

State Plan

For IEC Activity

For Ensuing Assembly Elections, 2011

Voters' Facilitation
Full Participation

1. The Scenario As It Is Now:

The State of Assam has seen 75.72 % polling in the last Assembly Election held in the year 2006, but it declined substantially to 69.60 % in the last Lok Sabha Election held in the year 2009. Taking the electoral base to be 1,81,74,973 number of electors as per the Elector Roll published as on 5th January 2011, this kind of poll percentage leaves out a substantial 30% of electors numbering around 54,52,492 outside the process of electioneering.

The scenario is more disturbing considering the fact that the voters' apathy is generally felt more in the urban and suburban areas, and also amongst young voters across the rural-urban divide. The urban and the youth voters are, in a general sense, more literate and hence should have shown more responsibility towards the task of government formation, but in practice, the reverse has happened. To add more to the problems, it is also felt that the level of voters' apathy are also different amongst voters belong to different genders, voters belonging to different age group, voters belonging to different educational background, voters having different occupations, and also amongst voters coming from different ethnic origins.

2. Objective of the State Plan:

The main objective of the State Plan is to evolve a concrete, specific and actionable plan for carrying out IEC activities across the State to reach the targeted section of voters showing more voters' apathy; and to provide them with effective information, motivation and facilitation.

The more specific objective of the Plan is to:

- i. Identify the classes of voters showing greater apathy towards voting.
- ii. Identify the general de-motivators and motivators having influence on such identified categories of voters.

- iii. Identify reach of various categories of media to these identified classes of voters.
- iv. Identify the media-mix that will be more effective in reaching these targeted sections and will also, at the same time, have power to influence them also.
- v. Develop materials for the IEC activities. This will include material in the form of print, audio, and video, as well as materials for carrying out personal contact programmes like Focussed Group Discussions, use of Community Mobilizers etc.
- vi. Co-ordinate with different stakeholders like State Govt. Agencies, Govt of India Agencies and Non-Govt. Agencies to ensure that the materials for IEC activities reach the targeted voters in time and in frequency as required.

3. Approach and Strategy

- a. A baseline survey of Knowledge, Attitude, Behaviour and Practices (KABP) of electors in Assam was carried out by an external agency. The study threw new lights on the class, categories and communities of voters that were showing greater signs of voters' apathy. The classes included urban population, educated class, population in remote areas, hill tribes, Govt employees and elite class as the main categories of people found absenting from voting. The reasons for not voting were also dealt in the study. The study also categorised the level of penetration of various kinds of media amongst the targeted population. For awareness and influence, TV, radio and neighbourhood were found to be the best medium. The study also suggested some short-term and long-term measures to tackle the apathy. The study was one of the main component in devising the strategy and approach for this State Plan.

- b. An initial meeting of all stakeholders like the DAVP, DFP, State DIPR, S&D Division, NSS, NCC, NYK, DD, AIR, etc were held on 02-Feb-2011 by Sri Akshay Rout, Director General of the ECI. The meeting worked as the main igniting point for the State Plan, where all the stakeholders were sensitised towards the ECI's expectation from each of the organisations.
- c. Sessions were held by the CEO's office separately with all the stakeholders and plans with respect to them were finalized. While finalizing the individual plans, the engagement of the targeted population and the special focus areas were kept in mind.
- d. Sri Akshay Rout, Director General of the ECI, again took final meeting on 12-March-2011 to put all the individual plans together to bring more synergy to it. This was also done to bring about a multiplier effect in the result of a coordinated activity on the ground.

4. **Activities Planned:**

Based on the strategy and approach above, a series of activities were charted out. The activities were sorted and assembled media-wise. The strength of the selected media to reach the identified classes of voters was also analysed. Then the actual activities to be carried out were detailed. A timeline was attached to each activity indicating the time at which the activity will be launched and how and when the activity will peak. The detail of each activity is given below.

(1) Media : All India Radio / FM Channels

Reach: AIR has 11 Stations and covers all areas of the State. Influence is very high amongst the rural population. In addition, 4(four) number of FM channels are also in the air and covers around 70% of the State. Popularity is very high amongst youths of both rural and urban areas.

Activities:

1. Theme Song: A Theme Song of 3-minute duration has been composed and recorded. Bollywood famed local singer Zubeen Garg has sung the song. The song highlights the importance of voting by all. The Song calls upon all sections of electors including youth, old, ladies, gentlemen, housewives, working class etc to come out and do a conscience voting on the day of poll. Will be broadcast in AIR as well as in FM Radios.
2. Capsules / Spots: 15 spots of 10-second duration each has been recoded covering various topics like (i) why should each of us must cast our vote, (ii) how EVM works, (iii) how secure is the EVM, (iv) continuous roll updation process, (v) arrangement being made for election, (vi) voter slip, (vii) time for voting on the poll day etc. 10 more spots of 30-second to 1-minute duration will be recorded by AIR. The number has been kept high so as to cover all aspects of election and also to ensure that listening to the same spots does not bore listeners. Will be broadcasted in AIR as well as in FM Radios.
3. Slogans: The announcers will broadcast Slogans for electoral participation on a regular interval. 15 such slogans from the slogans supplied by the ECI has been chosen for the purpose. Will be broadcasted in AIR as well as in FM Channels.

4. Appeal by Icons: We will be recording universal vote appeals, especially targeting the youth, by icons Jatin Bora and Nisita Goswami. The audio part of it will be aired in all the media of this category.
5. Interview: AIR will broadcast interview programmes, short talks and spots on voters' education in the morning time.
6. Phone in Programme: Live Phone in programmes on voter awareness will be carried out twice in the AIR.
7. Discussion Programme: This is being planned by AIR involving senior journalists, academician, social activists and Election Department officials.
8. Special Election News: Election related news story of the districts will be broadcast in AIR from 9.00 AM to 9.05 AM daily from 14th March to 11th April.

Time Line: Most of the broadcast will start broadcasting from 15th March on a slow scale and will gain momentum with time. The activities like jingles, theme song and slogans will peak on the previous day of poll, but will continue on the day of poll up to noon.

(2) Media: Doordarshan, Regional TV Channels, Cable Channels.

Reach: High reach of DD, Regional TV Channels and Cable Networks in urban areas. Medium reach of DD in rural areas. Regional TV Channels also have reach in pockets in rural area due to satellite TV network.

Activities:

1. Theme Song: Visual Clip of 30-second duration on the Theme Song have already been recorded. The visual shows all categories of people coming and queuing for voting and the bollywood famed local singer Zubeen Garg also is seen for catching voters' imagination. It will be aired in all the media in this category.
2. MS Dhoni: We have collected the MS Dhoni Video (20-second duration) having vote appeal in Hindi. It will be telecast in all media of this category.
3. APJ Abdul Kalam: We have collected the vote appeal in Hindi and English by Dr APJ Abdul Kalam. It will be telecast in all media of this category.
4. Appeals by Icons: Three visuals will be shot using the icons, two individually and one jointly, appealing for voting. Individual shots will be theme based, while joint shot will be plain appeal. It will be telecast in all media of this category.
5. Discussions: Three numbers of discussions will be organised with leaders of political parties and a group of voters. This will be done in the DD.

6. Interviews: Interviews with CEO, Chief Secretary, and DGP on elections and security will be shot and telecast in the DD.
7. EVM awareness: DD will telecast programmes on EVM working and voting process.
8. Visual Bytes: Small bytes of vote appeal from eminent non controversial and not political personalities will be shot and telecast in DD and other channels. A screening committee will screen the non-controversial character of the personalities.

Time Line: The discussion based telecast will continue from 20th March onwards till the end of campaign period. The Theme Song clip, appeal by Dhoni, Dr Kalam and the icons will start slowly and continue and peak on the previous day of Poll and also continue till noon on the day of Poll.

(3) **Media:** News Paper

Reach: English mainly urban, Regional more in rural. Covers mainly educated section of people.

Activities:

1. Photographic appeal using icons namely Jatin Bora and Nisita Goswami is being shot. Photographic session will be planned now that we have received the approval of the ECI on the icons. Messages for voting by all are ready, which will be imposed over the Photographic Appeals.

Time Line: The appeal will be advertised in print media a day before the poll date and on the poll date. A few advertisements will be carried before hand also.

(4) **Media:** Hoarding / Banner

Reach: Limited reach in urban locations and travelling voters.

Activities:

1. The DIPR owns a number of hoardings through out the State. These hoardings are more or less empty now due to model code of conduct. Big posters and banners for voters' participation having focussed appeal and some with icon's photograph with vote appeal will be put up. 100 such hoardings are planned for the entire State.
2. Various Banks have been requested to print and distribute handbills/pamphlets through their branches. They have also been requested to arrange putting up of posters and displays at their branches and ATMs.
3. The Indian Oil Corporation will be approached for arranging to display messages on LPG Consumer Bills and Receipts. Similar arrangements are being made with NEISO, Guwahati, NRL, NF Railways. Buses will be targeted for display on the rear panel.

Time Line: The posters and banners will be put immediately, latest by 20th of this month.

(5) Media: Mobile Phones

Reach: Extensive reach in both rural and urban locations and including voters on move. Can be approached almost at real time.

Activities:

1. All service providers will be given small slogans up to 162 characters for them to send to all their subscribers. This activity will be divided into two parts based on the phases in which the districts are going to poll. The activity- an SMS a day, different SMS on different days, will start a week before the poll date and continue till the poll date.
2. Service providers will be requested to display messages on the bills and also put display boards at their Customer Service Centres.

Time Line: The activity- an SMS a day, different SMS on different days, will start a week before the poll date and continue till the poll date.

(6) Media: Fixed Loud Speaker (FLS) Services

Reach: Extensive reach in all towns and cities, and some reach in rural pockets.

Activities:

1. The State DIPR has an extensive network of FLS in all towns and also in some rural pockets. Arrangement will be made to broadcast election related audios, theme song, spots and jingles and AIR clips on the FLS. This will reach the urban audience very quickly.

Time Line: The activity will start immediately on receipt of approved material.

(7) **Media:** People to People Contact Programmes like Photographic tableau, street play, folk dance, community mobilisation by local youth.

Reach: Will be tailor-made to reach identified pockets of voter where voting turnout has been traditionally low. These pockets have already been identified at the district level by taking data of last two elections.

Activities:

1. College Students: NSS, who are having a NSS programme Officer in each College, will involve them in motivating College students for vote. The NSS Volunteers will also be motivated to act as a community mobilizer for their own areas.
2. Photographic Tableau: Two photographic tableaux, carrying photographs of icons and other printed materials with photos will tour covering all district w.e.f. 16th March, covering first phase districts first and then second phase districts. They will also have multimedia device to play audiovisuals based on Theme Song and other election related videos. In each district, it will be carried to the identified pockets to create awareness, generate interests and break hesitation, if any. This is being done in coordination with the DAVP.
3. Street Play: DIPR will hold street plays in each district beginning from 20th March. When the tableau is in the district, the street play will be held at the same location where the tableau visits for greater impact. The locations of the street play will be the identified pockets of low turnout.

4. Folk Dance: Song and Drama division will hold 3-4 activities in each district involving folk dance and cultural items in coordination with the local administration at identified pockets. These groups will also try to synchronise with the tableau. It will start w.e.f. 1st April.
5. Film Shows: The Director Field Publicity will host a few films shown on EVM/election process. The locations will be identified by the local administration in the pockets of low turnout.
6. Group Discussions: The Director Field Publicity will facilitate a few ‘on the spot group discussions’ between voters at some locations like a market, youth club etc. This will be done in last week of March and in April.
7. Youth Clubs: The NYK is having approximately 14,000 affiliated youth clubs, and also has two numbers of paid volunteers called the National Youth Corps in each block. The Corps will be used to mobilise and motivate the youths of the clubs to vote themselves and also to motivate others in their areas to go and vote. The Corps will also hold focussed group discussions in few locations of very low turnout. This activity will start by 15th March.

Time Line: Time lines for various activities have been specified with the activity. However, these activities will go on a steady pace over the period up to the poll.

5. Responsibilities of the DEOs

The DEOs will draw up a district plan in tune with the State Plan. The DEOs will identify the pockets where the voters' participation has been below the average in the last Assembly and Parliament elections. Many of the activities envisaged in the State Plan will need detail plan at district level. The CEO Assam will approve the district plan.

6. Handholding and Midterm Review:

The CEO office will review the progress of the IEC activities in the districts. They will also provide handholding at the district level for proper implementation of the Plan.