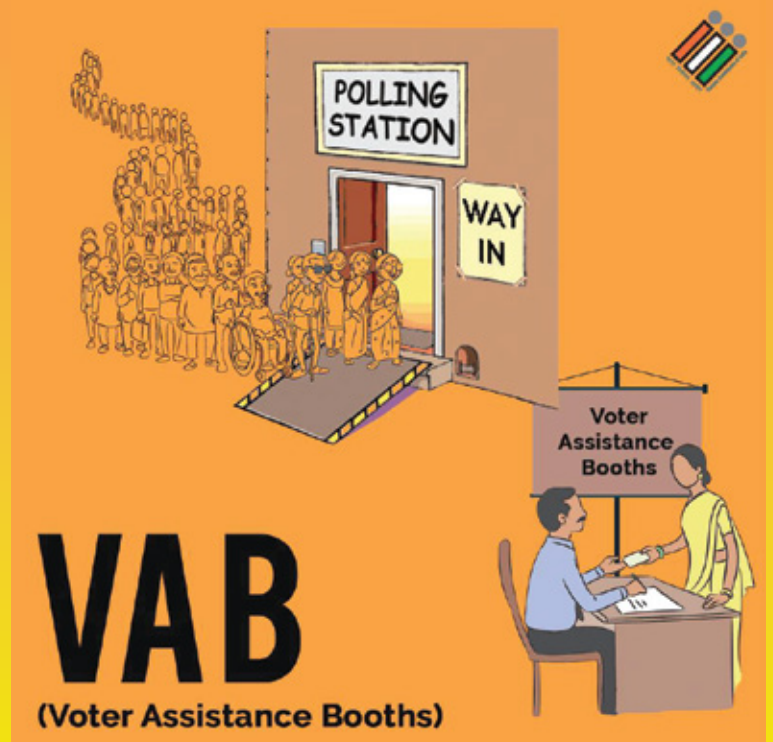
(BLO as Credible Friend)
To enhance credibility, BLO should:

Possess in-depth familiarity with the locality and households within their assigned Polling station area, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of the community.

Ensure the timely and efficient disposal of forms related to electoral processes, reflecting a commitment to expeditious administrative procedures.

Demonstrate politeness and courtesy when interacting with electors in their polling booth, fostering a positive and respectful environment.

Address citizens' queries in an informed and prompt manner, providing accurate information and guidance as needed.

Maintain a non-partisan stance to uphold impartiality and fairness in electoral activities.

Guarantee that no areas, including newly developed colonies within the assigned jurisdiction, are overlooked or omitted from the BLO's responsibilities.

Regularly and accurately update the BLO register to maintain organised and precise records.

Stay updated and informed with the latest activities of the Election Commission and its innovative tools, such as Apps and engaging creatives, for effective functioning.

Organise Chunav Pathshalas (election workshops) every two months, contributing to continuous voter education and awareness within the community.

Tools of Dissemination of Infomation: BLO as Smart Communicator

WhatsApp as a major communication tool, BLO is expected to connect with households and maintain regular communication to ensure the timely dissemination of accurate information.

Utilise creative materials from both the ECI and CEO to effectively motivate and encourage electors.

Promote awareness and usage of ECI apps, including KYC, c-Vigil, Saksham App, BLO App, etc and the website voters.eci.gov.in among voters. Encourage them to utilise these platforms for filling forms, updating information, and addressing any queries they may have.

Actively engage in encouraging local residents, with a special emphasis on youth and newly eligible electors, to participate in National Voters' Day (NVD) programme ceremonies held at the booth.

Election Commission of India
Connect through Whatsapp

Baaton Baaton Mein

In Conversation with BLO

Sandhya Bhardwaj, a Booth Level Officer (BLO) stationed at 115 Seoni, 53 Legislative Assembly, Andhiari, Madhya Pradesh, shares her experience during the 2023 election process. In July 2023, she participated in BLO meetings, although being relatively new to the position, the information was initially challenging to grasp. Subsequently, the Electoral Registration Officer (ERO) emphasised the importance of maintaining correct, pure, and clean voter lists for every BLO, leaving a lasting impression on Sandhya.

Motivated by this directive, Sandhya resolved to ensure the purity and accuracy of the voter list for her assigned booth. On August 2, 2023, when the draft voter list was published, she encountered numerous grievances about the lack of progress for the past 2-3 years. Even visiting supervisors and sector officers acknowledged the need for dedicated effort, urging Sandhya to take charge of addressing the people's concerns. Eagerly accepting the challenge, Sandhya began her comprehensive approach to improve the electoral list.

Initially, she meticulously reviewed the electoral list section-wise, identifying and segregating names of deceased individuals, duplicate entries, and shifted persons. Implementing a systematic approach, Sandhya visited households on different days, collected necessary documents and announced the names eligible for removal from the list. Simultaneously, she encouraged eligible individuals to come forward for inclusion in the list, ensuring a methodical and organised process.

Devoting herself fully without breaks, Sandhya received 129 applications through Form-6 for new additions and identified 52 names for deletion due to reported deaths. Additionally, she addressed 5 cases of duplicate entries and 3 cases of completely transferred names, successfully eliminating 60 names from the list. Even with connectivity challenges at the school, Sandhya managed to bring Form-6 entries to her home and completed the online filling process after working hours.

Sandhya's dedication and efficiency did not go unnoticed, as her efforts were recognized by the District Election Officer (DEO), who forwarded her name for consideration as the Best BLO. Sandhya has set an exemplary case for fellow BLOs.

Story from the ground

Mr. Gafoor, the Head Master of G.H.P.S Duganoor and Booth Level Officer (BLO) for Duganoor Part No-223 in Raichur Rural, 53 Assembly Constituency, Karnataka

To cleanse and fortify the voter list, Mr Gafoor incorporated new young voters and women while eliminating deceased, double/repeated, and shifted voters. Undertaking house-to-house visits, Mr. Gafoor aimed to re-engage dropout children and reach out to the youth, village panchayat members, and local citizens. This comprehensive outreach facilitated the identification of voters who had shifted due to marriage or work, as well as those who were no longer alive. Subsequently, with dedicated efforts 53 deceased, 22 double/repeated, and 25 migrated voters were identified and removed, totaling 100 from the voter list. The village now boasts a refined list with 1183 voters. Simultaneously, 58 new voters were successfully added. In a commendable feat, all Aadhaar details of 1192 voters were obtained within 10-15 days, completing 100% Aadhar linking. Acknowledging the invaluable support and guidance from seniors, Mr. Gafoor expresses pride as a BLO.

In the heart of Rajasthan, Churu district, the booth-level officers geared up for the 2023 elections with the announcement of the voting date on 25th November.

Their mission extended beyond merely organising the elections; it embraced the challenge of boosting voter turnout in the district. The meticulous planning and execution aimed to ensure that the elections were not just well-organised but also fair and transparent.

As per the voter list published on October 4, 2023, Churu district boasted 16,31,215 voters. On the voting day, 12,39,238 voters exercised their democratic right across 1568 polling stations. Remarkably, the voting percentage soared past 76%, marking a significant improvement from previous elections. The BLOs extensively used voter awareness apps providing comprehensive information related to the elections, which became easily accessible to citizens for registration and relevant information. This accessibility played a pivotal role in breaking previous voting records.