

# Cambridge Conference on Electoral Democracy – 21 July 2022



Elections: Emerging from the Pandemic –  
Reflections on and Learning From State Elections

# Dilemma before EMBs : Elections during Covid-19

- **An unknown pandemic**
- **Panic and Fear among voters**
- **Disenfranchising voters v/s conducting safe elections**
- **August 2020: ECI decided to conduct elections**
- **First Legislative Assembly Election in Bihar in Nov 2020**



# Broad Guidelines for ensuring Covid appropriate behavior

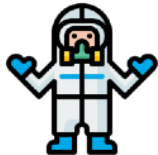


**Option of Postal Ballot facility extended to**

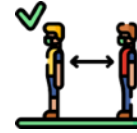
- PWD electors,
- 80+ citizens,
- Essential servicemen/women,
- Covid-19 positive electors



**Hand gloves provided to the voter**, for signing on the voter register and pressing button of EVM for voting.



**Polling Increased for one more hour** for quarantined COVID-19 patients



**Earmarking circle** for 15-20 persons of 2 yards (6 feet) for standing in queue



Electors with high temperatures after second testing to **vote at the last hour of poll**



**Non-compliance of Covid-19 instructions to be liable** under the Disaster Management Act, 2005,



**All polling stations are located at ground floor** and sturdy ramps

# Covid-19 mitigation strategy for Elections



Detailed protocols followed for biomedical waste management and disposal of masks, PPE Kits and other materials used for elections during Covid-19



Facility of **Online nomination** to candidates in addition to physical filing of nominations



**Banned rallies** for some time to ensure that campaigning does not become super spreader of Covid-



Number of persons for submission of **Nomination** restricted to two (2) instead of five (5).



**Number of vehicles** for nomination restricted to two (2) instead of three (3)



All election officials and employees treated as frontline workers and **given precautionary booster doses in addition to getting double vaccinated.**



# Magnitude of Electoral Management in Bihar – Nov. 2020



**Total Electoral Personnel- 531,000**



## Polling Stations

• LA2020	<b>106,071</b>
• LA2015	<b>65,337</b>
• <b>Increase</b>	<b>62.34% ↑</b>

\*increase of 40,734 polling stations



## Registered Electors

• Male	38,789,388
• Female	34,855,815
• Third Gender	2,457
• <b>Total</b>	<b>73,647,660</b>



- Number of electors in each polling station reduced from 1500 to 1000
- 
- Lead to additional 40,000 (approx.) polling stations

# Material Management Challenges Bihar- Nov 2020



Covid-19  
Guidelines  
• State Level  
Guidelines at the  
Office of Chief

Covid-19  
Guidelines

Sl.	Name of Items	Quantity Used
1	Infrared thermometer	0.11 million
2	Hand Sanitizer (500 ML)	1.1 million
3	Face Shield	18 million
4	Surgical face mask	0.7 million
5	Hand Sanitizer (100 ML)	18 million
6	Single use Nitrile gloves	5.4 million
7	LD PPE Bag for Packaging	15.1 million
8	D-Cut Bags	0.11 million
9	Disposable Hand Gloves	72.1 million
10	Brown Tape 50 Mtr.	18,000
11	Cartons	0.11 million
<b>Total</b>		<b>91 millions</b>

# Challenges in Conducting Elections in Bihar- Nov 2020



- **Massive movement of over 5,31,000 polling personnel and observance of Covid appropriate behaviour- huge logistical issues**
- **Polling personnel got infected.**
- **7 District Election Officers were infected along with number of other election officials.**
- **FOUR officers including IG ranked police officer, a teacher and two security personnel died due to COVID . Huge challenge to keep everyone motivated**

# Enthusiastic Turnout in Bihar

## Voter Turnout

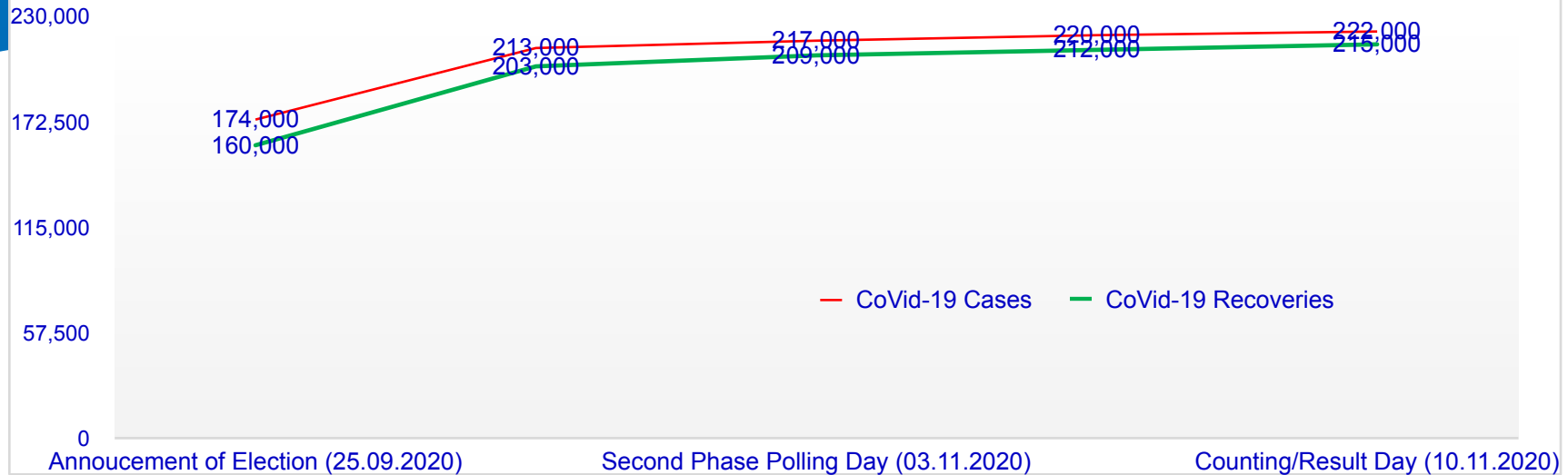
	Male Electors	Female Electors	Male Voters	Female Voters	Male Turnout	Female Turnout	Overall Turnout
• LA2020	38.7 million	34.8 million	21.1 million	20.08 million	54.45 %	59.69%	<b><u>56.93 %</u></b>
• LA2015	35.7 million	31.2 million	19.07 million	18.91 million	53.32 %	60.48%	<b>56.88 %</b>



# Health and Safety Challenges in Bihar



Covid-19 Confirmed cases and Recoveries during Bihar Election 2020



Source: India Today, Data Intelligence Unit

**Covid-19 cases and recoveries were stable in Bihar from the date of announcement of elections to the Result day and elections were not a super spreader event.**

# Election in 5 more States in 2021 during second wave

Emboldened by the success of Bihar election, conducted election in 5 more states in 2021

States of Assam, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal and Union Territories of Puducherry;

With an electorate of **187 million voters** for 824 seats, one of the largest election during a pandemic

Second wave of Covid-19 struck during elections. On 30 April 2021, country reported **over 400,000 new cases** in a 24-hour period.

Change of guard at the top in the middle of elections with **CEC and EC turning Covid-19 positive**



# Election in 5 more States in 2022 during third wave

Third wave of Covid-19 pandemic during 5 state elections in Feb-March 2022

**All physical rallies**, road shows, *padayatras* etc. were completely banned initially.

**Stringent cap on the number of people** on door-to-door campaigning and restrictions on the maximum number of people in indoor meeting halls

As the Covid situation & vaccination improved, Commission started easing the norms and provided **graded relaxations**.



# Elections held during Covid-19 Pandemic (2020-2022)

	Bihar	Assam	Kerala	Tamil Nadu	West Bengal	Puducherry	Goa	Manipur	Punjab	Uttara khand	Uttar Pradesh	Total
Number of Electors	72 mill	23 mill	26 mill	62 mill	73 mill	1 mill	1.1 mill	2 mill	21.3 mill	8.2 mill	150 mill	444 million
Total Polling Stations	1,06,526	33,530	40,771	88,936	1,01,916	1,559	1,722	2,959	24,689	11,647	1,74,351	588,606
%increase in PS	62.96%	34.71%	89.65%	34.73%	31.65%	67.63%	4.98 %	5.91 %	9.24 %	7.31 %	18.49 %	33.42%
No. of ACs	243	126	140	234	294	30	40	60	117	70	403	1757
Voter Turnout	56.93% (56.66% in 2015)	81.8% (84.49% in 2016)	73.9% (77.1% in 2016)	72.73% (74.24 % in 2016)	81.56% (82.66% in 2016)	81.66% (84.03% in 2016)	79.59 % (81.21 % in 2017)	88.33% (85.87% in 2017)	71.59% (76.83% in 2017)	64.07% (64.72 % in 2017)	60.67% (61.04 in 2017)	-

# Presidential Election 2022 during Covid-19

- Presidential Election held on 18 July 2022.
- Indirect election system of proportional representation
- An electoral college of 4809 MPs and MLAs
- Covid-19 safeguards and protocols maintained on the day of polling.
- Covid positive electors, allowed to cast vote in the last hour of polling
- Results today



# Lessons from elections held during Covid-19

**Elections can be conducted** despite pandemic by ensuring all health protocols

Support and facilitation to **vulnerable voters** is a must

Covid-19 pandemic is a dynamic situation which needs **dynamic response** mechanism

**Postal votes increased by 122.87%**

**Use of IT, APP based services**, online processes, logistic management and training assumes criticality in election management during pandemic





# Thank You.



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