

Report on Election Best Practices
& NACIE Recommendations in Assam

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report captures Assam's noteworthy efforts to make the electoral process more inclusive and accessible for all citizens, especially those from marginalized communities. Through the Systematic Voters' Education and Electoral Participation (SVEEP) program and following the guidance of the National Advisory Committee on Inclusive Elections (NACIE), Assam has introduced several impactful initiatives aimed at boosting voter awareness and participation.

The state has taken proactive steps to reach groups often left out of the electoral process, such as transgender persons, sex workers, persons with disabilities (PwDs), nomadic communities, tea garden workers, and homeless individuals. For instance, transgender SVEEP ambassadors have been appointed to lead awareness campaigns, while partnerships with AIDS Control Societies have helped ensure sex workers are enrolled in the electoral roll. Special registration drives, mobile enrollment units, and door-to-door outreach by Booth Level Officers (BLOs) have made voter registration more convenient for people in remote and underserved areas.

Efforts have also focused on engaging women voters. Campaigns like the Pink Power Mega Rally in Nalbari and traditional folk performances such as Diha Naam have energized women's participation. Self-Help Groups (SHGs) have played a key role in spreading awareness at the grassroots level, and camps were organized to enroll women who otherwise lacked access to registration services.

Tea garden workers, particularly in districts like Sivasagar, have benefited from dedicated enrollment drives and community engagement efforts. Overcoming barriers like geographical isolation and lack of documentation, these initiatives have helped bring more people from these communities into the electoral fold.

In short, Assam's multi-pronged approach to voter education and inclusion reflects a deep commitment to ensuring that every eligible citizen can exercise their right to vote, strengthening democracy and participation across the state.

1. Introduction

Elections are the fundamental structure of a democracy, where every citizen possesses the right and capability of determining the course of governance in their country. Free, fair, and accessible elections are the foundation of a democratic society, and a well-informed electorate is vital to maintaining democratic values. The Systematic Voters' Education and Electoral Participation (SVEEP) program has played an important role in filling awareness and participation gaps for these underrepresented and marginalised groups.

This report compiles the SVEEP activities carried out in various parts of Assam and also mentions the work done on the recommendations given by the National Advisory Committee on Inclusive Elections (NACIE). Significantly, the importance of enabling extensive participation of persons belonging to marginalised sections of the society such as the transgender persons, female sex workers, persons with disabilities (PwDs), senior citizens, Practically Vulnerable Tribal Group (PVTGs), nomads and homeless was also specifically highlighted. By acknowledging the challenges these groups encountered, from undocumented status to societal stigma and physical inaccessibility, specific actions were taken to ensure their participation in the electoral process.

Assam has made remarkable strides towards inclusiveness and participation in elections through strategic outreach, community-based awareness launches, infrastructural measures and policy interventions. These initiatives are diverse in nature and highlight best practices and success stories; the report reveals how they made an impact and offers recommendations on how their processes can be strengthened even further. The ultimate goal is to ensure that every eligible citizen, regardless of social or economic status, is empowered to exercise their right to vote.

2. Best Practices in Assam

2.1 Ensuring Electoral Inclusion

A crucial aspect of ensuring free and fair elections is to identify and remove barriers that prevent marginalized communities from exercising their voting rights. Assam has implemented several initiatives aimed at increasing voter registration and participation for communities that have historically faced exclusion. These consist of:

2.3.1 Transgender Registration: This initiative was focused on almost every district, mapping and enrolling transgender voters through collaboration with social welfare departments. Special enrollment drives and meetings with election officials ensured their participation in the electoral process.



(Photo on the left side) Raja Baspor, a transgender voter from Nazira, Sivasagar, appointed as SVEEP Ambassador.

2.3.2 Sex Workers: Many sex workers remain unregistered as voters due to social barriers and the lack of identification documents. Suppose, in Udalguri and Golaghat,

partnerships with AIDS Control Societies and NGOs, including Randia Youth Centre, played a crucial role in facilitating their voter registration.



➤ Targeted outreach efforts were conducted to provide safe spaces for enrollment and educate them about their electoral rights. As part of this initiative, Form-6, Form-7, and Form-8 were distributed to ensure a smoother registration process and greater participation in the electoral system.



2.3.3 Nomads& Homeless: Many nomadic communities and homeless individuals face challenges in voter registration due to the absence of a permanent address. To address this, special initiatives were launched, including mobile registration desks and outreach programs in collaboration with social welfare organizations. These efforts aimed to assist individuals in obtaining the necessary identity documents for voter registration.



(Photo above) Electoral inclusion efforts in Tezpur: Mobile centers and special camps for voter registration.

In Tezpur, mobile demonstration centres were deployed across Dhekiajuli, Rangapara, Barchalla, Naduar, and Tezpur LACs to ensure the inclusion of nomadic and homeless populations in the electoral process. Additionally, special camps were set up near shelters to provide easier access to registration services.



2.3.4 Persons with Disabilities (PwDs): To make voting accessible for PwDs, Sonitpur District implemented door-to-door voter registration drives, provided wheelchair assistance, and collaborated with NGOs to ensure that disabled individuals had proper support on polling days.

2.3.5 PVTG Inclusion: Special meetings with SC/ST organizations ensured that Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups were included in the electoral rolls.

2.3.6 Mobile Voter Registration Desks: In areas with high populations of marginalized groups at Kamrup, mobile voter registration desks were established to ensure those facing mobility and transportation challenges could easily register and verify their electoral details.

2.3.7 Multi-Media Awareness: To reach a broader audience, digital platforms such as official websites, Facebook pages, WhatsApp groups, and community radio broadcasts were utilized to spread voter education messages efficiently.

2.2 Voter Sensitization & Awareness

To ensure that all eligible citizens are informed and motivated to participate in the electoral process, extensive sensitization and awareness campaigns were conducted. These initiatives aimed to educate voters about their rights, the importance of elections, and the voting process. Key initiatives include:

2.2.1 Special Voter Awareness Camps: These camps served as resource centers where voters could register, correct voter details, learn about Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs) and Voter Verifiable Paper Audit Trails (VVPATs), and clarify doubts about the electoral process.

2.2.2 Community Engagement Programs: Direct interaction with transgender persons, sex workers, PwDs, and tea garden workers especially in Sivasagar was prioritized to ensure they understood the importance of voting and the procedures involved.

2.2.3 Targeted Awareness Drives in Educational Institutions: Many young voters lack awareness about voter registration and the electoral process. Special sessions were conducted in colleges and universities to engage first-time voters and provide step-by-step guidance on how to participate in elections.

- 2.2.4 **Public Outreach through Folk Media & Street Plays:** Cultural and traditional storytelling techniques were used to engage voters, particularly in rural areas. Street plays, folk songs, and interactive community performances effectively conveyed messages about electoral rights and responsibilities, making the information more accessible and engaging. In **Sivasagar**, a special street play titled **"Vote"** was performed to raise awareness about the importance of voter participation. This initiative helped connect with the local audience in a culturally resonant way, ensuring a deeper understanding of electoral processes.
- 2.2.5 **Digital & Social Media Campaigns:** Official websites, Facebook pages, WhatsApp groups were leveraged to disseminate information about voter registration, polling station details, and the significance of voting.
- 2.2.6 **Workshops & Training Programs:** Sessions were conducted for election officials, volunteers, and community leaders to ensure effective voter outreach and engagement.
- 2.2.7 **Involvement of Local NGOs & SHGs:** Partnerships with local organizations ensured a wider reach, particularly among women, disadvantaged groups, and first-time voters.
- 2.2.8 **Door-to-Door Awareness by Booth Level Officers (BLOs):** BLOs conducted visits to homes to distribute voter education materials and assist citizens with registration and electoral queries.
- 2.2.9 **Special Awareness & Demonstration Centers:** Mobile demonstration centers were set up to reach homeless individuals, nomadic communities, and shopkeepers who otherwise might not have access to formal voter registration channels.

These initiatives collectively contributed to increased voter awareness, higher turnout, and an overall more informed electorate.

2.3 Women-Centered Voter Awareness

Recognizing the importance of gender-inclusive electoral participation, Assam launched several initiatives aimed at increasing women's participation in elections:



(Photo above) Encouraging women's participation: Awareness camps held in **Hailakandi** district.

2.3.1 Pink Power Mega Rally & Bike/Scooty Rally: This initiative was taken by **Nalbari** district. The **Nalbari** district organized a high-visibility rally with hundreds of women officers and community leaders, raising awareness and encouraging women to vote. The initiative aimed to inspire confidence and highlight the role of women in democratic processes.



(Photo above) **Nalbari** district's initiative to empower women in the electoral process through a high-visibility rally.



(Photo above) Bike/Scooty Rally at Nalbari District.

2.3.2 Diha Naam (Folk Song Performances) through Mobile Vans: This initiative was also taken by Nalbari district. In Nalbari, traditional folk performances were adapted to include election awareness messages, creating a culturally resonant medium to promote voting. These performances targeted women in rural and semi-urban areas, ensuring that voter awareness messages reached a wider audience.



(Photo above) Nalbari district's initiative: Using cultural folk performances to encourage voter participation among women.

2.3.3 Special Enrollment Camps for Women: Voter registration camps were organized in almost all the districts to enroll new women voters and educate them about their right to vote. The campaigns were primarily directed towards enrolling women from remote and underrepresented regions, so that all the women who were eligible could enrol themselves to vote and participate in the democratic process.



(Photo above) Empowering women through voter registration camps, ensuring every eligible woman gets a chance to vote in **Hailakandi** District. .

2.3.4 Engagement with Self-Help Groups (SHGs): In **Baksa**, women-led SHGs played a crucial role in spreading voter awareness at the grassroots level, leveraging peer networks to encourage participation and mobilize women voters.

2.3.5 Targeted Awareness for First-Time Women Voters: In **Tezpur**, special awareness drives were organized in **Darrang College, LGB College, and THB College** to educate young women on the voting process and their role in shaping governance. These programs focused on first-time voters, providing them with hands-on experience with Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs), Voter Verifiable Paper Audit Trails (VVPATs), and the steps to complete voter registration. Additionally, voter education sessions were conducted in skill development centers to ensure that young working women had access to accurate electoral information.

2.4 Tea Garden Worker Electoral Inclusion

Tea garden workers in **Sivasagar** have historically faced significant barriers in electoral participation due to factors such as lack of awareness, geographic isolation, and unavailability of official documentation. These workers, who form an essential part of Assam's economy, often reside in remote plantations, making it difficult for them to access government services, including voter registration.

To address this issue, targeted voter registration drives were conducted in collaboration with Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and tea garden management in Sivasagar. Special voter education sessions were organized within tea garden communities to ensure workers understood the importance of voting and was aware of their electoral rights. Booth Level Officers (BLOs) and election officials visited tea estates to facilitate on-the-spot registration, reducing the need for workers to travel long distances to government offices.

Community meetings and group discussions were conducted to enhance voter education. These efforts helped in addressing misinformation and ensuring that workers were confident in participating in the electoral process. The success of these initiatives has resulted in a significant increase in voter registration and turnout among tea garden workers in Sivasagar.



In addition to registration support, the initiative focused on awareness-building through local engagement. Community meetings and group discussions were conducted to enhance voter education. These efforts helped in addressing misinformation and ensuring that workers were confident in participating in the electoral process.

The success of these initiatives has resulted in a significant increase in voter registration and turnout among tea garden workers, demonstrating the effectiveness of community-driven electoral inclusion efforts.