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**PAFFREL**

# Training Manual for Citizen Voter Education

PAFFREL

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## **Disclaimer**

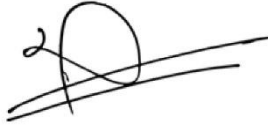
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## **Let us be informed citizens.**

Although almost a hundred years have passed since Sri Lanka had gained universal suffrage, the PAFFREL believes that we as citizens should continue to educate ourselves more on the issues such as people's sovereignty and exercise of it, the electoral system, and civic responsibility.

The PAFFREL presents this booklet to you with the view to achieving this objective, in particular to enhance the knowledge of the voters on such issues. I would like to thank Mr. M. M. Mohamed, the former Commissioner General of Elections & Member of Election Commission, and Professor M.T.M. Mahees of the Department of Sociology, University of Colombo, for their contribution in compiling this manual, and the PAFFREL Senior Project Officer Shivakumar Sathyaraj, Senior Project Officer Induwara Arthanayake and Project Officer Izzath Inham for successfully coordinating the public outreach of it.

We believe that the study of this guide book will enhance your knowledge enabling you to become a conscientious citizen well informed of these important issues.



Rohana Hettiarachchi

Executive Director

PAFFEREL

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## **Voter Education**

# 1.

## People's Sovereignty and democracy

This chapter intends to explain two important and timely concepts: people's sovereignty and democracy which illustrate the relationship between the citizen and the state.

### 1.1. The owners of the State

There is a widely held belief that the ownership of modern democratic state lies with the people. The concept of people's sovereignty has emerged from the idea that the highest authority or supreme right of state lies with the people. Although it is generally held that the people possess the right of state, in reality it lies with the citizens. Citizens are the people who are recognized by the state as belonging to it. Accordingly, foreigners and persons who do not hold citizenship of the country do not enjoy the full rights of people's sovereignty of the relevant state.

### 1.2. Sovereignty

Accordingly, the concept of ownership of a state is called sovereignty. As the modern democratic states belong to the people, the authority possessed by the people is described as people's sovereignty. According to the definition of people's sovereignty in Article 3 of the Constitution of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka, "Sovereignty of Sri Lanka is in the people and is inalienable." This makes it clear that the sovereignty inherent by the the people, cannot be transferred to anyone else. This can be explained by the fact that the sovereignty of the state remained in the hands of kings when Sri Lanka was ruled by a monarch. So much so, King Don Juan Dharmapala, who ruled the Kotte Kingdom in 1505 AD, was able to cede a part of the Kotte Kingdom to the crown of Portugal because the sovereignty of the state was held by him. Similarly, when the last king of the Kandyan Kingdom, Sri Wickrama Rajasinghe, was defeated in 1815, his authority fell into the hands of the Chieftains (the Nilames) of the kingdom and that was how the Chieftains could enter into a convention with the British government and transfer the remaining part of our country to the British crown. However, according to the provisions of the current Constitution of Sri Lanka, it is clear that no ruler can transfer the ownership of the state to anyone other than by the people, at any time. According to the Constitution, sovereignty includes the following three elements.

- I. Ruling Power
- II. Franchise: the right to vote.
- III. Fundamental rights

Ruling Power means the authority to run a state. There are 3 branches of ruling a state: the executive, legislative, and judicial.

Franchise or right to vote is the power to elect representatives of one's choice, to govern the country. The Fundamental rights (Human Rights) include the rights that are enshrined in the fundamental law of the country in compliance with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, proclaimed by the United Nations in 1948, signifying the basic rights that a person should be entitled to live as a human being. Accordingly, it signifies the legal protection available to

citizens to protest against injustices when the rulers violate or are about to violate all, some or one of the fundamental rights enshrined in Articles 10 to 14 of the Constitution of Sri Lanka. .

Thus, although sovereignty is said to consist of three branches, it is evident that it actually consists of five elements: the executive, legislative, judicial, franchise, and fundamental rights.

### **1.3. Exercise of the Sovereignty of the People**

**Ruling Powers** - The ruling powers, which constitute the main component of the sovereignty of the people, are not actually exercised by the people themselves. The legislative power i.e. the power to enact laws which is one element of ruling powers is exercised by public representatives elected by the people on their behalf.

The executive power is exercised by the Executive President elected by the people, the Cabinet of Ministers who are the people's representatives and the Public Officials (Bureaucracy) whose salaries are paid by the tax paid by the people.

The other element of ruling powers, the judicial power, is exercised by independent Courts. But the voting power, which is a significant element of sovereignty, is directly exercised by the citizens to appoint their representatives for the legislature and the executive body. Similarly, the fundamental rights are enjoyed directly by the people .

## 2.

### **Voting determines our future**

This chapter aims to explain how the people's sovereignty is exercised through voting and also to emphasize that exercising one's vote is the responsibility of every citizen. It also explains the role of the representative of the people, in each election.

#### **Voting and the State -**

We have understood from the above chapter that the sovereignty of a state lies with the people. We have also understood that the powers to rule, which is a major part of sovereignty, is not exercised directly by the people.

The powers to rule are exercised by the representatives elected by the people and a bureaucracy (state officials) appointed by them. Therefore, in a democratic state, voting is an opportunity granted to the people to choose their representatives to rule the country. It can also be considered as an opportunity for the people to exert influence on the power of the government.

#### **Voting and Democracy**

Government by the people, for the people, and of the people i.e. with the participation of the people, is known as democratic governance. In a democratic rule, the state is governed based on the needs of the people.

Although a system of governance based on the will of the majority of the people is comparatively called democracy, scholars who comment on democracy are of the view that such a regime should be conducted in a manner that does not harm the will of the majority and also the rights of the minority who oppose that system, and in a manner that does not prejudice the minority.

Elections are the main tool used to identify the needs and the will of the people. Therefore, free and fair elections held in appropriate times constitutes a key component of a democratic state.

#### **Elections / Polls in Sri Lanka**

There are 4 main elections and a referendum held in Sri Lanka. They are:

- Presidential Election
- Parliamentary Election
- Provincial Council Election
- Local Government Election
- Referendum

Each of these elections/polls is conducted in compliance with the provisions of statutory laws passed by the Parliament.

1. Parliamentary elections shall be governed by the Parliament Elections Act, No. 01 of 1981,
2. Presidential elections shall be governed by the Presidential Election Act, No. 15 of 1981,
3. Provincial Council elections shall be governed by the Provincial Council Elections Act, No. 2 of 1988,
4. Local Government Elections shall be governed by the Local Authorities Elections Ordinance (Chapter 262) Act,
5. Referendums shall be governed by the Referendums Act, No. 7 of 1981.

Of the above, excepting referendums, all other elections/polls are conducted to elect representatives of the people. The role expected of the elected representatives is different from each other.

### **The Role of a Member of Parliament**

Parliament has 3 functions. That is, enactment of laws, financial management and formulation of policies. Also, the members of the Cabinet of Ministers, which is a major institution of the executive, are appointed from the Parliament. Also, Parliament is a national institution. Therefore, a candidate elected as a Member of Parliament should be a person with the ability and vision to enact laws, manage public finances and formulate national policies. Also, since Parliament is a national institution, the members elected should have an understanding of, and sensitivity to national needs.

### **The role of a Provincial Councillor**

The functions of the Provincial Council include the formulation and implementation of statutes on matters falling within the purview of the Provincial Council, the management of the Provincial Council's finances and making policy decision for the development of the province in accordance with national policies and plans.

Therefore, the candidates elected to the Provincial Council should be endowed with the ability and vision to carry out these tasks.

Also he/she should possess the ability to negotiate with national institutions on behalf of the Provincial Council with confidence.

In such situations, they should be prepared to fight with the Ministers involved in national politics even if they belong to one's own political party. Also they should have a good understanding of the life, resources and natural conditions of the province.

### **The role of a local government Councillor**

Regional development is the primary aim of a local government institution. Formulation of by-laws, preparation and implementation of development plans, budgeting, maintenance of public utility services and ensure public health protection constitute the primary functions of a local government institution to achieve this objective. Therefore, a Councillor of a local government institution should have a good knowledge of the relevant domain of the local body and also a good rapport with the people residing in it. He should be a person having a constant touch with the people.

### **The importance of having a proper understanding of the role of people's representation**

The facts outlined above explain that the role and responsibility of public representatives at three tiers of governance in Sri Lanka differs from each other. Therefore, when expressing ones preference for a candidate in a general election, it is important that the most suitable candidate capable of fulfilling the relevant role shall be selected.

It is very important for the future of the country to consider the ability of the public representatives to fulfill the role that is truly expected of him/her, rather than their rhetoric, eloquence, appearance, political affiliations, wealth, spending power, the number of social functions like weddings and funerals that they attend, and appearances made on behalf of the supporters, when electing them. Accordingly, it should be emphasized that the exercise of the right to vote is an essential element in a democratic state and also a responsible act of putting into practice the sovereignty of the people and the representative democracy. It is also the responsibility of voters to correctly understand the role expected of a public representative when casting their votes and expressing preference in electing suitable candidates for that role.

### 3.

#### **Election Process/mechanism**

This chapter is intended to explain the administrative process applicable to holding elections and the revision of the electoral register required to cast votes in an election, and also to discuss the legal amendments introduced subsequently, to strengthen the electoral process. While there is no specific calendar for holding elections /polls in Sri Lanka, the provisions for determining the date of elections/polls and the dates for performing other statutory functions are specified in the Constitution and the various Election/Poll Acts. However, the process of preparing the electoral registers, which is considered the final and conclusive evidence of the voter turnout in an election/poll, is carried out by the Election Commission on an annual basis. The fundamental elements of this process can be described as follows.

#### **3.1 Electoral Register - Revision Process**

##### **3.1.1 The Registration of Electors (Amendment) Act No. 22 of 2021 and the New Census System**

In terms of the Registration of Electors Act No. 44 of 1980, the voter registers are updated annually. The voter registers compiled up to 2022 included all Sri Lankan citizens over eighteen years of age residing at the qualifying address as on the first of June of each year. However, with the coming into force of the Voters Registration (Amendment) Act No. 22 of 2021, ratified on the 13th of October, 2021, the registration of Sri Lankan citizens who have fulfilled the relevant qualifications as voters commenced on the first of February of each year from the year 2022.

The amended act has offered a great opportunity for young people who have completed eighteen (18) years of age to have their names included in the electoral register as soon as they reach the relevant age limit. According to the law that prevailed earlier, every voter who has completed eighteen years of age had to wait for almost a year to have their names included in the electoral register and more than a year to be able to vote. However, after the introduction of this amendment, the new voters who have completed eighteen years of age are counted every four months, and a supplementary list is prepared and added to the existing electoral register as a list of new voters so that they will also get the opportunity to vote whenever an election/poll is held during that period. For this purpose, three supplementary lists of those who have completed eighteen years of age will be prepared every four months of every year. Three separate lists shall be prepared and ratified, including **(1)** those who complete their eighteenth year of age between the first day of February of a given year and the thirty-first day of September of that year, **(2)** those who complete their eighteenth year between the first day of June of that year and the thirtieth day of January of the following year, and **(3)** those who complete their eighteenth year between the first day of October and the 31st day of January of the following year; and these 3 lists shall be attached to the already valid register of voters as supplementary lists. Although the combined lists containing the names of new voters had been prepared to be used in the local government elections scheduled to be held in March 2022, the

new voters however, lost their first opportunity to vote as the election was postponed due to non-release of necessary financial provisions by the Treasury. However, the 2024 electoral register for the presidential election scheduled to be held on September 21, 2024, was ratified on July 1, 2024, and new voters who have completed eighteen years of age between February 1, 2024 and May 31, 2024, are also scheduled to vote for the first time. It is a historic event that the youth will have the opportunity to vote for the first time within a maximum of seven months and a minimum of three months after reaching the qualified age of voting.

Changes had been occurred in the method of enumeration of voters with the implementation of the Amendment to the Voters Registration Act No. 22 of 2021.

Instead of the method of collecting information by providing a form called Form BC, a sheet containing the details of family members whose names appear in the Current Register is given to each household, and if those voters are eligible to be registered under that household, the signatures of the respective head of the household or another adult in the household are obtained by the Grama Niladhari, who is the Census Officer, and if there are any children who are about to complete eighteen years of age, after confirming this, those names are also entered in the relevant records. Similarly, the details of new regular residents who return due to marriage or changes in residence are also obtained at the same time. Also the Grama Niladhari will take necessary action to remove the names of the persons whose names already appear in the Current Register but cannot be entered in the Register to be revised due reasons such as death, left the residence or have lost the legal qualifications required to be registered as voters.

### **3.2 Elections / Constituencies / Wards**

The entire island is treated as one single electoral constituency in a presidential election or a referendum. In a parliamentary election, 22 electoral districts are considered as electoral divisions; in a Provincial Council Election, 25 administrative districts are considered as polling divisions and in a local government election, 341 local government institutions (24 Municipal Councils, 46 Urban Councils and 271 Pradeshiya Sabhas) are considered as polling divisions. In addition, in accordance with the provisions of the Voters Registration Act No. 44 of 1980, the entire island is divided into 160 Polling Divisions and compilation of voter registers for elections / polls, and the release of results in each election / poll are conducted based on these polling divisions. Further, in accordance with the provisions of the above-mentioned Voters Registration Act, there are about 12,750 Polling Districts in Sri Lanka where the voters belonging to each polling station reside. The smallest unit belonging to the election is the polling district. Apart from that in a local government election, each local government institution is divided into a number of 'Wards', and for each ward, one member or, in the case of a multi-member ward, more than one member is appointed. Each of these divisions consists of one or more electoral wards. In the local government elections in Sri Lanka held in 2018, there were 4910 wards located in 341 local government institutions.

### **3.3 Authority to declare elections/polls, fix nomination and polls dates**

The authority to hold an election/poll lies with the Election Commission. Except for the parliamentary election, the Election Commission has the authority to declare all presidential

elections, referendums, provincial council elections and local government elections. The President shall issue the proclamation only for the parliamentary election specifically announcing the date on which the Parliament will be dissolved, the nomination period for the next election which shall commence on the 10th day from the date of dissolution and ending at 12.00 noon on the 17th day, the date on which the election will be held within 5 to 7 weeks from the last day of the nomination period and the date of the inaugural sitting of the new Parliament. In the case of a Presidential election, the Election Commission shall issue the notice fixing the date on which nominations will be called and the election will be held on a day between the 16th and 21st days from the date of issue of such notice. On the day fixed for the receipt of such nominations, two hours from 9.00 a.m. to 11.00 a.m. shall be designated as the nomination period. A day not less than 4 weeks and not more than 6 weeks from the date of such nomination shall be declared for the Presidential Election by the Election Commission. In the case of Provincial Council elections, the Election Commission shall issue notice/notifications that the Provincial Council elections will be held, and the nomination period, which shall commence on the 14th day from the date of issue of such notice, shall end at 12.00 noon on the 21st day. The Election Commission shall announce the polling date that falls within 5 to 8 weeks from the last day of the nomination period. In the case of elections of local government bodies, the Returning Officers issue the nomination notice as per the instructions of the Election Commission. The nomination period begins on the 10th day from the date of the issuance of the notice and ends on the 13th day at 12.00 noon. The polling date for local government elections, as in the case of parliamentary elections shall be on a date not less than 5 weeks and not more than 7 weeks from the last day of the nomination period.

A candidate of a recognized political party contesting a Presidential Election is required to make a security deposit of Rs. 50,000/= while an independent candidate should deposit Rs. 75,000/= In the case of Parliamentary and Provincial Council Elections, the independent candidates shall make a security deposit of Rs. 2,000/=. In the case of a Local Government Election, a candidate of an independent group should make a security deposit of Rs. 5,000/= while a candidate of a recognized political party should deposit only Rs 1,500/= The security deposits can be made prior to submitting the nomination papers only in the Parliamentary Elections; In the case of Presidential Election, Provincial Council Election and Local Government Elections, it is mandatory that the deposit shall be made on or before 12.00 noon on the day preceding the last day of the nomination period. Only at the Parliamentary Elections the deposit can be made on the last day before the nomination paper is submitted. In a presidential election, the deposit placed shall be forfeited if the candidate fails to secure 12.5% of the votes polled from the entire island; failure to secure 12.5% of the votes polled in the electoral district by an independent group in a parliamentary election will result in the cash deposit being forfeited. Also, in a provincial council election, the candidates of independent groups that fail to secure at least one seat and in the case of a local government election, the failure to secure 5% of the voted polled in the ward contested by the candidate will result in the cash deposit being forfeited. Moreover, the deposits made by the additional candidates listed in the second nomination paper for the local government election shall be forfeited if a recognised political party or independent group fails to secure 5% of the votes in that local government election.

A specific time period is allocated for lodging objections to nominations, if any, in the legal provisions for the Presidential and Parliamentary elections. In the case of Parliamentary elections, objection to nomination papers can be filed from 12.00 noon to 01.30 pm on the last day of the nomination period, in the case of Presidential elections it will be from 9.00 am to 11.30 am. However, there is no legal provision for lodging objections to nominations in the Provincial Council and Local Government Elections Acts, and if an objection is made by someone, such objections are kept securely filed so that they could be taken up for future court proceedings.

### **3.3.1 Rejection of nomination papers**

In every election/poll, nomination papers that do not conform with the requirements specified in the provisions of the relevant Acts will be rejected, and consequently all candidates will be rejected. Only In Local Government Elections, only in three instances, only the relevant candidates are rejected, and the other candidates will have the opportunity to contest. Each candidate has to endorse his consent to be nominated and the nomination paper has to be signed by the Secretary of the political party or the leader of the independent group, whose signature shall be attested by a Justice of the Peace or a Notary Public. The three instances are (1) where the candidate has not endorsed his consent in which he expresses his intention to be nominated in the nomination paper (2) and where the candidate has not submitted the affidavit referred to in the Seventh Schedule introduced by the Sixth Amendment to the Constitution, which must be duly completed and submitted by every candidate or the affidavit submitted and not duly certified, and (3) failure to submit a certified copy of the birth certificate where the candidate is a youth or fails to attach an affidavit signed certifying his/her date of birth in the event the birth certificate cannot be obtained, in such a case only the nomination paper of the candidate shall be rejected. All other candidates shall have the opportunity to contest. In parliamentary elections and provincial council elections, if one candidate is disqualified, the entire nomination paper shall be rejected. Similarly, in local government elections also, all the candidates whose names appear on both nomination papers are rejected when a nomination paper is rejected for reasons other than the three cases mentioned above.

### **3.4 Provision of Postal Voting Facilities**

Only those specified in the Election/Poll Ordinances, such as public servants, members of armed forces and police officers, who are not able to go directly to the polling station and mark their votes on the date of polling due to their engagement in various official duties, are eligible to apply for postal voting. In the case of Parliamentary Election and the Presidential Election only, officers and employees of the Prisons Department along with other officers are also entitled to postal voting. In every election/polling other than the Provincial Council Election, applications for postal voting must be submitted within 10 days from the date of publication of the notice calling for nominations. In the case of Provincial Council Election only, the said period will be from the 7th to the 14th day from the date of publication of the notice calling for nominations. Only in the case of local government elections, postal ballots are counted at the polling station where the ballot papers are counted, while in other elections and polls, postal ballots are counted at separate counting centers.



case of Local Government Elections, the blue colour ballot papers should be placed in an envelope provided by the Elections Office to the Senior Polling Station Officer. In all elections and polls except the Provincial Government elections, at the time of counting, the blue ballot papers are removed from the ballot box and placed in a separate envelope and delivered to the Election Store along with the sealed bags that are handed over at the end of the counting.

### **3.6 Types of Representatives**

The political parties, independent groups and candidates contesting the election are provided with opportunity to appoint representatives to observe and monitor the statutory duties performed in each stage of the election. The number of representatives that can be appointed varies depending on the nature of each duty, and the designation of the representatives vary depending on the case. Even the persons who are authorized to appoint these representatives vary depending on the election/poll.

A Presidential candidate shall have the power to appoint a proxy to represent him in respect of the whole island, on or before the day of nomination as applicable to the. In the absence of such an agent/ proxy, all the functions to be performed by such agent shall be performed by the Presidential candidate himself. Although each candidate shall appoint only one agent to represent him, such appointment may be revoked at any time, irrespective of the fact that the agent so appointed is the candidate himself or not, and on such revocation or on the death of the agent, another agent shall be appointed forthwith. The names of the agents initially appointed and of any subsequent replacements shall be displayed by the Commission by public notice.

Each representative may appoint not more than one authorized representative for each electoral district. Such appointments shall be notified to the Returning Officer of the relevant electoral district in writing, within one week from the date of nomination. In the event that no authorized representative is appointed for a candidate for any electoral district within the above period; the representative agent shall be deemed to be the authorized representative of that electoral district.

The authorized representatives of each electoral district shall appoint not more than one regional representative for each polling area situated in that electoral district, within two weeks from the date of nomination, and each such appointment shall be submitted in writing to the relevant Returning Officer.

In the case of parliamentary and provincial council elections, the candidate whose name appears on top of the nomination paper that sets out the names of the candidates of a recognized political party or independent group contesting the election, shall be deemed to be the authorized representative for the electoral district or the administrative district for parliamentary election and provincial council election respectively. And such authorized representative or the leader of the independent group may delegate the power to appoint polling station representatives for a polling area to one of the candidates appearing in the candidate list, not earlier than seven days before the Election Day. Where no such power has been delegated to a representative for a particular polling area, the authorized representative shall perform all the functions

In the case of Local Government Elections, the Secretary of the respective political party contesting the Local Government Elections or the leader of an independent group may, 72 hours before the commencement of the nomination period, appoint an authorized representative and send the name in writing to the Returning Officer of the polling area where the election is to be held.

At every election, the contesting political parties and independent groups shall have the power to appoint two polling agents/ representatives for each polling station and five counting agents/ representatives for each counting center where more than one ballot box are counted. The authority to appoint agents for polling stations shall be vested in the representative or authorized representative appointed for the polling area, while the power to appoint representatives for counting centers shall be vested only in the authorized representative or secretary or the leader of the independent group. When only one polling station is set up for a local government election and the counting is carried out at the polling center itself, only two counting agents are authorized to be appointed.

In every election/poll, two agents may be appointed to represent a political party or independent group to the center where the results are tabulated, and only authorized representatives have the authority to do so. Also, a higher-level representative has the authority to exercise the authority of a lower-level representative at any time.

### 3.7 Casting Vote and marking preference

The proper way to mark the vote in a presidential election would be to mark number '1' in the empty box opposite the symbol of the candidate of one's choice. In a presidential election, 'X' is accepted as a vote only as an alternative mark for '1'. In a presidential election where more than three candidates are contesting, each voter is entitled to mark two preferences in addition to marking his vote. Then, after marking his vote as '1', he may, if he wishes, cast a second preference by marking '2' for another candidate and a third preference by marking '3' for some another candidate.

The infographic illustrates three ways to mark a ballot for a 'PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION 2024' with candidates AAAA, BBBB, CCCC, and DDDD. Each candidate has a unique symbol: a hand for AAAA, a circle for BBBB, a star for CCCC, and a triangle for DDDD.

- Usual Methods:** Shows two valid ways to mark a ballot. The first shows a hand symbol with an 'X' in the preference box. The second shows a hand symbol with a '1' in the preference box. A speech bubble says 'We make use of our Preferential vote'.
- Preferential Methods:** Shows two valid ways to mark a ballot with multiple preferences. The first shows a hand symbol with '1' in the first preference box and a '2' in the second. The second shows a hand symbol with '1' in the first, '2' in the second, and '3' in the third. A speech bubble says 'We make use of our Preferential vote'.
- Rejected Methods:** Shows three invalid ways to mark a ballot. The first shows a hand symbol with an 'X' in the preference box. The second shows a hand symbol with an 'X' in the preference box and a '1' in the second preference box. The third shows a hand symbol with an 'X' in the preference box and a '2' in the second preference box. A red 'X' in a circle is shown next to these examples.

Additional elements include a cartoon character asking 'What we do???' and another saying 'WIN' with arms raised, and a bar chart showing '48%'.

In parliamentary elections and if the proportional representation system is implemented in the provincial council elections, one can also vote for a political party or independent group of one's choice by marking an 'X', and in addition for one, two or a maximum of three other candidates by marking an 'X' on the candidate's preference numbers at the bottom of the ballot paper. Since the local government elections are a mixed election, one can only vote by marking 'X' in front of the symbol of one's choice.

### **3.8 Setting up the Polling Station**

The setting up of polling stations is determined by the number of votes assigned to that polling station. A single-queue polling station is maintained when the number of voters is less than 900 and a polling station with two-queues is maintained when the number of voters exceeds 900.

### **3.9 Counting of votes and preferential votes.**

In a presidential election, the candidate securing at least 50% of the valid votes cast in the entire country plus one more vote shall be declared President by the Election Commission. In all eight presidential elections held so far, all those who were elected to the office of President had obtained 50% and at least one more vote. In the event that no one has succeeded in crossing the above threshold (50%) at the end of the counting of votes, in accordance with the provisions of the Constitution and the Presidential Elections Act, the candidate who has secured the highest number of votes after counting the second and third preferences of the voters who had voted for the other two candidates who had secured the highest number of votes in the entire country, shall be elected President.

Prior to commencing the counting of votes, the Election Commission shall list all the presidential candidates in descending order of the number of votes secured by them, and the number 01 and 02 on the list are designated as the 'Remaining Candidates' and all the other candidates are designated as 'Eliminated Candidates'. Before commencing the counting, of the sealed bags containing ballot papers of each candidate that have already been sealed and kept safe at all counting centres, the bags of the two remaining candidates shall be kept aside without being opened; and the bags of the eliminated candidates shall be opened one by one and all ballot papers shall be placed in six boxes placed on the table as follows:

1. Second preference secured by the remaining candidate 01
2. Third preference secured by the remaining candidate 01
3. Second preference secured by the the remaining candidate 02
4. Third preference secured by the remaining candidate 02
5. Ballot papers without marked preferences
6. Remaining ballot papers

In each case, it is checked whether the second preference is given to the first or the second remaining candidate, and only if the second preference has not been given to either the first or the second remaining candidate, then the third preference is counted and placed in the relevant box. After counting, the second and third preferences obtained by the first remaining candidate are added to the number of votes already secured by the first remaining candidate from the whole island, and the second and third preferences obtained by the second remaining candidate are added to the number of votes already obtained by the second remaining candidate, and the candidate who has obtained the highest number of votes is declared the President. At this stage the contest is restricted only to two candidates, the one who obtains one or more votes than the other will be declared the President because he has secured one vote more than 50% of the votes.

If the parliamentary election is held under the proportional representation system, the councillors of the provincial councils will be elected from among the candidates who secure the highest number of preferential votes from each party or group in the electoral district or administrative district, and the seats allocated to them in proportion to the number of votes obtained by that party or group. Since the Local Government Election is a mixed election, in which the 60 % of members are elected on the basis of divisions / wards and the balance 40% is elected on the proportional basis. the candidate who wins the ward becomes the member of that division; and after reducing the number of councillors elected on the basis of divisions / wards, , the balance 40% is allocated in proportion to the number of votes secured by each party and independent group in that Local Government Institution. The party secretary or group leader will appoint the councillors for the balance 40% from among the candidates who contested the divisions or from the second list.

### **3.10 Regulation of Election Expenditure**

The provisions of the Regulation of Election Expenditure Act, No. 3 of 2023, ratified on 24th January 2003, have given a new lease of life to the election administration.

According to this Act, within five (5) days after the end of the nomination period for every election/poll, the Election Commission shall, in consultation with the political parties and independent groups contesting the election, determine the maximum amount that each party or independent group or candidate may spend on a voter. Thereafter, the number of registered voters in each electoral area shall be multiplied by the amount determined as above, and the maximum amount that each political party or independent group and candidate contesting the election shall be calculated and published in the Gazette as the ‘Authorized Amount’ i.e. the maximum amount that may be spent during the election period.

Every political party, independent group and every candidate contesting the election shall, within twenty-one (21) days after the conclusion of every election/poll, submit a statement of expenditure to the relevant Returning Officers (in the case of Presidential Elections, to the Election Commission) accompanied by a declaration signed before the Justices of the Peace stating that all the information furnished by him is correct.

The relevant officers should publish a notice indicating the place and date at which all the reports received by them for public display at least one national newspaper in Sinhala, Tamil and English within ten (10) days after the expiry of the above twenty-one (21) days.

Every candidate should include in the election expenditure report the receipts of all contributions and all the expenses incurred during the election period.

According to this Act, no person shall accept any donation or contribution, whether in cash or in kind, from following sources, for the purpose of promoting or facilitating elections.

- a) From any government department, public corporation or a company incorporated under the Companies Act or any other company established under a previous written law relating to companies,
- b) Foreign State, an international organization or a body of persons incorporated or registered outside Sri Lanka.

- c) any company incorporated in Sri Lanka under the Companies Act or any previous written law relating to companies, in which foreign shareholding, directly or indirectly, is fifty percent or more, or
- d) From any person whose identity is not disclosed

**All the following receipts must be included in the above expenditure report:**

- a) All donations or contributions accepted or received by a political party, independent group or candidate on behalf of that recognized political party, independent group or candidate and, if such donations or contributions were received in kind, the estimated value of such donations or contributions;
- b) Whether such donations or contributions were received in the form of gifts, loans, advances or deposits; and
- c) The name, address and national identity card number or registration number, as the case may be, of the individuals or bodies of persons, whether incorporated or unincorporated, who made such donations or contributions.

**All the following expenses shall be included in the above expenditure report:**

- a) For printing, publishing, pasting, exhibiting or displaying any advertisements, leaflets, handbills, flags, painting, photograph, notices or posters relating to that election;
- b) For producing advertisements relating to the election and broadcasting them on radio or television;
- c) For producing advertisements and publishing them in newspapers, periodicals, social media, digital billboards or any other digital media or other publications relating to that election;
- d) For hiring or using premises or equipment for holding meetings relating to that election;
- e) For hiring vehicles for purposes relating to that election, excluding expenses for hiring vehicles for the candidate's transportation;
- f) For supplying fuel for those vehicles

The expenditure should be supported by bills and receipts confirming whether the money was paid or not, and if the above services were obtained free of charge, all such services should be included, including the names and addresses of the persons who had provided them.

The following expenses incurred by or on behalf of a recognized political party, independent group or candidate should not be included in the report.

- a) Expenses incurred in transportation of the candidate within the area where the election is held; and
- b) Expenses incurred in stationery, telephone or other forms of communication.

Every candidate who, at an election held under a certain law, fails to submit the aforesaid return of expenses within twenty-one (21) days without a reasonable cause,

or who makes a statement before a Justice of the Peace which is included in the aforesaid return of expenses, which he knows or reasonably is aware that it is false, shall be guilty of an offence

under the relevant election law, and shall be liable to such punishment as may be specified by law for the commission of an unlawful act.

Any person found guilty of any illegal act shall, in addition to a fine of a certain amount, if elected at the election be disqualified to become a councillor or hold the membership of the council and also will be deprived of civic rights for a certain period of time.

It should be remembered that the term ‘election’ in this Act refers to the Presidential Election, Parliamentary Election, Provincial Council Election and the Local Government Elections.

### **3.11 Increase in fines imposed on violation of election laws**

The Elections (Special Provisions) Act, No. 21 of 2023, certified on 17th October 2023, has increased the fines imposed for violations of the rules in all elections/polls held in Sri Lanka by a very high percentage. Accordingly, this Act applies to fines for violations of the rules in all elections/polls, including the Presidential Election, Parliamentary Election, Provincial Council Election and Local Government Election, as indicated in the table below. The fines imposed for violations of the rules in each election/poll have been increased as follows.

<b>Previous fines</b>	<b>Revised fines</b>
Rs. 50.0	Rs. 25,000.00
Rs. 100.00	Rs. 50,000.00
Rs. 300.00	Rs. 100,000.00
Rs. 100.00	Rs. 200,000.00
Rs. 1000.00	Rs. 400,000.00

The law stipulating that a candidate contesting an election/poll shall submit a declaration of assets and liabilities within three months from the date of nomination shall be read along with the subsection 80(1)(p) of the Anti-Corruption Act, No. 9 of 2023, certified on the 8th day of August 2023. In terms of section 89 of the said Act, the candidates nominated for election at an election held under the Presidential Election Act, No. 15 of 1981, the Parliamentary Elections Act, No. 1 of 1981, the Provincial Council Elections Act, No. 2 of 1988 and the Local Government Elections Ordinance (Chapter 262) shall submit a copy of the declaration of assets and liabilities and a summary of the declaration of assets and liabilities to the Election Commission (or Returning Officer) along with the nomination paper of the candidate.

### **3.12 Election Commission**

The Election Commission, introduced by the Seventeenth Amendment to the Constitution of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka, is a unique Commission among the Commissions currently operating in Sri Lanka. The current structure of the Election Commission, as amended by the Eighteenth, Nineteenth, Twentieth and Twenty-first Amendments to the Constitution is as follows in accordance with Articles 103 and 104 of the Constitution on the Election Commission.

The Election Commission is a Council consisting of five persons from among those who have distinguished themselves in a certain profession, field of administration or education, appointed by the President on recommendation of the Constitutional Council. One member of the Commission shall be a retired officer of the Elections Department or the Elections Commission who has held the rank of Deputy Election Commissioner or above. The President will, on the recommendation of the Constitutional Council, appoint one of such members as its Chairman.

The purpose of the Commission shall be to conduct free and fair elections and referendums. No member of Parliament, Provincial Councillor or Local Government Member, Judicial Officer or Government Officer shall be appointed or act as a member of the Commission.

The provisions of the Constitution and other laws relating to the removal of judges of the Supreme Court and judges of the Court of Appeal shall apply *mutatis mutandis* to the removal of members of the Election Commission. The quorum for any meeting of the Commission shall consist of three members.

No court shall have the power or jurisdiction to entertain, hear, determine or entertain any complaint, on any ground whatsoever, against any decision, order or action made or taken or alleged to have been made or taken by the Commission under the Constitution. The decisions, orders or actions of the Commission shall be final and conclusive. Further, no civil suit or proceeding shall be initiated against any member or officer of the Commission in respect of any act or thing done or purported to be done in good faith by him in the performance of his functions or in the discharge of his functions under the Constitution or under any law relating to the holding of any election or referendum, as the case may be.

All powers, functions and duties assigned or imposed upon the Election Commission or the Commissioner General of Elections in relation to all elections and referendums held in Sri Lanka shall be implemented, performed and exercised by the Commission. The preparation and revision of electoral rolls for the purpose of elections and referendums and the conduct of such elections are included in the said powers, functions and duties but not limited to them. It shall be the duty of the Commission to enforce and secure all laws relating to the conduct of such elections or referendums, and it shall be the duty of all Government authorities responsible for the enforcement of such laws to assist the Commission in securing the enforcement of such laws.

In accordance with the provisions of the Standing Orders of Parliament for the exercise and performance of its powers, functions and duties, the Commission shall be responsible and

answerable to Parliament and shall submit to Parliament a report on its activities carried out in each financial year for that year.

The Commission shall have the power to prohibit the use of any immovable or movable property belonging to the Government or any State Corporation during the election period for the purpose of promoting or preventing the election of any candidate, political party or independent group contesting an election or the use of any candidate, political party or independent group contesting an election, by a written order of the Chairman of the Commission or the Election Commissioner General, on the advice of the Commission. It shall be the duty of every person or officer who is in charge of or in control of such property at the time to comply with and enforce such order.

The Commission shall have the power to issue to any operator of a radio or television service or to any owner or publisher of a newspaper such orders as the Commission considers necessary to ensure that an election or referendum is free and fair.

It shall be the duty of the operator of the relevant radio or television service or the owner or publisher of the newspaper to take all necessary steps to ensure compliance with the regulations so issued.

The above-mentioned orders prohibiting the misuse of State property or the regulations issued to the media shall be published in a daily newspaper of wide circulation published in Sinhala, Tamil and English, and shall come into force on the date of publication of such orders or regulations in the Gazette or on such later date as may be specified in such orders and regulations. Every order or regulation shall be submitted to Parliament for approval within three months from the date of publication in the Gazette. Any order or regulation not so approved shall be deemed to have lapsed from the date of such disapproval without prejudice to anything previously done thereunder.

When an order is made for an election or referendum, the Commission shall notify the Inspector General of Police to provide the Commission with the necessary facilities and number of police officers for the conduct of the election or referendum. The Inspector General of Police shall provide the Commission with the facilities and police officers specified in such notification. The police officers and facilities so provided shall be deployed by the Commission in a planned manner for the free and fair conduct of the election or referendum. Every police officer so provided to the Commission shall be responsible to the Commission during the election period and shall act under the direction and control of the Commission. No civil suit or proceeding shall be instituted against a police officer so provided in respect of any lawful act or thing done in good faith by him in the performance of his duties under the Commission or pursuant to a direction of the Commission.

There shall be an Election Commissioner-General under the Election Commission. The Commissioner-General shall be appointed by the Commission on such terms and conditions as the Commission may determine.

The Election Commissioner-General shall have the right to attend the meetings of the Commission except when any matter concerning him is being considered by the Commission. However, he shall not have the right to vote at such meetings.

The Commission may appoint other officers to the Commission on such terms and conditions as the Commission may determine.

The Commissioner General of Elections shall implement the decisions of the Commission subject to the directions and control of the Commission and shall also supervise the officers of the Commission in the matter. The Commission may delegate any of the powers, duties and functions of the Commission to the Commissioner General of Elections or to any other officer of the Commission, and the Commissioner General of Elections or such other officer shall exercise and perform such powers, duties and functions subject to the directions and control of the Commission. Every officer so appointed shall be subject to the directions issued by the Commission in the performance of the duties and functions assigned to him and shall be responsible and answerable to the Commission in that regard.

Any Government officer, any employee of a State corporation or any other business or undertaking entrusted to the Government under any written law, any company registered or deemed to be registered under the Companies Act, in which fifty per cent or more of the shares of the Government or a State company or a local government institution are held by the Government or a State company or a local government institution, who fails to comply with any order issued by the Commission or any direction issued to the media regarding the misuse of State resources, shall be guilty of an offence and shall be liable on conviction to a fine not exceeding one hundred thousand rupees or to imprisonment for a term not exceeding three years or to both such fine and imprisonment. Every High Court shall have jurisdiction to hear and determine any matter brought against any Government officer for failure to comply with any such order or direction.

## 4.

### Eligible Voter

According to the Election Act, it is observed that there is a slight difference between the terms eligible voter and voter. An eligible voter is a citizen who meets the requirements to be enrolled in the electoral register and has got his/her name included in the electoral register. Eligible voter is one who goes to the polling station on the day of an election/poll and requests to be given a ballot paper. The most important party in an election is the eligible voter. If there are no eligible voters, there is no election/poll. This chapter explains the qualifications, disqualifications and responsibilities of the eligible voters.

#### 4.1. Qualifications of an eligible voter

- Must have completed 18 years of age.
- Must have the name enrolled in the electoral register for the year in which the election is held.
- Must be a regular resident of the qualifying address as of the first day of February of the relevant year.

#### 4.2. Disqualifications to be an eligible voter

- Being a mentally incompetent person as determined by a court.
- Being convicted of an election fraud/offence and has become incapable for a period of seven years from the date of conviction
- Being convicted of an offence under the Bribery Act, and has become incapable for a period of seven years from the date of conviction.
- Being convicted of an offence against the Election Act, and become incapable for a period of 3 years from the date of conviction.
- Being a person who has been deprived of his civil rights and has become incapable for a period of seven years from the date of conviction.
- A person convicted of an offence of contempt by a Presidential Commission and has become incapable for a period of seven years from the date of his conviction.
- A person who has been convicted for an offence punishable with imprisonment for a term not less than two years and is serving a sentence of more than six months or has served the entire sentence within the past seven years or is under the penalty of death or is serving a sentence of imprisonment for a term not less than six months in lieu of such sentence or has served the entire sentence within the past seven years , such a person shall be disqualified from being registered as an eligible voter for seven years.

#### 4.3 Responsibilities of an eligible Voter

If you have been issued an official ballot paper, it means that you are eligible to vote, and are free from above dis-qualifications, and eligible to vote in the relevant election.

Also, do not forget that you are a citizen.

The power to vote is one of the main rights of the people as a citizen.

Therefore, the first responsibility of an eligible voter is to exercise the right to vote.

Similarly, when exercising the right to vote, it is the responsibility of a voter to vote for the political party or group that is most proficient in lawmaking, financial management and policymaking among the political parties and groups that contest the election.

After casting the vote, it is the voter's responsibility to give preference to the candidate/candidates who are proficient in lawmaking, financial management and policymaking and select them according to the criteria described in the above chapters.

#### **4.5 The role of voters after the general election**

Voters' responsibilities do not end with casting the votes. It is also the voter's responsibility to ensure that the political parties, independent groups and candidates who have received their votes and preferences are acting responsibly, and to monitor and encourage them to fulfil the election promises made during the general election. This can be done individually or in an organized manner.

It is also a responsibility of the voter to oppose, particularly when politics is used for personal gains and contrary to the expectations of the people.

The voter must be on alert in ensuring that the Member of Parliament who has been elected to parliament by his vote is fulfilling his role as a member of parliament, his attendance at parliament sessions, engagement in debates, appearing before parliament on public issues, submitting public petitions, and representing on parliamentary committees etc .

##### **4.5.1 New system of making claims and lodging objections**

As per the provisions of the main statute: the Registration of Voters Act, No. 44 of 1980, twenty-eight (28) days have been allocated to file claims by a person who has lost the opportunity to have his name included in the revised register at the time of the annual census of voters, and to lodge objections against instances in which the name of an ineligible person has been included or is scheduled to be included. Also the law provides ten (10) days to lodge objections in the event that a new voter who is eligible to be included in the electoral register through the supplementary list is unable to apply for inclusion of his name or an ineligible person has already taken steps to have his name included in the said register.

The District Election Offices shall display the lists of those names for public inspection at various places identified in their districts for the purpose of obtaining information required for filing claims and objections and publish the same through newspaper advertisements. Further, after conducting investigations by the Deputy/Assistant Election Commissioner of the district on each claim and objection, the final lists shall be prepared, and such lists shall be certified on the dates determined by the Election Commission. A total of about 17 million voters, including the number of eligible voters who have completed the age of eighteen years between 1st February and 31st May, have become eligible to vote at the Presidential Election scheduled to be held on 21st September 2024.

## 5.

### **Our candidate**

An election is held to elect a group of candidates as members of parliament. Therefore, candidates are an essential part of a general election. This chapter explains the qualifications, disqualifications, responsibilities of candidates and the factors that voters should consider when choosing a candidate.

- ❖ Presidential Election
- ❖ Parliamentary Election
- ❖ Provincial Council
- ❖ Local Government Election

#### **Qualifications of a candidate**

- ❖ Be a Sri Lankan citizen
- ❖ Be at least 18 years of age

#### **Disqualifications of a candidate**

- ❖ Not being a citizen of Sri Lanka
- ❖ Being under 18 years of age
- ❖ Being a judicial officer
- ❖ Being a member of the armed forces
- ❖ Being a police officer
- ❖ Being a government official who is a staff officer
- ❖ Being a staff officer of any state cooperation
- ❖ Being a mentally retarded person confirmed under a valid law of Sri Lanka
- ❖ Being a person proved to be bankrupt
- ❖ Being a person who has acquired the citizenship of a foreign country

If anyone in the list of public officials indicated above, who has no political rights, is nominated as a candidate, he/she must resign from service or retire from service 7 days before submitting his/her nominations. Similarly, a civil servant with political rights must obtain unpaid leave 10 days before submitting his/her nomination.

#### **Responsibilities of a Candidate**

Candidacy in an election is a responsibility. It is not limited to winning an election. A basic legal responsibility of a candidate is to declare his assets and liabilities to the Election Commission in accordance with the Declaration of Assets and Liabilities Act. Although the previous law stated that the above-mentioned declaration of assets and liabilities should be submitted within three months from the closing date of nomination period, according to Section 89 which should be read along with Sub-section 80(1)(p) of the Anti-Corruption Act, No. 9 of 2023, every candidate contesting an election/poll shall submit the relevant declaration of

assets and liabilities form and a summary of the declaration of assets and liabilities at the time of submitting nomination. It is also the responsibility of a candidate to conduct campaign activities in accordance with election rules. Not to use state property for campaign activities is also a, further responsibility. Implementation of policy statement, fulfill the responsibilities entrusted to the Council into which the candidate has been appointed and to act without resorting to promote nepotism, cronyism and coteries of tight-knit groups is also a responsibility .

## 6.

### **March 12 Criteria for selecting a candidate**

The March 12 Movement has introduced several criteria to determine the qualifications and disqualifications of candidates which could be applied in selecting a candidate the voter prefers. You can verify this by checking the candidate list of those who have submitted nominations.

#### **The characteristics of an ideal candidate according to the March 12 criteria are:-**

- ❖ Being a practical person possessing a global perspective, indigenous thinking, sensitive to the needs of the entire community, and capable of contributing to formulate laws and policies and financial management.
- ❖ Should not be a person sentenced to prison for a criminal offense or being sentenced to suspended prison sentences.
- ❖ Should be a person of good character, accepted by the society, and one who had not been convicted for bribery or corruption. It is important to be careful of those accused of bribery and corruption.
- ❖ Should be a person who is not engaged in or had not engaged in businesses such as alcohol, drugs, gambling and casinos, and brothels which are harmful and detrimental to the survival of the country.
- ❖ Should be a person not engaged in or had not engaged in environmentally harmful businesses that destroy life support structures.
- ❖ Should not be a party to financial agreements entered into with the government which were prejudicial to the country before becoming a public representative and also while being a public representative misusing the political power.

#### **The Importance of Women Candidates**

Although the female population in Sri Lanka is 55%, women's representation in Parliament and Provincial Councils is very low. Therefore, there is a need to increase women's representation in Parliament. The most appropriate way to do this is for political parties and independent groups to include a fair percentage of women in their nomination lists. But ultimately, it is the voters who have the right and ability to elect women to Parliament from district nomination lists

#### **The Importance of Youth Participation**

The percentage of young MPs in Sri Lanka is very low relative to the youth population. The opportunity of young men and women to get nominations through political parties and independent groups is very few and rare. However, it is important to remember that the responsibility for promoting youth representation can be shared by political parties and independent groups as well as voters by giving preference to young candidates on their own candidate in nomination lists.

## Giving marks to candidates running for the election

The point system introduced by March 12 Movement in a chart captioned “Let's give your vote a value, let's give marks to candidates before voting" can be utilized for reaching a reasonable decision on whom to vote for, on polling day. In addition, it is important to be concerned on whether the candidate has the ability and skills to contribute to making laws, managing public finances and formulating policies, which constitute the prime role of parliament.

**Let's add a value to your VOTE!  
Grade the candidates before you vote.**

Political Party	Candidates competing in your ward	Earns in a justifiable manner	Does not misuse the power	Not proven guilty of bribery or corruption	Amiable and accessible to you	Environment Friendly	skilled/ experienced in Social Service	Respects all religions, ethnicities and cultures	Total

Method of scoring the candidate on each guideline

Very Good 08 - 10  
 Good 05 - 07  
 Average 02 - 04  
 Poor 00 - 02

Select the most suitable candidate by calculating the total.

**Let's use our vote wisely and elect only the suitable candidates to your Local Government Authorities.**

A Message from March 12 Movement

**Private and Confidential.**

## 7.

### **The correct way of voting**

This chapter describes the process of a polling station and the process of casting vote there.

#### **1. Polling date**

The President has the authority to first announce the date of parliamentary election. In the event that polling cannot be held on the relevant date, the Election Commission has the authority to fix another date. The Election Commission has the power to fix the dates for all presidential elections, referendums, provincial councils and local government bodies. Accordingly, the Election Commission decided on 26.07.2024 that this year's presidential election will be held on 21 September 2024.

#### **2. Time duration of polling**

All election and polling regulations, including the Elections Act, provide that polling shall be conducted between 7 am and 4 pm on the polling day. However, in elections/polls other than local government elections, the Election Commission has the power to change the period of polling by publishing a Gazette notification.

However, it is preferable to go to the polling station early in the morning, to cast your vote.

#### **3. Things to carry when going to the polling station**

There are 2 documents that every voter must carry when going to the polling station.

#### **4. Acceptable ID cards for voting**

1. National Identity Card issued by the Department of Registration of Persons,
2. Valid Passport
3. Valid Driving License.
4. Retirement Identity Card issued to pensioners
5. Senior Citizen Identity Card issued by the Department of Social Services,
6. Clergy or Priest Identity Cards issued by the Commissioner for Registration of Persons
7. Temporary Identity Cards issued by the District Deputy / Assistant Election Commissioner
8. Letter with a photograph of the person concerned, issued temporarily to applicants for National Identity Cards by the Department of Registration of Persons.

No other identity cards will be accepted at the polling station. Therefore, if you do not have any of the above-mentioned identity cards 1 to 6, or if they are unclear, it is necessary that steps must be taken to obtain an identity card as described under number 7 or 8.

Apart from the above-mentioned documents, no other document will be accepted for verification of the voter's identity except the receipt with a certified photograph issued by the Grama Niladhari after submitting the application for office identity cards and national identity cards.

## **5. Procedure to be followed when a voter enters the polling station**

- 5.1 After the voter hands over the official notification slip to the officer, the voter's name and number as mentioned in the copy of the electoral roll is read out aloud.
- 5.2 The identity card is checked and the voter's identity is confirmed.
- 5.3 If there is any objection from the polling station representatives, it should be submitted at this stage.
- 5.4 The voter's number is marked on the ballot paper and the ballot paper is detached.
- 5.5 The ballot paper is placed on the official ballot paper.
- 5.6 A mark is made on the electoral roll to indicate that a ballot paper has been issued to the relevant voters. (The ballot paper number should not be written here)
- 5.7 Applying indelible ink on the left small finger of the voter.
- 5.8 Handing over the ballot paper to the voter

### **After receiving the ballot paper**

- i. In the case of a parliamentary election, first of all, mark 'X' in the box provided against the symbol of the political party or the number of the independent group that you prefer.
- ii. Check carefully before marking the ballot paper as there may be similar symbols on the ballot paper.
- iii. Mark 'X' against only one symbol or number on the ballot paper as marking more than one 'X's renders the vote invalid.
- iv. Secondly, mark the cross (x) for one candidate or two candidates or three candidates on the preference number mark the preference for one or two other candidates.
- v. Also, in a presidential election, as more than three candidates usually contest in Sri Lanka, one can vote for the candidate of his/her choice by marking '1' in front of the symbol, and only if the voter wishes to mark preferences he/she can mark '2' and '3' for two more candidates respectively.
- vi. Then, place the ballot paper in the ballot box.

### **Actions to be taken when objections are raised regarding the identity of a voter**

When an objection is raised by a polling agent or any other person regarding the identity of a voter, the Senior returning officer at the Polling Station may, in addition to the printed statements provided by the Election Office in accordance with the provisions of the Act, provide a statement appropriate to the nature of the objection raised, and inform the voter to sign the statement, stating that if he does not sign, he cannot issue him a ballot paper according to the law. If objections are raised against the voter that he/she is ineligible to vote, on account of reasons such as: that his name is incorrectly stated in the voter register, or that his National Identity Card number does not match the identity card number in the voter register, or that the voter's gender is incorrectly stated in the voter register, or that he has already cast his vote at another polling station, or that he is a person who is impersonating himself on behalf of a

person who has gone abroad, the voter may be ordered to sign the most appropriate declaration among these declarations and sign it as mentioned above. If he refuses to sign the declaration, he should not be given a ballot paper, and if objections are raised in a very serious manner after receiving a ballot paper and voting after signing, the voter should be declared a suspicious voter and handed over to the police.

### **Additional issues**

A person who is unable to vote due to total or partial visual impairment or physical disability, may be accompanied by another person as provided for in the Elections (Special Provisions) Act, No. 28 of 2011, and the person accompanying the voter may produce the certificate of Grama Niladhari or certificate of the Government Medical Officer with their recommendations on the form issued by the Election Commission for the purpose, and mark the vote and also mark his preference in the presence of the Senior Presiding Officer and cause such ballot paper to be placed in the ballot box.

In the event, a voter who is subject to a disability and is unable to accompany a person for his/her support and fails to carry the certificate issued by Grama Niladhari or the Government Medical Officer, as provided in previous Acts, and also the Election Commission has obtained the authority to mark the ballot paper after consulting with the competing parties and independent groups, the voter can seek assistance of the Senior Presiding Officer, keeping an assistant of his staff as witness, to mark the vote and cause such ballot paper to be placed in the ballot box. If a mistake is made due to oversight in marking the ballot paper, it could be referred to the Presiding Officer and if he is satisfied, a new ballot paper will be issued.

## **Shall We Join Hands**

### **8.1 PAFFREL Organization**

The PAFFREL was founded in 1987 by representatives of several national-level civil society organizations in the country. It has been registered as a non-profit organization under the Company's Act. PAFFREL was established at a time when the need had arisen for civil society to intervene to ensure the democratic nature of the elections, in a situation where violence and violation of electoral laws had been affecting the level playing field. One of the main objectives of establishing PAFFREL was to promote public participation in preventing violence and irregularities before, during and after the general elections. Since its establishment, PAFFREL has observed all elections held in the country in collaboration with a large number of civil society organizations. It has conducted consultation and awareness-raising programs in several areas in the country and various spheres such as voter rights, democracy, human rights and good governance for several years. PAFFREL maintains complete impartiality in all its activities.

### **8.2 Vision**

To nurture a democratic nation with a politically literate and empowered citizenry that values democratic values and promotes accountability and transparency in governance.

### **8.3 Mission**

To build a people's movement through active participation of conscientious citizens committed to democracy and to foster a vibrant and dynamic civil society to promote and ensure that all elections held are free and fair and to safeguard good governance.

### **8.4 Main Activities of PAFFREL**

Among the civil activities of PAFFREL, the following activities are of paramount importance. Namely,

- Monitoring Elections
- Promoting Voter awareness
- Facilitation of the revisioning process of Electoral Registers
- District awareness on the March 12 Movement
- Activities related to Parliamentary Forum affiliated to the March 12 Movement

### **8.5. How can you get involved with PAFFREL?**

- As a long-term election monitor
- As a mobile election monitor
- As a member of the election monitoring team
- By coordinating awareness programs

## Annexure 1

### Important Cases Related to Elections

Case No	Petitioner- Respondent	Case object
SC/FR/509/98.	Waruna Karunathilaka Vs Election Commissioner	Challenging the cancellation of elections in several Provincial Councils
CA/1164/98.	Dilan Perera Vs Rajitha Senaratne	Challenging the appointment of an MP who had entered into an agreement with the government
SC/FR/ 412/1999	Medivaka (Egodawela) Vs Election Commissioner.	Abolition of Kandy district election during 1998 Provincial Council elections.
SC/640/2000	Arjuna Parakrama Vs Election Commissioner	The failure to cancel the polling of several polling stations in Mahanuwara District in the parliamentary election, 2000
SC/26/2002 (CA/487/99)	Center for Policy Alternatives (CPA) Vs Election Commissioner	Challenging the appointment of a person whose name didn't appear in the nomination paper to fill a Vacancy of a provincial council member
SC/FR/20/2002	Navaneethan Sodhilingam Vs Election Commissioner	Not allowing voters from unliberated areas to attend cluster polling stations is a violation of fundamental rights.
SC/FR/278/200 5	Omalpe Sobhita thero Vs Election Commissioner.	Challenging the Determination of the second term of office of President Chandrika Kumaratunga
SC/FR/ 243, 244 and 245	Jayantha Wijesekera and others	Challenging the combination of the North and East Provinces
CA/Writ/176/2 006 and CA/Writ/ 356/2008	PAFFREL Vs Election Commissioner	Allowing alternative documents instead of the National Identity Card
SC/FR/352/ 2007	Sugathapala Mendis Vs Chandrika Kumaratunga	Waters Edge case
SC/FR/35/2016	Mohammed Hussein Vs Election Commissioner	Issue an order to conduct local government elections
SC/FR/351/201 8 from SC/FR to 365/2018	Several parties	Challenging the dissolution of Parliament prior to the completion of the minimum period stipulated .

## **Annexure 2**

### **Some topics that can be used for a PowerPoint presentation**

1. Types of elections/polls in Sri Lanka
2. Laws on elections/polls in Sri Lanka
3. Authority to conduct elections/polls in Sri Lanka
4. Elections/poll nomination period
5. Deposit of deposit in elections/polls
6. Determination of election/poll dates
7. Valid voter register and political parties
8. Eligible Voter and Voter
9. Postal voting process
10. Arrangement of polling station
11. Polling station officials
12. Types and numbers of representatives/agents appointed by contesting parties and groups
13. Valid identity documents accepted at a polling station
14. Official ballot papers, ballot papers and tendered ballot papers
15. Verification of voter and marking with appropriate mark
16. Decision-making when objections to the identity of a voter are raised
17. Sealing of ballot boxes at the beginning and end of the polls
18. Requirements of the Chief Counting Officer for counting votes
19. Election offences, illegal acts and acts of corruption
20. Process for submitting election petitions

## **Civic Education**

## **1. Introduction**

People's Action for Free and Fair Elections (PAFFREL) always attempt to enhance the capacity of youth in Sri Lanka through awareness building programs to encourage their active participation in democratic governance with the support of foreign collaborations. The aim of this project is to cultivate a conscientious citizen voter base in Sri Lanka, promoting logical and mature political engagement among youth voters. The project seeks to motivate youth to express their socio-political aspirations and actively participate in democratic governance utilizing creative and objective approaches.

This project will be instrumental in the development of a comprehensive training manual & a toolkit, drawing from existing resources. Participants from diverse backgrounds will be equipped with knowledge of civic rights, responsibilities, and democratic values through Training of Trainers Programs and voter education initiatives. The Manual and the toolkit will be the basic guideline for the PAFFREL trainers to conduct training session for youth, improving their political literacy, civic rights and responsibilities and upholding democracy. Expert-led sessions on the electoral system and informed voting will further enhance their understanding.

The training will be mainly focus on district-level youth and they will be encouraged to advocate for their rights and civic duties who stand together to demand their rights. Those empowered youth members will be the future change agents of this country with knowledge and active necessary participation.

The project will be implemented island wide in collaboration with National Youth Councils, Teacher Training Colleges and Vocational Training Centers including National Apprentice and Industrial Training Authority, German Tech, Korean Tech, Hardy Advanced Technological Institute and school children in 12th and 13th grades will also be engaged through School Parliaments on their request basis. Furthermore district level civil society groups will be empowered referring this Manual and Toolkit.

## **2. Objectives**

1. To provide basic understanding about the importance of voters' behavior to youth and general public in terms of democratic political participation
2. To emphasize the role of active citizenship in the process of empowering the democracy in the civil society through electoral politics

3. To provide common green platform for youth leadership based on the practical voters' education at different socio-cultural context. .
4. To enhance the critical thinking on the political literacy of youth depending on the changing political policies and development projects in Sri Lanka
5. To recognize the significance of the correlation between use of media and information technology and voters' education specially during the election period
6. To provide voters' education incorporating all categories of society in order make broader inclusive policy and practice in political participation
7. To empower the youth on issues of bribery, corruption and violence with regard to election process as a part of voters 'education

### **3. Expected Outcome of the Training**

1. Basic awareness the importance of voters' behavior to youth and general public in terms of democratic political participation
2. Identification of the role of active citizenship in the process of empowering the democracy in the civil society through electoral politics
3. Development of green leadership and personality through political participation based on the voters' knowledge
4. Being able to have critical knowledge about the political literacy of youth depending on the changing political policies and development projects in Sri Lanka
5. Understanding of the significance of the correlation between use of media and information technology and voters' education specially during the election period
6. Achievement of voters' education incorporating all categories of society in order make broader inclusive policy and practice in political participation
7. Be able to understand the issues of bribery, corruption and violence with regard to election process as a part of voters 'education

### **4. Content of the Voters' Education Training**

The thematic and conceptual aspects of this training are designed with following contents incorporating border and wider focus representing socio-political and democratic actions.

#### **4.1 The Importance of Democracy**

The origin of the term “democracy” comes from Greek words “demos” and “kratos” which describes people and authority. It is also defined with many definitions such as rule by people, the system of the governments that lies in the supreme authority of people, The government that functions with the consent of the people. Thus, democracy exist where people elect representatives. The government consists with the elected representatives and they are accountable to the citizens. Those representatives who clear the test of accountability are returned by the electors and those who fail stand rejected (Election Commission of India, 2016).

As M. Print & D. Lange (2013) explain about European civic engagement in democracy, democracy doesn't deserve the name without the participation of citizens. Besides, the legal rights and institutions alone rarely enough for the democracy to flourish (Honohan, 2002). Furthermore, the participation in democracy changes its focus throughout history. Around 1950s, the prominent focus was given to the rise of skills and competencies of citizens. In early 1960s' the focus was on activities related on campaigning by politicians and political parties, and contacts among citizens and public officials. In the 1970s' it was about the importance of community groups and direct contact between officials, politicians, and citizens. Furthermore, the idea of political participation was challenged and need for protest and rejection by all grass-root groups and social movements were also included as important in participation. During the 1990s the growing need for communitarian actions and civil activities including volunteering work became prominent. And the most recent focus was about individualized, ethically- or morally-based acts of participation such as flash mobs, guerrilla gardening and political consumption. However, voting is still remaining as an important mode of participation in democracy.

#### **4.2 Who is an active citizen?**

The Council of Europe defines active citizenship as the power of people “to exercise and defend their democratic rights and responsibilities in society, to value diversity and to play an active part in democratic life “Citizens cannot fulfill their ambitious tasks without having specific competencies “combination of knowledge, skills, attitudes and values” at their disposal enabling them to become an active citizen (Hoskins, Barber, Nijlen et al., 2011, p. 84). According to Putnam (1993, 2000), Almond and Verba

(1963), and De Tocqueville (1863) democracy needs active citizens to maintain the checks and balances on democratic life.

In the need to promote active citizenship among people the council of Europe emphasized the need to develop education along with democratic citizenship. Based on their view education for democratic citizenship includes training, awareness-raising, information, practices and activities which aim, by equipping learners with knowledge, skills and understanding and developing their attitudes and behaviour, to empower them to exercise and defend their democratic rights and responsibilities in society, to value diversity and to play an active part in democratic life, with a view to the promotion and protection of democracy and the rule of law (Print & Lange, 2013).

Vibrant democracies need active citizens to monitor the political systems and to be able to create and resist change (Crick, 2003). Active citizens should be able to mobilize people through social campaigns, petitions and protests to build social justice. These activities continue with people who accept participatory democracy. On the other hand, representative democratic actions such as voting, representing as candidates for elections, and communication with the parliament members are also essential for the continuation of democracy. Thus, the term active citizenship is connected with both participatory and representative democracy.

According to Putnam (2000) active citizenship is in decline. And the less participation is reported highly among young generations who are described as no longer prepared to perform their duties for the continuation of democracy. As Dalton (2009) explains that norms of youth are changing from older generations where activities like voting, trade unions and political parties has transferring towards volunteering, protesting etc. still the young generations are moving away from traditional politics where the policy decisions are still making. Thus, the politicians also tend to neglect the needs of the youth due to the lack of participation and influence of youth (Wattenberg, 2012). The decline has also resulted in reduction of opportunities for young generations in terms of employments, education, health services etc (Willets, 2010). Thus, the younger generation's active participation is essential and their ability to become more politically savvy to receive all the benefits and opportunities rather than suffering with alienation (Print & Lange, 2013).

### 4.3 Green Leadership

Many research conducted in studying leadership in global environmental politics where in the later 1980s and early 1990s the concept of leadership was introduced in the study of international institutions. Oran Young in 1991 explains that leadership is a critical determinant of success or failure in the processes of institutional bargaining that dominate efforts to form international regimes or, more generally, institutional arrangements in international society.” Furthermore, he defines leadership as the “actions of individuals who endeavor to solve or circumvent the collective action problems that plague the efforts of parties seeking to reap joint gains in processes of institutional bargaining.” Young (1991, p. 285)

According to Arild Underdal (1994, p. 178), leadership is the “asymmetrical relationship of influence in which one actor guides or directs the behavior of others toward a certain goal over a certain period.” This definition embodies many qualifications that an upcoming leader must fulfill. First, leadership is a social relationship between the leader and followers. Therefore, there’s no leader without followers. The relationship involves influence and power but not necessarily hard power, as leadership should not be about coercion.

Environmental problems in the globe such as the climate change and loss of biodiversity are rising higher while many countries contribute to them yet their impacts aren’t equally distributed. Moreover, the issues cannot be solved by selected countries and collective actions are essential. Thus, leadership is an essential ingredient of successful collective action to achieve common goals.

What remains unclear, however, is what exactly motivates some states to offer leadership in Global Environmental Politics, and how those motives differ from motives to exercise leadership in other issue areas in international politics. Even though there’s arguments that all efforts to provide international leadership are connected to the provision of public goods, such as security and global public health, there seems to be at least one special characteristic that distinguishes environmental leadership from other forms of international leadership: environmental leadership is not necessarily anthropocentrically driven but may connect with non-anthropocentric underpinnings. While the existing GEP literature on environmental leadership is more or less based on rationalist assumptions of the self-interested basis of human decision-making, the emerging debate on planet politics (e.g., Burke, Fishel, Mitchell, Dalby, & Levine,

2016), which challenges the discipline of International Relations to rethink and reorganize its very foundations and accept the peremptory nature of planetary boundaries, which has great possibility to change ontological and epistemological assumptions about leadership in GEP. Such fresh developments could question about the leaders' and followers' ideas of nature, the relationship between leaders and nature, and the planetary impact of leadership etc. Moreover, apart from the political philosophical questions, emphasizing the well-being of the environment at the heart of GEP study on leadership could also have great potential to educate more eco-centric leaders for the future (Kopra, 2020).

On the other hand, a research conducted on green vote focuses on studying the prominence given to the environment by candidates and how the voters understand the necessity of focusing on the environment. The study focused on five American presidential elections from 1984 to 2000. And the findings indicates that environment had a significant impact in four out of five elections. Majority of the voters were able to distinguish the candidates based on their environmental policies. The influence of environmental issues on voters' decisions was only surpassed by economy and abortion-related policy concerns. Besides, a larger number of voters supported increased environmental efforts. As Andrews (2001, p. 1485) has observed, environmental advocates need to focus public attention on the issue. Elections, as opportunities for citizen expression, can provide that attention, and as recent presidential elections demonstrate, citizens can and do "vote the environment." (Davis, Wurth, Lazarus, 2008).

#### **4.4 Electoral (Political) Literacy in Formal Education**

Voter Education is important to make sure that the voters are well-informed and willing to be part of the electoral process. It needs to be aimed at enhancing voter confidence in the exercise of electoral rights with ease and the sense and conviction that they have contributed in nurturing democracy. Electoral Management Boards (EMB) in different countries have developed robust voter education systems under curricular and extracurricular domains with focusing on their respective statutes, legislative instruments, obligations and responsibilities.

Several EMB's have approached the subject by developing comprehensive Voter Education Resources and hosting them on their websites. These resources include

detailed voter information which is user friendly, and step by step electoral process information coupled with FAQ's. Voters may easily access this information for their guidance on participation in the electoral process. (US, New Zealand, Australia, Canada, India, Kenya etc.)

When focusing on several countries' actions taken for voter education, the Australian Election Commission (AEC) is charged for educating the community on electoral process in the country. AEC provide comprehensive information and guidance to voters on all election-related matters including enrolling and voting, and the AEC schools provides free educational resources and programmes for teachers and students. AEC's educational resources and programmes are well structured to suit the needs of students at different levels. One of their programs is 'Get Voting' which is a holistic programme that provides all what is required to run a free and fair election for school level students. It helps them to organize a school election, address Civics and Citizenship curriculum outcomes by providing students hands on experience of voting, helps in electing suitable student leaders while modeling good democratic practice.

The National Electoral Education Centre in Canberra offers education programs about the federal electoral system where the educators guide the participants through a 90-minute programme which includes; A multi-media presentation that explores the history of Australian democracy, Hands-on activities which help students to understand enrolment, voting and representation; and voting in a simulated election followed by counting of votes to generate a result. Specially the programme content can be customized to suit different learning levels and different areas of interest (Election Commission of India, 2016).

When studying the implementations of Canada, Elections Canada (EC) is responsible for the conduct of federal elections and also educating citizens. Their formal education generally includes all categories of voters, voter registration, where to vote, when and how to vote, the identification required to vote and the entire electoral process to make them ready to exercise the right to vote. Moreover, civic education for primary and secondary level students and teachers, youth engagement, community involvement and via various other means including online services, partnership building etc. Moreover, the Forum for Young Canadians gives 120 high schools students a behind scene look

at the Parliament Hill in Ottawa for them to enhance their knowledge on Canadian politics and public affairs.

The Central Election Commission in (CEC) of Georgia creates an environment where the voters can own their electoral rights and Civic voter education is part of their strategic plan (2015- 2019). The CEC is also mandated to create an environment where voters and electoral stakeholders can freely exercise their electoral rights. For that they have implemented creative initiatives. A pilot project namely “Electoral Development Schools” for youth was launched in 2015 by them with a collaboration of a training center which was implemented in 10 election districts. The Schools under the project aim at increasing civic engagement, popularization of elections amongst youth besides developing training skills of election officials.

For electoral participation and education, India has introduced Campus Ambassadors among the students from recognized colleges and universities in order to fill the gaps in youth electoral participation. During the national election there were around 9000 ambassadors. Indian states have developed booklets on the roles and responsibilities of the campus ambassadors and shared them during workshops. Most importantly, they were given the task of motivating the first-time voters to increase the voting turnouts during elections. They were also informed on using creative approaches to encourage students to register for upcoming elections to vote.

The ambassador’s duties were to firstly identify the students, teachers who haven’t registered for electoral votes without cards, facilitate them to register by supplying them forms and guidelines, coordinate with the election commission for approval of their applications, distribute voters cards, organization national voters day, coordination among other organizations of universities, create volunteer groups and become an educator in the neighborhood and help people to fill application forms (Election Commission of India, 2016).

#### **4.5 Use of Information and Communication Technology for Voter Education**

Many of the election management boards in different countries provide voter resources to enhance voter awareness on the election processes. And online voting facilities are also provided in many cases. Information for different categories of voters such as women, overseas voters, disable voters etc. are available online. Adding frequently

asked questions on official websites are other ways of using new technology. Many of the EMBs' demonstrate the use of social media for citizens especially youth to engage in electoral processes. The one way communication provided by the traditional media is declining and in contrast the use of social media is rising with providing new forms of access to voters and potential voters.

The NSW electoral commission in Sydney used social media strategy during election in 2011. They used social media to spread messages online and engage in direct conversations to hear people's opinions on election and also to reach young audiences on what they may have missed on traditional media. They also had Facebook community page with large audience. Besides, they were active on Twitter, YouTube with educational videos such as how to vote, and also SMS reminders to register on voting.

When focusing on UK, they have used social media strategies to spread E- government information and service delivery. For further examples; FixMyStreet, UK Citizens for Online Democracy, MySociety, TheyWorkForYou (which help the people to track the voting, speeches, statements and house and debate attendance of MPs) were available for the citizens.

Moreover, Bite the Ballot was another social media campaign which was started by young people to inspire others to speak up and be part of the decisions in the country. They used range of attracting methods such as music, comedy, dances etc. they also had Rock Enroll which is an interactive resource pack with interactive activities developed to improve electoral and political literacy of young people to engage in democratic debate.

#### **4.6 Voter Education for Inclusive Participation**

In different contexts worldwide, voter education for special groups has been a leading topic. The article 5 of the UN Convention discusses the elimination of racial discrimination (ICERD) (1966); State parties should undertake to eliminate racial discrimination in all forms and ensure the rights of everyone without distinguishing them from race, colour, nationality or ethnicity. Specifically, political rights to participate and stand in elections. Article 7 of the UN convention on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women (CEDAW) (1979) state parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in political and public

life. In the convention of the rights of persons with disabilities (CRPD) (2006) article 21 explains that state parties shall take all appropriate measures to ensure that persons with disabilities can exercise the right to freedom of expression and opinion, including the freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas on an equal basis with others and through all forms of communication of their choice.

Including providing information intended for the general public to persons with disabilities in accessible formats and technologies without additional cost; (b) Accepting and facilitating the use of sign languages, Braille, augmentative and alternative communication, (c) Urging private entities that provide services to the general public to provide information and services in accessible and usable formats for persons with disabilities; (d) Encouraging the mass media, including providers of information through the Internet, to make their services accessible to persons with disabilities; (e) Recognizing and promoting the use of sign languages. Article 29, under the participation in political and public life, states parties shall guarantee to persons with disabilities political rights and the opportunity to enjoy them on an equal basis with others.

When focusing on Canada and the initiatives taken by the Elections Canada agency to improve the accessibility of disable people during elections; they have provided variety of voting methods. Such as; proving flexible methods like voting by mail, advance voting days, mobile poll serving facilities for senior citizens, and in special cases voting at home in the presence of a election officer. Moreover, if requested in advance they provide sign language interpreters, or give the chance to have an election officer, a friend, relative for assistance, providing voting screens with lighted magnifiers to read easier. Furthermore, giving election workers training to make them aware of accessibility tools at the polling place, Provides tips on how to maintain these accessibility features, Makes election workers aware of various tools available to voters, and Educates them on how to approach a voter who may require assistance. Moreover, one of the best practices as they highlight is to design interventions by people with disabilities for the people with disabilities and make the space for them to educate facilitators, electoral observers and technical staff (Election Commission of India, 2016).

However, while research has been conducted on gender and electoral processes for decades, there's still not much attention paid to LGBTQ issues and election (Paulina & Przemyslaw, 2022).

Moreover, Kamenou has focused on the participation of LGBTQ+ community in politics and their vote with giving special focus on how their voting choices and rationality related to the decisions are affected by LGBTQ politics. They have given focus on Cypriot LGBTQ+ participants' perspectives for the analysis, and they have found two main patterns of voting in their political behaviour. Firstly, voting abstention as protest in response to political parties' and candidates' unwillingness to take LGBTQ+ issues seriously. Secondly, LGBTQ+ intersectional voting, which involves LGBTQ+ individuals prioritising LGBTQ+ identities and issues at the ballot box yet understanding these as intersecting with other dimensions of inequality. Unfriendly political environments for people doesn't discourage them from participating rather they understand and enact themselves not only as sexuality- and gender-identity-nonconforming political agents but also as political agents of intersectional social justice and radical political change (Kamenou, 2024).

#### **4.7 Non- Political Factors Influencing the Political Participation**

It is a common belief that social systems in which individuals belong, influence the voting decisions of them. The main factors that influence can be the caste, race, religion, ideology, family, opinion leaders etc. Moreover, social media has also become prominent in influencing people's voting choices since it provides an equal platform for express and share political views. This culture of sharing has enabled them to equally participate in the political process through online social platforms (Castells, 2010, 2012; Jose van Dijck, 2013).

As Zeib (2021) suggests, people need to reevaluate the social determinants behind electoral behaviour. Mainly because patterns of information production has changed over the years. With technological developments, communication has become more complex where interactivity among people has increased, and with a high choice of media environment people are exposed to much information and the voters are more empowered than before.

Some sociological factors that define voting behavior of an individual are peer group, family members and social class. Gavin Stamp, a political reporter of BBC states that one-third of young adults claim that their voting decisions are influenced by their family members and peer groups.

Kudrnáč & Lyons, (2017), the young voters who live with their parents, are often influenced by their parents for voting preference. Gidengil et al., (2016) explains that the turnout of the adult voting has a strong connection with parental voting. The most influential social pressure is from within the household (Blais et al., 2019). As research findings indicate the close-bounded family relations in Pakistan families influence adult children in their voting choice. However, in the same research, the role of social media in voting turnout was highlighted. Social media provides a democratic space for information flow and for open discussions. This eventually leads towards developing citizens with vigilance. Besides, social media can be used for predictions of election campaigns and results (Zeib, 2021).

As another non-political factor influencing politics; the urban rural difference can be studied. It is proved by research that urban-rural geographical differences influence people's voting choices. In a research conducted in USA shows that countries urban-rural continuum is statistically significant estimation of voting patterns in presidential elections (Dante & Kenneth, 2017). Furthermore, according to Bassett (2003), there are many misconceptions about rural dwellers. One of the beliefs are that government structure gives political power to rural dwellers. However, in reality they are politically under- represented in proportion to the real population size. Besides, rural issues receive less attention and they receive inadequate political representation. Additionally, the author suggests that reformations need to take forward to enhance the political voice of rural dwellers; including public campaign financing and for modifications to the current electoral process.

#### **4.8 Corruption during the Election**

Fair elections are the best and most direct mechanism for the citizens of the country to express their political preferences. However, in countries where democratic institutions are weaker and corrupted, serious threats to elections processes come forward. According to Transparency International (2014) there are three main ways that electoral

integrity is undermined. Namely; vote-buying, abuse of state resources and election rigging.

Vote-buying occurs when a politician or a political party provides favours such as; access to public services, resources or preferential treatment to voters in exchange for consensus, political support, and commitment to vote.

Abusing of state resources can include any use of publicly owned resources that affects the financing of political parties or of elections in such a way as to favour a single party or a candidate at the expense of others. For instance, using government-owned infrastructure and state resources including personnel for election campaign purposes and the manipulation of state-owned media. Election rigging, explains the manipulation of electoral outcomes through corrupt practices such as ballot-stuffing, misinforming voters, mis-recording of votes, manipulation of voter's registers and manipulation of demographic information.

## **5. Method of Training**

The methodology of the training program on voters' education will be carried out by delivering lectures in very interactive manner and having discussion among the participants. The knowledge and experiences of participants will be discussed and shared. The challenges and coping mechanism experienced by participants will be used for short and informal group discussion and presentations. Finally participants are expected to design very simple action plan on voters' education based on the conceptual knowledge and their real life experience.

The training will be carried out based on following themes and topics

## 6. Content of Lecturing (Four hours)

	<b>Topic or concept</b>	<b>Time in minutes (4 hrs.)</b>
1	Introduction to Voters' Education and Awareness	40
2	Importance of Democracy	20
3	Who is the active citizen	20
4	Political literacy and Elections in Sri Lanka	20
5	Voters' education and green leadership	20
6	Mode of communication, media and Voters' education	20
7	Inclusive participation	30
8	Corruption and violence during election	20
9	Other factors related to voters' education	20
10	Summary and Conclusion	30

## 7. Planning Training Workshop

Trainers task is to train community educators to run voter education workshops at the grassroots level. There are two aims here - to teach community educators how to run a workshop in general; and to teach community educators how to run voter education workshops in particular. These training workshops have to be planned according to the local situation, language, ethnicity education level and urban rural differences. The process of planning and organizing workshop can be presented in five steps.

### Step 1:

Ask yourself: What do you want to achieve in the workshops? What are your main aims? What will youth / people know, think, feel, be able to do, by the end of your workshops?

### Step 2:

Find out everything you can about the workshop participants: What do they know about elections and voting? Have they ever run workshops before? What is their educational background? What language do they prefer to use? Do they live in urban or rural areas? Do they belong to organisations? This helps you to prepare your workshop programme so that it meets the needs of your participants, as well as your aims.

### Step 3:

Structure the programme: Look at your aims. Ask yourself - what information and experience do the participants need to achieve these aims? Do not try to cover too much in

one session. It is better to teach a small amount carefully and thoroughly, rather than confuse people with too many new ideas and thoughts.

#### **Step 4:**

Structure each session: Decide in what order you will present information. What will you do first? What will you do next? All sessions should have an introduction, a body and a conclusion.

#### **Step 5:**

Then decide how you will present each issue. What techniques will you use? A short talk? A group discussion? A game? A roleplay? A debate?

#### **Step 6:**

The organization of the discussion

- Ask participants in to discuss the meaning of given theme or topic (democracy/corruption)
- Guide the participants to brainstorm the process of given theme at public level as discourse
- Ask participants to discuss the role of citizens in developing critical arguments
- Summarize the session using key notes.

### **8. Some Special Concerns in Planning and Organizing Workshop**

1. Respect the knowledge and experiences of participants.
2. Draw on the collective wisdom of the group.
3. Build tolerance and patience for other people's views.
4. Get all participants Actively involve in the workshop.
5. Vary your activities so as not to bore people.
6. Present each theme or issue clearly.
7. Encourage people to ask questions.
8. Plan you session read whole manual thoroughly
9. Work out your time accurately and stick to it.
10. Make sure you have everything you need before the session starts
11. Check what language or languages participants wish to use in the workshops.
12. Use familiar words and terms.
13. Be flexible. Adapt your workshop to meet the needs of the participants.

14. Use the language which is best understood by most of the groups.
15. Don't leave all your planning to the last minute.
16. Don't bore your participants by giving long lectures.
17. Remember adults learn best by doing.
18. Don't use unfamiliar jargon which no-one understands.
19. Don't allow any one person to dominate the discussions or to intimidate others.
20. Don't be dogmatic about your own point of view - listen.

## **9. Facilitator Guide for the Training of Voters' Education**

### **Basic Skills of Facilitator**

1. Organizing meetings in advance.
2. Encouraging even participation from all attendees.
3. Rephrasing questions or concepts for group understanding.
4. Guiding conversations and eliminating distractions.
5. Supporting the group's decision making.
6. Collaborating and uniting a group toward a common goal
7. Developing a good rapport with participants

### **How to build Rapport between Facilitator and Participants**

1. Be concerned about facilitator's dress code
2. Use simple, friendly, non-technical language
3. Avoid speaking or questioning extreme or personal matters
4. Try to understand participants instead of their understanding of facilitator
5. Respect their life style and religious beliefs
6. Try to unbiased towards gender, ethnicity and other social divisions
7. Adjusting to local physical and training environment
8. Never use mobile phone & tabs during the interaction with participants
9. Avoid taking photos or recording device without permission
10. Be punctual and try to adjust with time & working schedule of people

## **Special Capacity of Facilitator**

1. Ability to stimulate thinking, manage group dynamic
2. Listening and summarizing what is being discussed
3. Familiarity with techniques or activities to enhance participation,
4. Developing creative and critical discussion from the groups discussions
5. Analytical skills to be able to reframe, capture essence and identify interests
6. Establish goals and expectations of training throughout the session
7. Be concerned about ethical considerations
8. Maintain the proper recording and evidence

The training will be conducted by using four (04) methods in respective native languages. The facilitator must be fully aware about (1) what knowledge to be shared and (2) how to be shared in a simple manner.

### **1. Delivering lectures**

The overall information and relevant data or subject matters of the training has been comprised with the lecture presentation slides based on the training curriculum. The facilitator has to be fully familiarized with the curriculum and lecture materials. In case of any requirement, the facilitator has to be prepared with sharing the content of lecture in a clear and simple manner. The facilitator must know all the technical terms and definitions that are found in the curriculum and lecture slides.

### **2. Discussion with participants**

The second mode of sharing relevant knowledge among the participants is interactive discussion. This discussion has to be supported with feedback, arguments and counter arguments about issues related to voters' education. Here, the role of facilitator is very important. The facilitator has to play a role of moderator and provide better ground for all participants to express their views. The facilitator has to make sure that all the participants have equal opportunity to express their thoughts and not let few participants to be dominant in the discussion.

### **3. Informal group / community mapping**

This method derives from PRA and is widely used as part of other types of participatory approaches as well. The facilitator has to explain this process and get all participants to actively join in this collective exercise in order to identify the key issues of obtaining voters' education as main objectives of training.

### **4. Designing an action plans**

An action plan serves as a strategic tool designed to outline specific steps, tasks and goals necessary to achieve a particular objective. The main purpose of designing such action plans is to come out with pragmatic strategic plans and material solutions to problems and crisis of voters' education. The facilitator has to support the participants to design action plan incorporating the components such as inactive citizenship, poor political literacy and social inequality. The facilitator should not give any clues or points but technically support the participants to achieve this target.

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