

**CEPPS Quarterly Report: April 1, 2019 to June 30, 2019**

**SRI LANKA: Improved Election Management Program (IEMP)  
USAID Associate Cooperative Agreement No. AID-383-LA-15-00001 under the Leader  
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**Project Dates: September 29, 2015 – September 30, 2020**

**I. PROGRAM OVERVIEW**

*Problem Statement*

After decades of civil war, authoritarian rule, and widespread corruption, Sri Lanka's national Unity Government – inaugurated in 2015 – committed itself to an ambitious reform agenda that included promises of good governance, economic development and reconciliation. However, four years later, the government faces challenges delivering on its promises. As Sri Lanka looks to hold presidential and parliamentary elections between 2019 and 2020, public trust in and approval of the government remains low. Recent events have also underscored and exacerbated the Prime Minister and President's reticence to work together to promote shared campaign commitments, with potentially negative impacts on Sri Lanka's development. On October 26, following the abrupt withdrawal of the Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) from the National Unity Government alliance, President Maithripala Sirisena appointed former President Mahinda Rajapaksa as the new Prime Minister. Civil society advocates noted widespread concern over the constitutional validity of this decision and multiple legal challenges later, Mr. Sirisena reinstated Mr. Wickremesinghe.

Exacerbating an already challenging political situation, on April 21, a series of coordinated bombings in Sri Lanka hit places of worship and high-end hotels, killing 253 people and injuring hundreds more. In the immediate aftermath of the bombings, mobs have retaliated against the Muslim community, burning dozens of Muslim-owned shops, homes and mosques and killing at least two people. Within this context, there is concern over the use of polarizing campaign rhetoric that perpetuates hate speech and disinformation, especially targeting Muslims, as an effective tactic for voter mobilization in the upcoming elections. Taken together, the interconnected issues of leadership challenges, rising communal divisions, and lack of public trust in the government injects high levels of uncertainty and potential for political turmoil ahead of a busy election period.

Presidential elections are anticipated in November or December 2019, and the next general election is due in September 2020. However, parliamentarians have recently called for a referendum to hold the parliamentary elections prior to the presidential elections – a move that

would require a change to the Constitution and inject further uncertainty into the electoral timeline. Sri Lanka's nine Provincial Council elections are also due, although numerous issues – including approval of a boundary delimitation report as well as determination of the provincial level electoral system – must first be addressed by parliament.

Regardless of the election order, the upcoming electoral cycle will be critical as it could reinvigorate momentum toward national goals of accountable and inclusive government. The Election Commission of Sri Lanka (EC) has an important opportunity to advance such positive momentum through the effective management of the electoral process, which can advance public confidence in democratic systems as the best platform for addressing citizens' concerns. While the EC, as one of the few highly trusted public bodies, is well placed to effectively address electoral challenges, the shifting electoral schedule combined with rising anti-minority and anti-democratic sentiments pose challenges in basic electoral preparations. Such challenges demand a flexible programmatic response that focuses on further enhancing the EC's capacity to plan for and respond efficiently to electoral developments in order to maximize the integrity of the election process.

In addition to the EC's critical role in election management, in order to maintain democratic momentum for legal reforms, Sri Lanka's citizens must also participate actively throughout the electoral cycle as voters, advocates, election observers and candidates. There are several opportunities to leverage in the upcoming year which includes both anticipated presidential and parliamentary elections. Given the landmark change in government and the commitments to reform, Sri Lankans are eager to see democracy deliver. Additionally, as in other countries, Sri Lanka's parliament is an important venue where reformers can challenge the status quo to push through pro-reform and open government policies. Parliament also is one of the few avenues for cross-party and interethnic dialogue. If designed well, an open parliament plan can provide opportunities to link democratic reform issues, peace and reconciliation, and issues of concern to constituents, as well as enhance greater accountability, transparency, inclusion and responsiveness on key issues of public concern.

### ***Theory of Change and Critical Assumptions***

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

CEPPS' activities are contingent upon the willingness of national partners to receive technical assistance and support. In particular, the Improved Election Management Program (IEMP) planned

activities are based on the following assumptions:

- The security, political, and legal situation in Sri Lanka permits CEPPS to operate freely and openly.
- The political environment enables passages of legal reforms – especially election dispute resolution and parliamentary reforms.
- The EC and parliament continue to be willing to engage CEPPS partners and, at a minimum, agree to conduct the planned activities, especially as they relate to operationalization of the EC’s strategic plan and election preparations, and parliament’s reform plan.
- The EC and parliament accept the support of international experts provided by CEPPS partners to provide guidance on selected election-related and parliamentary reforms and planning, and the environment exists where laws and procedures can be strengthened and reformed.
- The political environment allows government officials, civil society, media and other stakeholders to speak openly regarding electoral and parliamentary vulnerabilities and policies and procedures.
- EC officials and parliamentarians are able to travel internationally to participate in study tours.
- The national government and parliament are willing to receive training on strategic communications and public engagement and accept guidance on how to reform their communications strategies.
- CEPPS national surveys are shared with select government, parliament and political leaders.
- Presidential and general elections are held during the program period.

### ***Objectives***

The IEMP addresses the following objectives:

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

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

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

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

On April 21, Easter Sunday, a series of coordinated bombings in Sri Lanka hit places of worship and high-end hotels, killing 253 people and injuring hundreds more. According to government officials, the attacks were carried out by Sri Lankan citizens associated with the National Thowheeth Jama'ath, a local militant Islamist group, with the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) claiming responsibility as well. Following the Easter attacks, Sri Lanka's government instituted a national state of emergency as well as a police curfew, and blocked social media in an attempt to curb the spread of ethnically-driven rumors and hate speech which might incite further violence. Months after the Easter bombings, members of the Muslim community continue to face harassment.

While much of the [violence took place](#) when the police curfew was in effect from April 21 to April 28, with police reporting that 500 buildings and some religious centers had been destroyed in mob violence, polarization between the country's ethnic and religious communities continues to grow. As an example, in June, the local government body in the town of Dankotuwa (Puttalam District) ordered minority Muslims not to participate in the local market, saying that their presence could trigger violence. [Police ultimately stepped in](#) to prevent the ban from being implemented, indicating that there was no reasonable basis for the discrimination.

As Sri Lanka prepares for its presidential election in late 2019, major parties continue to debate their front runner. On June 22, the United National Party (UNP)-led United National Front (UNF) announced that it would field [one common presidential candidate](#). The UNP Finance Minister echoed previous calls to recognize Sajith Premadasa, a UNP Member of Parliament (MP) who also serves as the Cabinet Minister of Housing, Construction and Cultural Affairs, as the UNP's lead presidential candidate. Additionally, on June 29, representatives from the Sri Lanka Podujana Peramuna (SLPP) and parties aligned with the Joint Opposition announced that they will contest the upcoming elections – both presidential and parliamentary - [as an alliance](#). Although not yet formalized, it is widely expected that former [Defense Secretary Gotabaya Rajapaksa will be the new alliance's candidate](#).

Electoral stakeholders have continued to raise concerns around delays to the provincial council elections. In April, the Election Commission (EC) requested that President Sirisena seek [clarification from the Supreme Court](#) on the laws pertaining to the election delays. In particular, the EC requested the Supreme Court's interpretation of the legal status of the 2017 Provincial Council Elections (Amendment) Act, which established the mixed member proportional representation (MMP) system as the designated electoral system. MPs have argued that the 2017

Provincial Council Elections (Amendment) Act no longer applies due to Parliament’s failure to approve the provincial council boundary delimitation report, which was first presented in 2018 but never debated in Parliament. The Supreme Court has characterized the ongoing delays as a [“violation of the right to franchise and the sovereignty of the people.”](#) Absent any new progress on the implementation of the provincial council election, in June, the EC Chairman threatened to leave his position if the provincial council elections are not held before the presidential elections (anticipated November 2019). In response to the Chairman’s announcement, on June 29, Prime Minister Wickremesinghe announced to UNF and UNP leaders that [“there is no possibility of holding the provincial council elections”](#) this year, and that in order to hold the provincial council elections, a new act had to be passed in Parliament to clarify the electoral system.

Also, in June, President Sirisena called for reforms to the 19<sup>th</sup> amendment, which was introduced by his government, saying that the 19<sup>th</sup> amendment provisions have “triggered instability” by diminishing the power of a single leader. Key provisions of the 19<sup>th</sup> amendment included shifting select responsibilities from the President to the Prime Minister and strengthening the institutional independence of Sri Lanka’s key commissions, including the EC.

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

- CEPPS/IFES’ Program and Inclusion Manager and Senior Program Officer conducted a Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) and Strategic Planning Dashboard training for M&E data entry officers. The training reached a total of 50 participants representing all 25 districts.
- CEPPS/IFES worked with the EC to conduct a two-day Training the Facilitator (TtF) workshop in Vavuniya in Tamil for 16 newly recruited EC field staff in the Northern and Eastern provinces who are planning to conduct voter and civic awareness initiatives. The training was led by the Deputy Elections Commissioner of EC and three Assistant Commissioners from the EC, with facilitation support from CEPPS/IFES’ Senior Program Officer.
- CEPPS/IFES worked with the EC to conduct a two-day Countering Hate Speech and Disinformation Workshop for 29 youth. The workshop was facilitated by IFES’ Regional Director for Asia Pacific, an EC Deputy Commissioner, and CEPPS/IFES’ Gender Consultant. Also linked to efforts to counter hate speech in elections, CEPPS/IFES facilitated a discussion on countering election violence with nine members of the Youth Committee on Elections (YCE). The YCE members discussed ways to draw on experiences shared by CEPPS/IFES from other country contexts in order to formulate their own strategies to counter hate speech and disinformation during elections.
- CEPPS/IFES conducted a voter education session for 39 students at the Ragama Campus, University of Kelaniya. The session was conducted by CEPPS/IFES’ Program and

Inclusion Manager and included a basic introduction to principles of democracy and participation, the right to vote, the duty to engage in electoral processes, and an introduction to the two supplementary data collection forms on accessibility data and youth data.

- CEPPS/IFES and the EC conducted a voter education workshop for 48 participants representing disabled persons' organizations (DPOs) from across the island. Additionally, CEPPS/IFES and the Sri Lanka Central Federation of the Deaf (SLCFD) produced three sign language videos and two posters that provided information on the EC's new supplementary data collection, which collects data on accessibility requirements as well as the residence of 15-18 year olds. The videos were disseminated via social platforms including Facebook, WhatsApp and Viber and on the SLCFD Facebook page.
- CEPPS/IRI began outreach to major Sri Lankan political parties in advance of the presidential elections expected to be held in December 2019. Consultations were held with party leadership on an individual basis in order to identify the main priorities and needs of each party in the leadup to the elections.
- CEPPS/NDI coordinated two parliamentary exchange trips for the deputy speaker of Parliament and three MPs to Ottawa for the Open Government Partnership Summit, and for the deputy speaker to Washington, D.C. for meetings with congressional representatives and staff and foreign policy analysts.
- CEPPS/NDI organized a meeting with Transparency International Sri Lanka (TISL) and People's Action for Free and Fair Elections (PAFFREL) to discuss CSO engagement in the development of open parliament commitments. Additionally, CEPPS/NDI senior program advisor met with CSO representatives to obtain input and buy-in on the Open Parliament Plan's accountability and transparency measures.

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

- CEPPS/IFES: During the reporting period, the EC presented its updated draft election dispute resolution (EDR) procedures and regulations to 43 senior EC staff and officials participating in an EC/IFES-led EDR workshop. While the updated language draws on recommendations provided by IFES' International Legal Advisor, who facilitated the November 2018 "EDR Writeshop," the draft also reflects input from district-level and headquarters EC staff and was presented by the head of the Legal and Investigation Branch. Further demonstrating their commitment to implement more comprehensive EDR regulations, the EC has identified numerous products and procedural improvements to be developed, in partnership with CEPPS/IFES, ahead of the upcoming elections.

- CEPPS/IFES: The program period marked important strides in working towards countering hate speech and disinformation, with the YCE engaging CEPPS/IFES and the EC on efforts to mitigate harmful rhetoric. In the weeks following the training, participants led numerous activities including flagging harmful content on Facebook and planning for a “Hackathon” that will engage young people in developing digital tools to counter hate speech and inform voters about the importance of recognizing disinformation in online content.
- CEPPS/IFES: The EC updated its national enumeration forms to include information on voters with disabilities, enabling the EC to better anticipate and respond to voters’ electoral accessibility needs, as well as information on household members who are between the ages of 15 and 18. In June 2019, after several years of advocacy from CEPPS/IFES, the EC began using the updated enumeration forms as part of its annual, nationwide voter registration process. CEPPS/IFES produced multiple resources – including sign language videos and two education posters – to raise citizens’ awareness about the supplementary forms.
- CEPPS/NDI: Members of the parliament caucus, working closely with CEPPS/NDI, developed an Open Parliament Plan that was discussed at a side meeting of the Open Government Partnership Summit in Ottawa in late May 2019.

## II. ACTIVITY IMPLEMENTATION

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

All activities under Objective 1 have been completed.

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

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

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

CEPPS/IFES has completed activity 2.1.1

## Activity 2.1.2. Conduct Training of Trainers



*Participants taking part in an ice-breaker exercise during the TtF (left) and participant from Jaffna presenting her voter education lesson plan (right)*

*Train the Facilitators Workshops:* From April 4 to 5, CEPPS/IFES worked with the EC to conduct a Train the Facilitator (TtF) workshop in Vavuniya. In total, 16 newly recruited EC staff participated in the training, including three women and nine young people. The TtF was conducted in Tamil, targeting EC staff in the Northern and Eastern provinces who will be conducting their own initiatives ahead of the 2019 and 2020 elections. The EC's Deputy Election Commissioner and three Assistant Commissioners led the training, with facilitation support from CEPPS/IFES' Senior Program Officer. Responding to priorities outlined in the EC's Participatory Strategic Plan (PSP), the TtF training focused on building participants' capacity to design and implement their own voter and civic awareness programs in their respected districts—with a focus on reaching women, persons with disabilities and youth – as well as to educate *Grama Niladharis* about inclusive voter registration processes.

To further solidify new training skills, participants engaged in interactive lesson plan development, designing and delivering their own model sessions. CEPPS/IFES also provided a complete resource kit to each participant to encourage future sessions following the training. EC Member Professor Ratnajeewan Hoole provided closing remarks and expressed appreciation to USAID and CEPPS/IFES for working with the EC to increase staff's training capacity ahead of a busy election period in 2019 and 2020, and for their commitment to delivering trainings in Tamil as well as Sinhala to increase learning outcomes.

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*“This training enhanced my skills and knowledge, from developing training lesson plans to conducting an effective session to learning good facilitation skills”*

*- N. Kohulan, Vavuniya EC Office*

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

*Election Operations Training for Election Staff:* Beginning June 30, the EC and CEPPS/IFES conducted a three-day electoral operations training for 33 EC Deputy and Assistant Commissioners and other election officials, including 6 women. The training included an overview of key provisions for the nomination process, enumeration process, postal voting, selection criteria for senior presiding officers (SPOs), counting process, and verification and announcement of results. In addition to these operational topics, CEPPS/IFES Gender Consultant facilitated a module on gender sensitivity and women's electoral rights, which included an interactive session on key actions the EC could take to promote gender equality within its institutional structures. In his closing remarks, the EC Chairman requested all Deputy and Assistant Commissioners to ensure that the different safety and security needs of female polling staff are addressed during elections, including selecting polling centers that provide sufficient sanitary facilities for women election staff, providing transport facilities for working late night hours, and selecting safe polling centers.



*IFES' Gender Consultant discusses actions the EC could take to create a more gender sensitive environment*

Assistant Commissioners to ensure that the different safety and security needs of female polling staff are addressed during elections, including selecting polling centers that provide sufficient sanitary facilities for women election staff, providing transport facilities for working late night hours, and selecting safe polling centers.

*Voter Education Workshop for DPO Leaders:* On June 27<sup>th</sup>, the EC and CEPPS/IFES conducted a voter education workshop for representatives of DPOs at the EC, with a total of 48 persons representing organizations from across the island. Among the participants, 39 identified themselves as persons with disabilities, 24 of the participants were women, and 5 were youth leaders. The EC's Disability Focal Point, the EC Gender Focal Point, and a newly-recruited EC Development Officer who is also a full-time wheelchair user facilitated the workshop. The objective of the workshop was to create awareness among persons with disabilities on the importance of democratic participation, the principles of democracy and governance, the voter enumeration process, and an introduction to the newly adopted supplementary data collection form that enables more comprehensive and systematic data collection on the specific needs of persons with disabilities and youth.

Through interactive group discussions, participants identified types of barriers encountered by persons with disabilities in the electoral process and practical recommendations for how to address those barriers. Recommendations included: introducing a valid identity card for persons with disabilities through the EC that eliminates the necessity to obtain a medical certificate as proof of disability; conducting pre-election accessibility audits to select polling centers that are accessible

for persons with disabilities; instructing political parties on how to share accessible voter information; and adopting technology and procedural measures to ensure the secrecy of the ballot for persons with disabilities. Responding to the recommendations, the Chairman and members of the EC, the Director General and other senior officials agreed to establish accommodations to improve electoral accessibility in the 2019 and 2020 elections, including conducting disability sensitization trainings for both EC officials and poll workers to ensure that voters with disabilities are treated with respect and dignity.



*Participants representing diverse DPOs engage in group discussions*

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

*Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Training for the EC:* As part of CEPPS/IFES’ continued efforts to provide support to the EC in monitoring the progress of its strategic planning goals, on April 8, CEPPS/IFES conducted a Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) and Strategic Plan Dashboard training for EC data entry officers. CEPPS/IFES’ Program and Inclusion Manager and Senior Program Officer led the training with a total of 50 participants (18 women and 21 youth) representing all 25 districts of Sri Lanka. At the request of the EC, the training included an introduction to M&E principles; a review of the goals and objectives of the EC’s Strategic Plan; and step-by step guidance on the dashboard data entry process to ensure that all district-level offices are entering accurate and



*Participants entering data into the EC Dashboard*

comprehensive data that will enable the EC to track its progress in meeting the Strategic Plan objectives. The participants conducted a real-time data entry exercise during the training to solidify knowledge gains. The Chairman of the EC concluded the training, recognizing CEPPS/IFES and USAID’s support in building the district level staff’s capacity to conduct more systematic data collection and evaluation that can be used to inform managerial decisions in the future.

*Accessibility Data Collection and Production of Sign-Language Videos:*

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*“I am very happy to receive this form. The fact that the form asks for Braille as well as non-Braille technology requirements, and the need to be accompanied by an assistant, are valuable to blind persons. I have shared the information with my friends with disabilities and encouraged them to fill out the form.”*

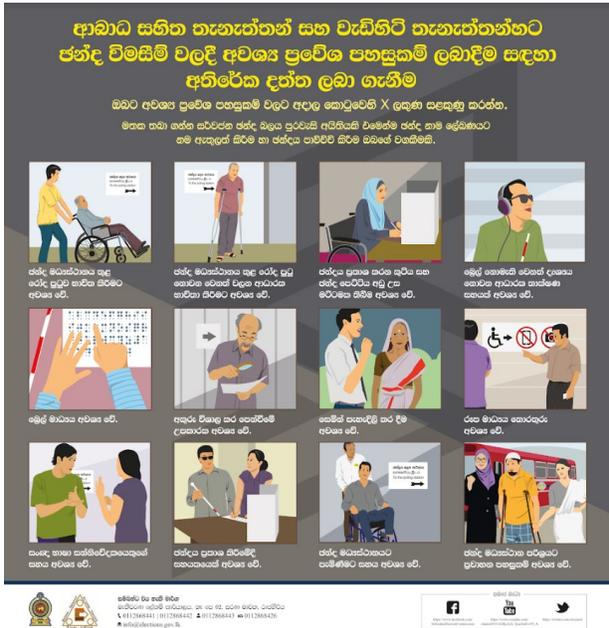
- Feedback from a citizen who is blind

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On May 30th, CEPPS/IFES and the Sri Lanka Central Federation of the Deaf (SLCFD) – which is a member of the Disability Inclusive Elections in Sri Lanka (DIESL) working group – produced three sign language videos on: 1) the supplementary form for voter enumeration, which includes data collection on accessibility requirements for persons with disabilities and older persons during elections; 2) information on persons between 15-18 years of age; and 3) the importance of obtaining the National Identity Card for elections. The videos were disseminated via social platforms including Facebook, WhatsApp and Viber and on the SLCFD Facebook page. As of the end of the reporting period, the outreach for the videos is as follows:

Video topic	Approximate number of views	Number of shares	Video links
Accessibility requirements for people with disabilities and older people	2,400	112	<a href="https://bit.ly/2xPrWOB">https://bit.ly/2xPrWOB</a>
Youth information form	1,200	53	<a href="https://bit.ly/32ztoT4">https://bit.ly/32ztoT4</a>
National ID requirements	3,600	175	<a href="https://bit.ly/2LWBU2s">https://bit.ly/2LWBU2s</a>

Additionally, CEPPS/IFES produced two posters providing information on the supplementary form (Attachment I).



CEPPS/IFES voter education posters produced on supplementary form information.

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

No activities were conducted during the reporting period.

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

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

No activities were conducted during the reporting period.

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

No activities were conducted during the reporting period.

Activity 2.3.3. Train stakeholders on EDR roles and responsibilities

*Presentation and Review of the Draft EDR Complaints Management Procedure:* Building on CEPPS/IFES’ November 2018 EDR workshop, in early 2019, the EC drafted EDR provisions and circulated the draft to all district offices for input. During this reporting period, the EC legal unit incorporated all feedback received from the field offices and presented the final drafts to 43 senior

EC leadership (six women and five youth) during a June 12 workshop co-facilitated with CEPPS/IFES (Attachment II). Underscoring the EC's ownership over the process, the Director of the EC's Legal and Investigation Branch presented the draft procedures. Following the presentation, workshop participants were divided into groups to discuss all steps of the EDR complaints process. One key area was identifying training and capacity building needs for Deputy and Assistant Election Commissioners, which included knowledge in EDR systems, electoral acts, effective recording and reporting of complaints, best practices in collection of evidence, and the process for court procedures. Participants also strategized on how to prioritize the most prevalent election complaints, and identified new guidelines and changes needed to existing guidelines and regulations, such as updates to the media guidelines to respond to hate speech in social media, as well as updates to political parties' codes of conduct to include clearer provisions around campaign finance, abuse of state resources and electoral violence against women.



*Group Discussion to identify EDR training needs for EC officials (left) and an EC Deputy Commissioner presenting on the agreed EDR training needs (right)*

Following the completion of the workshop, the EC identified several activities to be completed before the next elections with technical support from CEPPS/IFES. Upcoming activities include:

- Finalize the EDR Complaints Management Procedure
- Revise the Draft Flowchart and Brochure on EDR, to be shared as a voter education resource
- Develop Complaint Management Information System (CMIS) specifications and related forms, and the new classification of complaints
- Draft roles and responsibilities of the complaint centers at each level (Divisional, District, and/or Central)
- Develop standardized internal forms to ensure that all complaints are filed systematically through a single platform
- Develop a Training Manual on EDR for election office staff, election officials, police, political parties, observers and media
- Train election staff and – once appointed – members of complaint centers
- Educate relevant stakeholders on the complaints process

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

Activity 2.4.1. Convene a voter education working group

At the EC's request, CEPPS/IFES anticipates that the voter education working group initiative will be led by YCE members, with the YCE engaging the perspectives of civil society, women's rights advocates, observers, and other electoral stakeholders as it develops new voter education resources. This activity will begin in the next quarter.

Activity 2.4.2. Develop multilingual and accessible voter education materials

*Voter Education Session for the Department of Disability Studies-Ragama:* CEPPS/IFES' Program and Inclusion Manager conducted a voter education session for the first year Bachelor of Science

in Speech and Hearing Sciences students of the Department of Disability Studies (DDS), at the Ragama Campus, University of Kelaniya. The session included 39 young people, 38 of whom were women. Core content provided information on democratic principles, the right to vote, the duty to engage in electoral processes, and a detailed review of the two supplementary data collection forms on accessibility needs and youth. The students of DDS regularly interact with persons with disabilities as part of their study course



*Students review CEPPS/IFES' VE posters during the session*

and are a conduit through which voter and civic information could be disseminated among wider networks of persons with disabilities, particularly those who live with speech and hearing disabilities. CEPPS/IFES disseminated its voter education materials as resources for the students to use in future outreach.

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

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

### Activity 3.1.1: Open Parliament Assessment

CEPPS/NDI has completed activity 3.1.1.

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

CEPPS/NDI has completed activity 3.1.2.

### Activity 3.1.3: Public Consultations

CEPPS/NDI coordinated and supported the participation of the deputy speaker of Parliament as well as three MPs at the 2019 Open Government Partnership Summit in Ottawa, Canada from May 28 to June 1. In addition to connecting with parliamentarians and civil society leaders from around the world on different open government initiatives, tools and processes, the trip provided the opportunity for the Sri Lanka delegates to develop ideas and refine recommendations for specific open government commitments to be included in the forthcoming Open Parliament Plan.

Following the OGP Summit, CEPPS/NDI organized meetings in Washington, D.C. for the deputy speaker from June 2 through June 6. CEPPS/NDI coordinated a variety of public consultations during the deputy speaker's visit including engagement with U.S. senators and staff from the following Senate committees: the Foreign Relations Committee, the Foreign Relations Subcommittee on Near East, South Asia, Central Asia, and Counterterrorism, the Appropriations Committee, Armed Services Committee, Budget Committee and the Asia, the Pacific, & Nonproliferation Subcommittee.

While in Washington, the deputy speaker also met with U.S. representatives and staff from the U.S. House Democratic Partnership as well as with the House Committees on: Foreign Affairs; Ethics; Committee on Oversight and Government Reform; Homeland Security; the House Subcommittee on Information Technology; and the Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs. The deputy speaker held further engagements with USAID, United States Department of State, and the United States Institute for Peace (USIP).

Further, CEPPS/NDI and USIP coordinated an off-the-record event during the deputy speaker's Washington D.C. visit to discuss the current and projected effects of the Easter 2019 terrorist attacks on the electoral environment and politics. The discussion provided an opportunity for the deputy speaker to engage directly with conflict resolution actors closely following Sri Lanka.

CEPPS/NDI organized a meeting between the chair of the Parliament Openness Caucus (deputy speaker of Parliament), four multiparty members of the caucus and two main CSO representatives in Ottawa (five men and two women) to discuss and agree on the draft OPP. The CSOs provided

comments that were incorporated into the second draft of the OPP that will be confirmed and presented to the business committee during the next quarter.

#### Activity 3.1.4 MP and Civil Society Exchange to Sri Lanka

CEPPS/NDI did not conduct activities related to Activity 3.1.4 during the reporting period.

#### Activity 3.1.5: Best Practices Dialogues

During this reporting period, CEPPS/NDI sponsored the deputy speaker of the Parliament of Sri Lanka's participation in the 2019 Open Government Partnership Summit from May 28 to 31 where he participated in a variety of sessions concentrated on Open Parliament Plan best practices from participating governments around the world. In particular, the summit included sessions themed on the following: developing parliament action plans, the Open Parliament e-Network, collaborating with civil society to develop better legislation and improve oversight of government policies, and emerging trends, opportunities and challenges in open parliament efforts.

Upon the arrival of CEPPS/NDI's senior program advisor for Sri Lanka programs in Colombo, CEPPS/NDI facilitated further best practices dialogues between members of the open government caucus and civil society actors.

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

CEPPS/NDI did not conduct activities related to Activity 3.1.6 during the reporting period.

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

On April 1, CEPPS/NDI facilitated a meeting between the open parliament caucus and civil society stakeholders, including representatives from TISL, PAFFREL and the Westminster Foundation for Democracy (WFD). The group discussed several priority areas for procedural processes that could be improved to ensure greater openness in parliament. They identified challenges such as changing standing orders, privileges and budgets that would be necessary in order to accomplish the objectives. In addition, the group raised the possibility of adopting best practices from the UK and US on their e-petition sites, but acknowledged the need for an effective process for those petitions to be reviewed and utilized. Some members of parliament showed enthusiasm in wanting to start some initiatives in an ad hoc way while the overall sentiment was to establish a concrete plan and to display that this is a non-partisan and sustainable effort. Another point that was made was how the plan will be implemented and executed in a way that is reflective of the seriousness this plan is being considered by relevant folks, especially civil society.

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

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

As the government of Sri Lanka was in a state of emergency and focused on responding to the April 21 terrorist attacks, CEPPS/NDI did not conduct activities related to Activity 3.2.1 during this reporting period. CEPPS/NDI hopes to initiate the parliamentary openness action plan launch and implementation with local stakeholders in the fourth quarter of fiscal year 2019. Further, the Parliamentary Openness Caucus meeting scheduled for June 21, was postponed to July 9.

### Activity 3.2.2: Civil Society Oversight Capacity Building

During this quarter, CEPPS/NDI met with TISL and PAFFREL to discuss avenues for their engagement in the development of open parliament commitments. CEPPS/NDI's senior program advisor in Colombo conducted introductory meetings with civil society actors focused on parliamentary strengthening and issues around transparency of government. The country representative also discussed CSO's input and gauged their level of buy-in around the proposed Open Parliament Plan's accountability and transparency measures.

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

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

CEPPS/IRI is currently fielding its second national survey. In this quarter, CEPPS/IRI contracted with an international survey research consultant and The Nielsen Company Lanka, an experienced local research firm, to produce the survey questionnaire in consultation with USAID and the CEPPS partners. Nielsen began conducting survey interviews in the field in June, with fieldwork and data analysis to be completed by the end of the fourth quarter in Year 4. To date, Nielsen has conducted 2,000 interviews nationwide.

### Activity 3.3.2. Comprehensive review of government communications

During this quarter, CEPPS/IRI consulted with USAID on how to best structure the findings of the communication review conducted in Years 3 and 4, given the subsequent collapse of the National Unity Government and other changes in the political landscape. Due to political sensitivities, CEPPS/IRI has determined in concert with USAID that the report and recommendations will not be made public and will instead serve as an internal resource and inform CEPPS/IRI's future technical communications support to the government of Sri Lanka.

### Activity 3.3.3. Targeted communications strategies are developed

During this quarter, changes in the political environment combined with the decision to not release the contents of the communications review led CEPPS/IRI to limit the scope of Activity 3.3.3. CEPPS/IRI will report on the results of this activity following the completion of trainings on communications techniques.

#### Activity 3.3.4. Training on communications techniques

During this quarter, CEPPS/IRI began identifying domestic and international communications experts to train relevant Sri Lankan government offices. In the two training workshops to be held in the next quarter, the communications review finalized under Activity 3.3.2. will inform the topics addressed and technical skills developed.

#### *IR 3.4: Electoral integrity through domestic election observation promoted*

##### Activity 3.4.1 Long-term and Short-term Election Observation

CEPPS/IRI has completed activity 3.4.1.

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

CEPPS/IRI has held initial consultations with its domestic observation partner, the Center for Monitoring Election Violence (CMEV) on the scope of domestic observation efforts focused on electoral violence. CEPPS/IRI plans to issue a subaward to CMEV in the next quarter, which will include both long-term and short-term observation of both upcoming national elections, with a focus on cataloguing and analyzing incidents of election-related violence.

##### Activity 3.4.3. Election Observations – Technical Assistance

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

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

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

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

CEPPS/IFES did not conduct She Leads SL during the reporting period.

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

Members of the Gender and Election Working Group (GEWG) identified the need to coordinate trainings for women local government representatives to ensure newly elected women have the

skills needed to effectively fulfill their roles as local councilors. While national institutions as well as civil society organizations have delivered some capacity building trainings already, women councilors note that trainings have not been systematic or uniform. CEPPS/IFES in coordination with GEWG members determined the need to implement a training needs assessment (TNA) for a representative sample of newly elected women councilors to better identify priority skills and training topics. On May 2, CEPPS/IFES met with the National Committee on Women (NCW) to discuss and finalize the TNA questionnaire and develop a data collection form that will help streamline findings to inform a final report. As a follow-up, the NCW will deliver the findings to the GEWG including the Ministry of Provincial Council and Local Government, Ministry of Women and Child Affairs, and the Sri Lanka Institute for Local Governance in August to inform the design of additional trainings for local government leaders.

Additionally, CEPPS/IFES worked with the NCW to develop a background paper on the need for quotas, which will be presented to the GEWG, Ministry of Women Affairs and Sectoral Oversight Committee on Women and Gender in the following quarter to bolster the NCW's advocacy efforts related to promoting a women's quota at the Provincial Council and Parliamentary levels.

### Activity 3.6.3. Organize youth events

*Engaging Youth in Workshop Aimed at Countering Hate Speech in Elections:* On June 21 and 22, CEPPS/IFES and the EC co-facilitated a two-day Countering Hate Speech and Disinformation Workshop for 29 youth, including six women. CEPPS/IFES' Regional Director for Asia-Pacific and Gender Consultant, and the EC Deputy Commissioner – who is also the EC's gender focal point – facilitated the two-day workshop. Through the interactive workshop, participants gained understanding of:

- The concept of hate speech, international standards and legal frameworks related to hate speech;
- The importance of balancing rights to freedom of speech and expression with the need to counter incitement to violence;
- Strategies for developing a rights-based approach to democratic participation-highlighting that some groups – such as people with disabilities, women and minorities - are uniquely vulnerable to hate speech in online space; and
- International best practices on strategies to counter hate speech, with examples from Indonesia and Kenya.

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*“Not only did I learn about international laws through which the discourse on hate speech stems from, I learned about successful campaigns against hate speech, which was extremely encouraging.”*

Participating journalist at CEPPS/IFES' Countering Hate Speech in Elections training

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The second day of the training culminated in CEPPS/IFES' flagship election crisis simulation, in which participants assumed roles of security actors, election management bodies, election observers, civil society and political representatives, and practiced how to accurately and

thoughtfully report a candidate's use of hate speech and violence-inducing rhetoric while not exacerbating its impact further. The simulation provided all groups with a new appreciation for the difficult decisions each institution must make during an election as well as the importance of working with different stakeholders and the challenges faced by each of them. At the close of the workshop, participants developed a strategy, according to their geographical representation, for countering hate speech in their communities. Some of the identified activities include: working with district EC offices to conduct school-level programs on countering hate speech and creating social harmony; developing short films/videos around hate speech and disinformation and working with civil society, media and election observers on countering hate speech initiatives during elections. The YCE will collaborate with CEPPS/IFES and the EC in the coming months to help youth organizations at district levels to carry out the proposed activities on hate speech, as a follow-up to this two-day workshop.

*Meeting of the Youth Committee on Elections:* During the reporting period, CEPPS/IFES facilitated a series of meetings with the YCE to discuss the upcoming activities for 2019. On May 4, the YCE met at CEPPS/IFES to discuss the widespread use of hate speech and misinformation via social media platforms in the aftermath of the Easter Sunday attacks. CEPPS/IFES' Regional Director for Asia-Pacific – who is also IFES' global technical lead on elections, conflict and security – led the session and shared comparative experiences on different measures taken in other country contexts to counter hate speech and misinformation. The YCE members agreed to engage their social media networks to share credible information and also to report narratives of misinformation and hate speech being circulated via social media platforms. At the EC's request, CEPPS/IFES and the YCE will work with the EC to disseminate messages aimed at countering harmful rhetoric.

On May 10, the YCE met with the members of the EC and senior EC officials to discuss the activities of the YCE in relation to the special international days identified by the EC. At the EC's request, given current security challenges, the YCE will focus on developing social media awareness campaigns on voter information in the immediate future, rather than holding large scale public events. On June 27, CEPPS/IFES facilitated a meeting with the YCE to finalize the YCE's activity plan for 2019 and strategize best ways to engage youth representatives across the country in voter education activities. At the end of the meeting, YCE members decided to include the following activities in their activity plan: conducting a "Hackathon for Democracy"- a platform to disseminate voter information on the internet; conducting an "Introduction to Elections" training for youth leaders, in collaboration with the EC targeting the International Youth Day; and working with participants who attended the Anti- Hate Speech and Disinformation workshop, civil society groups, and Facebook officials on countering hate speech initiatives.

*Discussion on People Against Violence in Elections (PAVE) for the Youth Committee on Elections (YCE):* On June 17, CEPPS/IFES' Regional Director for Asia-Pacific and Senior Electoral Advisor facilitated a discussion on PAVE for nine members of the YCE. Through roundtable discussion, CEPPS/IFES shared experiences from Bangladesh where the PAVE training helped empower young people to understand the root causes of violence and engage in community peacebuilding

efforts that promote non-violent electoral processes. In addition, YCE members discussed election-related violence and disinformation in Sri Lanka and agreed to utilize the Bangladeshi experiences in formulating their own strategy to counter hate speech and disinformation during the upcoming elections in Sri Lanka.

### *IR 3.7: Transparency and accountability of political parties improved*

#### Activity 3.7.1: Political Party election assistance

In June, CEPPS/IRI began holding consultative meetings with major political parties in Colombo to gauge their interest in and needs from communication trainings to begin in the fourth quarter. After initial outreach, CEPPS/IRI has met with the Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP), United National Party (UNP), Sri Lanka Podujana Peramuna (SLPP) and Tamil National Alliance (TNA). In total, CEPPS/IRI has met with eight party representatives (seven males, one female). All of the engaged parties have expressed significant interest in communications training, specifically focused on strategies to target youth and key voters through digital platforms. Communication trainings and workshops, to begin in the next quarter, have already been planned to include voter outreach, inclusive messaging and using modern communication strategies. CEPPS/IRI will ensure that youth inclusion and digital platform messaging continue to be a focus for its future activities.

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

Under CEPPS/IFES' small grant from Australia's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) related to "Strengthening Election Administration in Sri Lanka and Australia," in June, IFES' Senior Electoral Advisor conducted a Senior Presiding Officer (SPO) training session with a group of 43 EC participants that focused on providing best practices for EC staff to design and facilitate a comprehensive and systematic SPO training. The training also included a focus on election operational planning. Taken together, the improved SPO and election planning initiatives complement efforts under the IEMP to further enhance the EC's capacity to deliver transparent and inclusive elections.

As Lead Coordinating Partner, CEPPS/IFES convened a CEPPS coordination meeting during the last week of June with USAID, CEPPS/IRI and CEPPS/NDI to discuss potential synergies between the three workplans. The group discussed that activities related to political parties must have multiparty partnerships and that any activity in parliament will be presented to the Business Committee for approval. Once the Open Parliament Plan is approved by the Parliamentary Openness Caucus (POC), it will be presented to the Business Committee for approval as originally planned. To further strategize their work, the group will have a meeting in early July to discuss each organization's workplan, reflecting the areas of coordination between the CEPPS partners.

During the deputy speaker of Parliament's visit to Washington D.C. in June 2019, the CEPPS partners shared perspectives on ongoing challenges and recent political developments.

CEPPS/NDI's senior program advisor in Sri Lanka also conducted discussions with the Strengthening Democratic Governance and Accountability Project (SDGAP) on assistance to parliamentary openness, and with the Sarvodaya Shramadana Organization on providing civil society inputs into the Open Parliament Plan.

Pursuant to informal discussions on gender in the workplace, CEPPS/NDI has also been invited to a meeting on amendments to the Sri Lankan labor law including women's rights in the workplace, organized by the Ministry of Labour, with assistance from the USAID funded Supporting Accelerated in Sri Lanka (SAIL) project.

### *Activities Next Quarter*

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

This objective is complete.

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

- CEPPS/IFES will conduct elections operations training for newly recruited EC staff. (July)
- CEPPS/IFES will conduct a voter education program for the National Institute for Mental Health in Colombo, and separately, for the Northern Province DPOs (Tamil). (August)
- CEPPS/IFES will implement accessibility audits in Pollonnaruwa (August) and Wellawaya (September) in partnership with the EC.
- CEPPS/IFES will work with the EC to produce EDR training resource and awareness raising materials (August-September).
- CEPPS/IFES in collaboration with the NCW will conduct voter education programs for Women Development Officers ahead of the presidential election. (September)

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

- CEPPS/IFES will hold a Gender and Elections Working Group meeting to discuss the gender action plan, including coordination with GEWG members on implementation on a training needs assessment (TNA) and discuss the policy paper on women's political participation. (August)
- CEPPS/IFES will work with the YCE and EC to implement a youth and democracy event on International Youth Day. (August)

- CEPPS/IRI will complete fieldwork and analysis for its national public opinion survey in the final quarter of Year 4. CEPPS/IRI will seek guidance from the USAID Mission in Colombo about the release of survey data.
- CEPPS/IRI will hold its two communications workshops with the Sri Lankan government in August 2019, drawing on its finalized communications review.
- CEPPS/IRI will issue a subaward to CMEV to support the deployment of long- and short-term observers in priority districts expected to experience electoral violence in the final quarter of Year 4.
- CEPPS/IRI will begin its series of training workshops with political parties under Activity 3.7.1 in the final quarter of Year 4.
- CEPPS/NDI's Colombo-based senior program advisor will continue to hold regular meetings with key members of the Open Parliament Caucus to gather input and feedback as the Open Parliament Plan is finalized and presented to parliament. She also will continue to conduct regular meetings with civil society actors focused on parliamentary strengthening and issues around transparency of government to ensure their input and buy-in around the proposed Open Parliament Plan's accountability and transparency measures. In this regard, parliament has agreed that three CSOs, PAFFREL, TISL and Sarvodaya, will represent core civil society participation in the finalization of the OPP. These organizations will be present at the next Parliamentary Openness Caucus meeting to finalize the plan that will be presented to the Business Committee.

### III. RESULTS

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

Completed and retired.

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

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

- As outlined in the CEPPS IEMP AMELP, this data is provided on an annual basis.

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

2:

- As a result of CEPPS/IFES' ongoing M&E dashboard trainings, a total of 50 EC M&E data entry officers including 18 women and 21 youth, representing all 25 districts of Sri Lanka, were trained during this reporting period. This adds to the more than 100 district and senior level EC staff that have been trained on the M&E dashboard and all 25 district offices as they continue to utilize the M&E dashboard to collect data more systematically.
- Implementation of the supplementary data collection form through the voter enumeration process

*Indicator 2.1.2: Number of training and knowledge products developed*

6, including:

- Production of braille sleeves to be used for the voter enumeration forms.
- [Two voter education posters](#) on supplementary forms to collect accessibility requirements of voters with disabilities and to collect data of 15-18 year olds.
- Three sign language videos on supplementary form for voter enumeration
  - [Video 1](#)
  - [Video 2](#)
  - [Video 3](#)

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

No actions taken during the reporting period.

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

1:

- Building on CEPPS/IFES' 2018 EDR workshop, the EC legal unit incorporated all feedback received from the field offices and presented the final drafts to 43 senior EC leadership at district and head office for final review during workshop co-facilitated by CEPPS/IFES during this reporting period. The new provisions are expected to be finalized and implemented ahead of Sri Lanka's presidential election.

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

- 43 EC staff through the EDR Write Shop.

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

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

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

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

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

- During the reporting period, five MPs took part in an April 1 meeting on open parliament commitments and held consultations with three civil society representatives from TISL, WFD and PAFFREL. CEPPS/NDI re-convened the April 1 participants at the Open Government Partnership Summit in Ottawa, Canada. The group met with the POC of Sri Lanka, including members from TISL and PAFFREL. CEPPS/NDI and the open parliament caucus aim to put the plan forward to parliament in August 2019.

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

- During the reporting period, CEPPS/NDI convened meetings with MPs and CSOs, including PAFFREL, TISL and WFD. This was a key achievement that brought CSOs and MPs together to discuss and develop open parliament commitments that can play to strengthen open government, transparency, and accountability, and to combat threats to democracy such as violence, terrorism, hate speech, and disinformation campaigns. A total of five MPs participated in the April 1 meeting.

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

- CEPPS/NDI did not conduct activities related to this indicator during the reporting period. However, CEPPS/NDI assisted in the development of milestones in the Open Parliament Plan that were agreed upon by the POC members and 2 CSOs who met in Ottawa.

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

- During this reporting period, CEPPS/NDI held OGP and Open Parliament best practices discussions with 16 total MPs (one woman and 15 men), and CSOs including PAFFREL and TISL, as well as international donors to parliament including SDGAP and WFD.

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

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

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

- During this quarter, CEPPS/NDI continued to work with the caucus to plan concrete milestones with transparency and accountability mechanisms for the Sri Lanka Open Parliament Plan. The caucus agreed on six targets compatible with The Declaration of Parliamentary Openness. The mandate includes promoting a culture of openness, making parliamentary information transparent, easing access to parliamentary information, and enabling electronic communication of parliamentary information.

The six targets for the Sri Lankan Open Parliament Plan are:

- Target 1: Institute a Comprehensive Citizen Consultation Process and Participatory Review of Parliamentary Openness
- Target 2: Increase Transparency and Engagement of Parliamentary Committees
- Target 3: Promote Parliamentary Information Sharing
- Target 4: Enable Transparency and Citizen Engagement of the Legislative Drafting Process
- Target 5: Allow Citizens to submit legislative proposals and initiatives electronically to the Parliament of Sri Lanka
- Target 6: Make the Contents of the National Budget and other Budgets Understandable And Accessible To Citizens

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

### ***IR 3.3: Constituent outreach and communications improved by national government***

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

- CEPPS/IRI completed the first of two coordinated national public opinion surveys in Year 3. Following consultations with USAID, CEPPS/IRI did not publicly release survey data, and therefore did not conduct briefings with local decision makers. CEPPS/IRI did conduct briefings for USAID staff in both Colombo and Washington, DC in Year 3.
- Communications trainings were not planned during the quarter and as such there are no results to report. CEPPS/IRI will commence communications trainings in the next reporting period.

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

- There are no results to report this quarter. CEPPS/IRI will report on this indicator starting in the next quarter following the communications trainings in Activity 3.3.4.

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

- There are no results to report this quarter. At USAID's request, CEPPS/IRI did not conduct briefings for members of the government, Members of Parliament, political parties and the Election Commission on the findings of the first CEPPS national public opinion survey.

### ***IR 3.4: Electoral integrity through domestic election observation promoted***

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

- There are no results to report this quarter. CEPPS/IRI will report on this indicator following the subaward recipient's election observation in Activity 3.4.2.

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

- There are no results to report this quarter. CEPPS/IRI will report on this indicator following the subaward recipient's election observation and trainings in Activity 3.4.2.

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

- There are no results to report this quarter. CEPPS/IRI will report on this indicator following the subaward recipient's election observation in Activity 3.4.2.

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

- There are no results to report this quarter. CEPPS/IRI will report on this indicator starting next quarter following training for the subaward recipient in Activity 3.4.2.

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

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

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

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

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

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

1:

- CEPPS/IFES' Gender Consultant conducted a gender sensitivity training which included a discussion on what actions the EC could take to promote gender equality within its institutional structures. As a result, the Chairman of the EC requested all Deputy/Assistant Commissioners to ensure different safety and security needs of female polling staff are implemented during an election, such as selecting safe polling centers, providing transport facilities for working late hours, and providing proper sanitary facilities for women election staff at polling centers.

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

CEPPS/IFES did not measure this indicator during the reporting period. Women's leadership trainings are scheduled for late 2019/early 2020.

***IR 3.7: Transparency and accountability of political parties improved***

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

- There are no results to report this quarter. CEPPS/IRI will report on this indicator starting next quarter following the political party workshops and consultations in Activity 3.7.1.

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

- There are no results to report this quarter. CEPPS/IRI will report on this indicator starting next quarter following the political party workshops and consultations in Activity 3.7.1.

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

- There are no results to report this quarter. CEPPS/IRI will report on this indicator starting next quarter following the consensus building forums in Activity 3.7.1.

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

- 94 percent of trained election commissions officials (15 out of 16) in the TtF workshop in Vavuniya demonstrated an increase in knowledge on training practices and methods.

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

112 (unique numbers only):

- 16 EC officials in the TtF in Vavuniya, including three women and nine youth
- 33 EC Deputy/Assistant Commissioners, including six women during elections operations training
- 50 EC M&E data entry officers, including 18 women and 21 youth during Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Training
- 43 EC senior officials and staff during EDR Complaints Management Procedure workshop

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

116:

- CEPPS/IFES' Program and Inclusion Manager conducted a voter education session for the first year Bachelor of Science in Speech and Hearing Sciences students of the Department of Disability Studies (DDS), at the Ragama Campus, University of Kelaniya. The session included 39 young people, 38 of whom were women.
- CEPPS/IFES conducted a voter education workshop for representatives of DPOs with a total of 48 persons representing DPOs among the participants; 39 identified themselves as persons with disabilities.
- CEPPS/IFES and the EC implemented a countering hate speech and disinformation in elections training that reached 29 young people (six women) from Sinhalese, Tamil and Muslim communities.

In addition to the above individuals receiving direct voter education, CEPPS/IFES notes that, taken together, the three videos produced to educate citizens about the completion of the supplementary voter registration form were collectively viewed by an estimated 7,200 social media users as of the end of the reporting period (June 30, 2019).

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

CEPPS/IFES did not measure this indicator during the reporting period. CEPPS/IFES anticipates an update on this indicator in the upcoming quarter.

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

CEPPS/IFES did not measure this indicator during the reporting period in response to the security situation and tense political climate. In future reporting periods, CEPPS/IFES will work with the YCE to continue to engage youth trained through the democracy camps in upcoming civic and voter education outreach.

#### **IV. Foreign Assistance Indicators**

Indicator	Target FY2018/L OP	FY 2018 Quarter 1 (Oct-Dec 2017)	FY 2018 Quarter 2 (Jan - March 2018)	FY 2018 Quarter 3 (April-June 2018)	FY 2018 Quarter 4 (July-Sep. 2018)	FY2019 Quarter 1 (Oct-Dec 2018) FY 2018)	FY2019 Quarter 2 (Jan -March 2019)	FY2019 Quarter 3 (Apr - June 2019)	Project Total (Unique numbers only)
<b>USG Indicator GJD 3.2.1: Number of election officials trained with USG assistance</b>	50/100	38	45	99	53	34	83	112	278
<b>Disaggregated by:</b>									
<b>Gender</b>									
Female		4	7	26	33	8	27	26	90
Male		33	38	66	20	26	56	86	180
Unknown		1	0	7	0	0	0	0	8
<b>Official Type</b>									
HQ EC Staff		38	45	99	53	34	83	112	242
<b>USG Indicator 2.3-2.6: Number of laws or amendments to ensure credible elections drafted with USG technical assistance</b>	1/2	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	3
<b>USG Indicator (DR. 3.2-4) Number of individuals receiving civic education through USG-assisted programs</b>	1500/3000	449	1652	304	176	480	0	116	3070
<b>Disaggregated by:</b>									
<b>Gender</b>									
Female		219	970	285	143	207	0	67	1891
Male		9	682	19	33	186	0	49	978
Gender N/A		201	0	0	0	0	0	0	201
Youth		15	921	248	71	393	0	63	1517
People with disabilities		0	60	0	22	0	0	39	121
<b>USG Indicator (GNDR. 8)</b>		215	73	117	101	140	0	33	679

## V. ANALYSIS

## *Progress toward achieving objectives/impact*

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

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

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

The EC made strides in addressing electoral barriers faced by marginalized groups, most notably through the adoption of a supplementary form that allows more systematic data collection on the accessibility needs of persons with disabilities and older persons. This additional data collection represents an international best practice that CEPPS/IFES worked with the DIESL members as well as the EC to operationalize. Additionally, building on the positive adoption of the supplementary enumeration form, the EC's interest in working with the SLCFD as well as CEPPS/IFES to produce awareness raising videos in sign language related to the enumeration form demonstrates both the EC's deeper institutional commitment to promoting the electoral rights of persons with disabilities – as included in its Strategic Plan – as well as institutionalized relationship between DIESL working group members and the EC, which provides a platform for accessibility work through future election cycles.

In addition to the supplementary form on persons with disabilities, the EC also implemented a new, supplementary form that enables data collection on young people who are nearing voting age and thus may need to register before next year's annual enumeration process in order to be able to vote in the presidential and parliamentary elections. This supplementary data collection form is in direct response to the #YouthVoteSL campaign which, with support from CEPPS/IFES and the EC, engaged youth groups in advocacy efforts that raised awareness about the need to reform Sri Lanka's annual enumeration process that left thousands of 18-year-olds disenfranchised from electoral participation.

During the reporting period, the EC also took important steps to operationalize improved EDR procedures, thus addressing one of the key electoral integrity challenges in Sri Lanka's election process. These included compiling feedback on draft EDR policies and procedures and presenting it to EC senior staff and updating the [EC's website](#) to provide a user-friendly platform for citizens to make complaints through the EC's Complaint Management Information System (CMIS) – both of which can help strengthen the complaints process beyond completion of the IEMP.

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

The Easter bombings, and subsequent rise in hate speech against Sri Lanka's Muslim community, underscored shifting priorities in the electoral context due to concerns that candidates and political

parties will utilize harmful rhetoric in the upcoming elections to attract support. Left unchecked, hate speech has the potential to cause violence and undermine the electoral participation of minority groups and the EC – which has an institutional mandate to implement all elections – must be central to any response aimed at containing the spread of violence-inducing discourse. CEPPS/IFES was able to begin to respond to this critical, emerging need as part of its IEMP commitment to work with the EC on initiatives that promote inclusion in Sri Lanka’s electoral process. More specifically, the workshop on countering hate speech and disinformation in elections – co-facilitated by CEPPS/IFES and the EC – introduced the EC to new curricula related to countering hate speech that it can share with other electoral stakeholders, as well as providing an opportunity for the EC to demonstrate its leadership in proactively addressing hate speech. Additionally, by engaging YCE members as well as select youth advocates as key participants, CEPPS/IFES laid a foundation to introduce young leaders to their role in countering hate speech in elections. Indeed, in the weeks following the training, participants engaged in numerous activities including planning for a “Hackathon” that will engage young people in developing digital tools to counter hate speech and inform voters about the importance of recognizing disinformation in online content.

The significant issues related to hate speech will require ongoing and robust efforts to counter, the scale of which is beyond the IEMP. While recognizing this, CEPPS/IFES was able to make important inroads by remaining responsive and adaptive to the electoral environment; fostering the EC’s awareness of the important role it can play in engaging stakeholders to counter hate speech in elections; and building understanding and confidence among a cadre of young leaders about their responsibility to lead community-level efforts to improve inclusion in Sri Lanka’s electoral process. CEPPS/IFES will work with the YCE and EC to build on these important steps in upcoming voter education work.

CEPPS/IRI has continued to move forward with scheduling trainings for members of the Sri Lankan government to strengthen its ability to develop and implement strategic communications plans. Political events over the past two quarters have forced CEPPS/IRI to alter its initial approach. The constitutional crisis in late 2018 led to the dissolution of the national unity government, while the Easter bombings in 2019 further heightened political instability. As a result of these two events, CEPPS/IRI rewrote significant portions of its communications review, removing sections that contained information taken from CEPPS/IRI’s national public opinion survey and other politically sensitive subjects. The decision was eventually made, in consultation with USAID, to use the communications review as an internal document that informs CEPPS/IRI’s overall approach to implementing training workshops with the Sri Lankan government, but to not share the contents of the review with an external audience. CEPPS/IRI will move forward with holding two communications trainings with representatives from the Prime Minister’s Office and the President’s Office in the next quarter. The trainings will be based on CEPPS/IRI’s experience conducting similar activities around the world, but will not include content included in the communications review.

CEPPS/IRI has also taken the first steps for its communications trainings for political parties under Activity 3.7.1. CEPPS/IRI staff have held consultative meetings with the leadership of several major political parties, including SLPP, SLFP, UNP and TNA. The leadership of all of these parties has expressed great interest in participating in CEPPS/IRI communications trainings. In the next quarter, CEPPS/IRI will continue liaising with the leadership of these political parties and others, including the Sri Lankan Muslim Congress (SLMC), to conduct single-party training workshops with members of their communications departments.

Last quarter, CEPPS/NDI made strong progress coordinating and achieving buy-in from parliament on an Open Parliament Plan that includes important elements of the Open Government Partnership framework such as transparency and accountability mechanisms. From May 28 to June 5, CEPPS/NDI was able to expand on that progress by facilitating the deputy speaker's meetings at the OGP Summit and in Washington D.C. and by developing additional program activities under the CEPPS cost-extension.

The tragic events of April 21 set back discussions around open parliament initiatives back by several weeks and limited the participation of the secretary general in planned program activities such as the 2019 OGP Summit and follow-on meetings with U.S. stakeholders in Washington D.C.

### ***Constraints/Challenges and Lessons Learned***

As the election period draws closer, CEPPS partners remain conscious of, and responsive to, the rise in anti-international sentiment amongst Sri Lanka's political leaders. During a parliamentary debate in June 2019, for example, some members of parliament publicly stated that foreign funds in general, and U.S. Government funds in particular, are being paid to parliamentary advisors, as well as being used to influence the next elections. Underscoring the ongoing sensitivities with foreign engagement in a tense election year, the General Secretary of the SLFP announced that both the Status of Special Forces Agreement as well as the proposed, U.S.-led Millennium Challenge Corporation agreement will be delayed until after the next presidential election.

The heightened tension around international engagement is unlikely to subside ahead of the Presidential election. In response, CEPPS partners anticipate needing to adopt a low profile, continuously monitor the political environment in Sri Lanka, and work closely with USAID and in-country partners to ensure that the program remains adaptive to rising sensitivities. One example of adaptive responses is the need for CEPPS/IFES to ensure that neither IFES nor USAID is viewed as influencing the voter registration or complaints management system, and as a result, CEPPS/IFES will continue to provide technical advice only when specifically requested. Additionally, where CEPPS/IFES is remaining engaged on EDR and voter registration-related activities, it has ensured that the EC and civil society partners take the lead role.

The political events of the past year have continued to have an impact on CEPPS/IRI's programming. The collapse of the national unity government in late 2018 forced CEPPS/IRI to alter its approach to conducting its programming to strengthen the government of Sri Lanka's

strategic communication on key issues and reform priorities. More recently, the Easter bombings in April 2019 led to additional delays in CEPPS/IRI programming, including scheduling communications trainings and conducting fieldwork for its national survey. CEPPS/IRI has been able to move forward with scheduling communications trainings and completing national survey fieldwork. However, CEPPS/IRI will continue to liaise closely with USAID to determine whether to publicly release the upcoming survey findings, given the rapidly fluctuating political environment.

The Easter attacks also presented challenges to CEPPS/NDI's programming as the parliament was understandably consumed by the events and aftermath and had limited capacity to meet or focus on discussions about open parliament initiatives. CEPPS/NDI had planned to sponsor the participation of two key caucus members, the secretary general and deputy speaker of Parliament, in the 2019 Open Government Partnership Summit. The caucus members would also conduct a follow-on trip in Washington D.C. with U.S. public opinion leaders and foreign policy experts. However, the secretary general was unable to attend both the summit and the Washington D.C. meetings because he had been appointed to administer the Select Committee of Parliament investigating the April 21 terrorist attacks. Despite this challenge, CEPPS/NDI facilitated the deputy speaker's participation in the OGP Summit and continued with the meetings scheduled in Washington D.C. The deputy speaker had the opportunity to present Sri Lanka's commitment to democratic values and unique regional role to U.S. policymakers. Further, he was able to present and invite input about the Open Parliament Plan's target initiatives.

A critical need in the months ahead continues to be consolidating support and action across party lines to finalize and present the plan to parliament.

### ***Gender Integration***

The EC continues to take steps to operationalize its commitment to promoting women's rights in Sri Lanka's electoral process, as laid out in its Strategic Plan. In order to be effective, efforts to improve women's access to their electoral rights must be integrated throughout the EC's activities, and not relegated to gender-focused initiatives. Acting on this principle the EC requested CEPPS/IFES' technical support in implementing a gender sensitization session as part of a broader elections operations training for EC staff, which included a discussion on what actions the EC could take to promote gender equality within its institutional structures. Through interactive group work, participants developed actionable recommendations and presented their ideas to the EC leadership, demonstrating both commitment to as well as ownership over the gender actions. As a result, EC Chairman called on participating Deputy and Assistant Commissioners to proactively ensure that the differential safety and security needs of female polling staff are addressed during elections, including selecting polling centers that provide sufficient sanitary facilities for women election staff. Such messages from the EC leadership, as well as the EC's request to integrate gender into standard election operations training, underscore the EC's commitment to integrate

gender provisions into all stages of electoral planning and implementation to increase women's participation at all levels of election administration.

Due to systemic political exclusion noted above, CEPPS/NDI has encountered challenges reaching gender parity of activity participants. Despite this, the program team has sought meaningful ways to include the voices of women and marginalized gender identities throughout the program, such as advocating for a woman parliamentarian to participate in the 2019 OGP Summit, and ensuring that groups focused on gender inclusion play a key role in civil society coordination efforts.

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*Until IFES conducted this session, I didn't think of addressing the issue of providing proper sanitary facilities and ensuring security measures are provided for female SPOs. This is a good eye-opener for us.*

(EC Chairman)

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## LIST OF ATTACHMENTS

Attachment I: [CEPPS/IFES voter registration posters on the supplementary forms](#)

Attachment II: CEPPS/IFES Draft EDR Complaints Management Procedure

Attachment III: CEPPS/NDI June 5, 2019: Invitation for joint USIP-NDI Roundtable with Sri Lankan Deputy Speaker of Parliament