

# GUIDELINES ON GENDER CONSIDERATIONS IN INTERNATIONAL ELECTION OBSERVATION, INCLUDING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN ELECTIONS

The *Declaration of Principles for International Election Observation* (DoP) lays out key responsibilities regarding gender and inclusion with regard to *what* election observation missions should assess and *how* they should make those assessments. This document outlines guidelines and best practices for ensuring that gender considerations are substantively incorporated into international election observation mission methodology, public statements, and recommendations. It also provides guidelines on ensuring that mission composition (staff, leadership, and observers) reflects a commitment to gender equity, as well as on gender-sensitive training for staff and observers.

These guidelines introduce a focus on the issue of Violence Against Women in Elections (VAW-E). VAW-E, a form of violence faced by politically-active women, has been increasingly recognized as one of the most important and least addressed barriers to women's electoral participation and a threat to democratic integrity.<sup>1</sup> Though DoP endorsers have made progress towards gender-integrated observation, lingering gaps within traditional monitoring methodology present challenges in assessing VAW-E as a core electoral integrity issue.<sup>2345</sup> Given the critical role that international election observation plays in promoting electoral integrity, the DoP Gender Guidelines provide an important opportunity to bring attention to the issue and offer strategies for monitoring it effectively.

## I. INTRODUCTION

The full and equal participation of women in politics is a human right and a measure of democratic integrity. When all members of a society are free to participate and influence political processes and decisions without suffering discrimination or reprisal, democracy is more likely to develop and endure. There is strong evidence that as more women are elected, there is a corresponding increase in policymaking that reflects the priorities of families, women, and traditionally marginalized communities. When women are able to take vocal roles in politics and elections as activists, voters, party members, or government officials, their inclusion guarantees that policy and practice will reflect a broader spectrum of citizens' experiences and concerns.

While the constraints on full political inclusion for women vary among countries, discrimination embedded in gender norms and inequities remain at the root of their political disempowerment. In addition to gender, women's participation in politics can be impacted by multiple and simultaneous dimensions, including economic status, ethnicity, race, age, religious interpretation,

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<sup>1</sup> Report of the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences on violence against women in politics, A/73/301, United Nations General Assembly, 2018, <http://undocs.org/en/A/73/301>

<sup>2</sup> Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), 2016. *Sexism, harassment and violence against women parliamentarians*.

<sup>3</sup> UNDP, 2017. *Preventing Violence Against Women in Elections*. <http://www.unwomen.org/-/media/headquarters/attachments/sections/library/publications/2017/preventing-vaw-in-elections-en.pdf?la=en&vs=3742>

<sup>4</sup> UN Women, *Preventing violence against women in elections: A programming guide* (2017) <http://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2017/11/preventing-violence-against-women-in-elections#view>

<sup>5</sup> Hubbard, Caroline and Desoi, Claire. (2016). *Votes Without Violence: A Citizen Observer's Guide to Addressing Violence Against Women in Elections*.

citizenship status, and disability, all of which should be considered individually and intersectionally in any assessment of the integrity of democratic practices and policies.

Elections are an essential democratic process that, when conducted inclusively and credibly, empower citizens to select representatives who best reflect the will of the people and determine who has the right to govern. They also provide a mechanism to peacefully resolve the transfer of power. However, women's historical absence from political systems, means that too often they are not empowered by elections. Instead, they are often unable to take advantage of the opportunities elections provide for equal advancement, protection or rights, or to access the paths that electoral processes open to political power. Despite the benefits of women's participation, they continue to face a wide range of barriers to their participation as equals in the political sphere, including legal, physical, structural, financial, social, and cultural challenges to exercising their right to vote, run, and work in elections.

In addition, women are at a heightened risk of widespread violence and experience disproportionate impacts in tense electoral situations, including insufficient information on avenues for recourse when their rights are infringed, often because they occupy a subordinate status in society. When electoral processes perpetuate existing social inequalities, including those resulting from multiple subordinate-group identities, they lack a fundamental requirement for long-term democratic consolidation. In addition, significant and widespread transgressions of women's electoral rights can undermine the credibility of an election, as women they are half of every electoral demographic, including among that of marginalized groups. Advancing gender equality is proven to have long-lasting effects on countries' democratic resilience and stability<sup>6</sup>.

International election observation missions are uniquely placed to observe and raise awareness of barriers to women's participation in ways that are complementary to those of local stakeholders, including citizen election observers. International observers can provide a clear demonstration of international interest and support for elections that ensure the full and equal participation of women in line with universal human rights instruments, such as The Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). They can impart a comparative perspective on gender considerations in elections and can assess whether these considerations are in line with international obligations and principles. Recommendations and findings from missions can elevate pressure to ensure that women are able to exercise their full and equal rights to vote and to participate in political processes, as well as to mitigate the potential for critical barriers, such as VAW-E or the non-implementation of legally mandated gender quotas.

The *Declaration of Principles for International Election Observation* (DoP) lays out key responsibilities regarding gender and inclusion both in *what* missions should assess and *how* they should assess elections:

- Paragraph 5 requires that “international election observation examines conditions relating to the right to vote and to be elected, including, among other things, discrimination or other obstacles that hinder participation in electoral processes based on...gender...”

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<sup>6</sup> Thomas Carothers (2016) *Democracy Support Strategies: Leading with Women's Political Empowerment*, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

- This also implies that observer missions should assess how gender impacts participation of men and women differently.
- Paragraph 20 recognizes the responsibility to build an international election observation mission that is gender equitable in structure and leadership: “The endorsing organizations also recognize the importance of balanced gender diversity in the composition of participants and leadership of international election observation missions.”

To bolster these paragraphs in the DoP, this document outlines guidelines and best practices for ensuring that gender considerations,<sup>7</sup> including those that are the most pressing and critical for ensuring women’s equitable participation, such as VAW-E, are substantively incorporated into international election observation mission methodology, public statements, and recommendations.

This document provides guidelines on ensuring that mission composition and structure, including staff, leadership, and observers, reflects a commitment to gender equity, as well as on providing training to staff and observers that is gender-sensitive. It also provides guidelines for enhancing observer Codes of Conduct, addressing appropriate personal conduct, and countering sexual harassment and bullying within the observer mission or between members of the observer mission and members of partner organizations.

The guidelines in this document draw on international human rights law and gender equality mechanisms, which explicitly address the right to the equal participation by women in political and public life.<sup>8</sup> The guidelines also draw upon previous DoP discussions on the subject, the experience of DoP endorsers, and resources developed by DoP endorsers on gender considerations in international election observation missions. A list of resources from upon which these guidelines build is included in Section V.

## I. GENDER IN MISSION STRUCTURE AND STAFFING

To incorporate gender considerations into the work of an international election observation mission, a mission should reflect a commitment to gender equity, non-discrimination, and expertise in its objectives, structure, leadership, and staffing. Paragraph 20 of the DoP

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<sup>7</sup> For the purposes of this guidance document, **gender** refers to the norms, roles, and relationships associated with socially constructed characteristics of women and men, rather than the biological differences of sex that are male and female. This guidance document acknowledges the existence and equal importance of genders outside the male/female binary, but is focused on men and women’s participation in elections. Further, this guidance document provides recommendations for assessing women’s participation in observation methodology, while recognizing that women often represent different ethnicities, sexual orientations, economic status, education levels, and religions, creating major variations and intersections among and between their needs and interests. However, it does not provide detailed and nuanced guidance on how to incorporate these considerations into election observation.

<sup>8</sup> These include the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), Article 4, 7 and 8; the Convention on the Political Rights of Women; the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Articles 5, 7, 8, 19, 21, 25; the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women, Article 3; the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action; and Sustainable Development Goal 5, Targets 5.2 and 5.5; and Goal 16, Target 16.7. Regional international law also recognizes this right, including in the Charter of the Organization of American States, Article 3; the Inter-American Convention on the Granting of Political Rights to Women, Article 1; the American Declaration of the Rights and Duties of Man, Article II and XX; the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People’s Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa; the Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa; the Declaration on the Advancement of Women in the ASEAN Region; the 1991 Document of the Moscow Meeting of the Conference on the Human Dimension of the CSCE, Paragraphs 40, 40.1, 40.2, 40.3, 40.8 and 40.13; and the OSCE Decision No. 7/09 on Women’s Participation in Political and Public Life, Paragraph 2.

emphasizes that this commitment must be reflected in operational, logistical, and management decisions regarding recruitment, hiring, and training.

All levels of staff, including the core team and leadership, should have gender parity to ensure balanced representation. Further, it is critical to have an adequate number of staff who have the gender and elections expertise necessary to implement a gender-sensitive observation. In addition to setting staffing goals and expectations, there are organizational and logistical decisions that have an impact on whether an observation mission achieves both substantive and prescriptive parity. These include decisions around leadership criteria, recruitment strategies, as well as content of codes of conduct and guiding principles for the monitoring effort. Specific guidance on the different roles within a mission is included below.

#### *Mission Leadership*

Gender balanced mission leadership conveys an organizational and mission commitment to the consideration of gender and women's equality. This can be reflected in practices and criteria used for position recruitment. For organizations that typically have one mission leader, they should strive to have gender parity in leadership over a specified period of time (such as gender parity among leaders among all missions in each calendar year). For missions that have two leaders, leadership should be equally shared between a man and a woman.

A commitment to gender equality in all election-related activities should be included in the Terms of Reference provided to anyone involved in the leadership of missions. Missions should strive to include leadership with gender and elections expertise to better ensure mainstreaming of gender issues.

#### *Long-term and Short-term Observers*

As specified in the DoP, missions should have gender parity among their leadership, short-term observers (STOs), and long-term observers (LTOs). Whenever possible, two-person LTO and STO teams should include one person of each gender. When monitoring in high-risk or violent contexts, mixed-gender teams should be provided with gender-informed safety and security training. Ideally half of all LTOs and STOs will have experience and expertise in both gender issues and electoral processes. If this is not possible, the training and capacity building provided to them by the mission will be even more critical.

#### *Core Team and Other Mission Staff*

Missions should endeavor to have gender balance within the mission staff, such as directors, coordinators, logistics, and security officers. This includes not just international staff, but also national staff supporting the mission.

#### *Gender Specialists*

When observer missions deploy thematic observers or analysts, it is recommended that one of these be a dedicated gender analyst or gender and inclusion analyst to lead the integration of a gender perspective into the work and methodology of the team. If there is no dedicated gender analyst on the core team, then the mission should identify a gender focal point to take on the responsibility of integrating a gender perspective.<sup>9</sup> A gender focal point should have a minimum

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<sup>9</sup> EU EOMs "Practical Core Team Guidelines for Assessing Women's Participation in Elections", page 9.

level of expertise in gender and elections or be provided with targeted capacity building and/or guidance to fulfill this role. Alternatively, candidates with gender experience focused on a specific election issue (e.g. election violence) could be given priority when recruiting for analyst positions. Regardless of the composition of the core team, core indicators of gender equality in elections should be integrated into the main framework of the observation.<sup>10</sup>

If a gender and elections expert cannot be identified, endeavors to recruit monitors with some knowledge and expertise related to gender and elections in another needed technical area should be made. This can be an expertise combined with another necessary analytical focus, such as a campaign finance expert with experience or knowledge in how campaign finance issues differentially impact men and women. This can be reflected in recruitment practices and criteria used for position recruitment.

### **A. Recruitment of Observation Mission Leadership, Staff, and Observers**

There are a number of material, societal, and political barriers to participation as leadership, analysts, and observers that women may experience differently from men. These include:

- Women’s disproportionately higher responsibility for childcare;
- Perceptions of or actual level of safety for female versus male staff;
- Women’s weaker earning potential and less ability to take significant unpaid leave or temporary positions with pay;
- Women and men’s perception of elections and election observation as a masculine field; and
- Devaluation of women’s equally valuable but non-traditional expertise relevant for election observation.

Missions can mitigate these challenges in their recruitment strategy. Job descriptions and advertisements should use gender-sensitive language that encourages women to apply, such as an equal opportunities statement, and should deliver a message that responds to women’s potential concerns regarding safety, social acceptability, or lack of confidence to fulfill the position. Recruitment postings should be placed in locations where women are more likely to look. Considerations should be taken to broaden the criteria or previous experience expectations used for recruitment to include valuable areas of expertise that women may have, such as gender and development, or leadership and diplomacy in a *non*-political field.

## **II. INCORPORATING GENDER IN ELECTION OBSERVATION METHODOLOGY**

An election does not meet international obligations and is not consistent with core principles unless it includes the opportunity for full and equal participation by women as well as men. Thus, in assessing the democratic quality of an election, gender considerations and barriers, including VAW-E, should be considered in the design of each mission’s methodology, scope of work, observer forms and reporting templates, public reports, and recommendations. This section outlines guidelines for integrating gender into the design of mission assessment frameworks, data collection strategies, and reporting mechanisms.

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<sup>10</sup> See “Gender in Election Observation Methodology” section for core indicators of gender equality in elections.

Because missions have different structures, sizes, and funding levels, and each context will have different political considerations and needs, each mission will need to carefully consider how to use its resources to emphasize gender in all aspects of the mission to achieve the objectives of ending the cycles of inequality women face and increasing gender transformative electoral processes. Gender considerations should not only be emphasized at the individual mission level, but also at the international, normative level, such as during conferences and initiatives focused on international election observation.

#### **A. Assessment Framework: Measuring Gender Equality in Election Processes**

Women's ability to fully and equally participate means they have equal access to the same rights, responsibilities, and opportunities as their fellow male citizens, and can participate without fear and discrimination as voters, candidates, and election workers. An election does not meet international obligations and is not consistent with core principles unless it includes the opportunity, in law and practice, for full and equal participation by women as well as men. Observers should, therefore, evaluate how various aspects of elections affect men and women differently, ensuring that the gender perspective forms an integral part of the observation methodology. A first step is to consider how established legal frameworks, policies, and the electoral environment impact the ability of men and women to participate in each of the following ways:

- **Voters:** are provided and receive full electoral information, including eligibility requirements for registering to vote; have equal access to these requirements (e.g. legal documentation required to register or to vote); have equal opportunity and ability to inspect the voters list; understand processes for and have access to the resources necessary to file complaints; have equal access to polling stations; can independently cast a ballot in accordance with their freely determined choices.
- **Candidates:** can register to be a candidate; receive/compete for nomination; campaign safely and without hindrance; have access to public or party funds and resources equal to that of male counterparts; have access to media and balanced, objective coverage equal to that of male counterparts; can access the position when elected, without reversal of results; can file electoral disputes, if warranted; and track the process of adjudication.
- **Political party activists, staff members, and party agents/pollwatchers:** can participate freely in campaign activities without fear or threat of violence; can assume leadership positions within their party.
- **Nonpartisan election observers and/or other civil society members, and media representatives:** can monitor, report on, and participate freely in campaign activities without hinderance or fear; can assume leadership positions within their respective organizations.
- **Election workers/officials:** can participate as commissioners or staff in election management body (EMB); are able to undertake their duties without fear or favor; may lead EMB; can participate safely as poll workers; and lead polling station staff without experiencing threats or coercion.

To accomplish this, election observation methodologies should include and assess objectives (which represent higher level indicators) and specific indicators or benchmarks of gender equality for each component of the elections. Questions should then be developed based on the local context to evaluate these indicators and should be included in and used as part of analysis.

A set of illustrative objectives (representing higher-level indicators) and specific benchmarks to assess are included in Appendix 1. These are organized by electoral component and in all cases assume that equal participation and access requires *freedom from discrimination, fear, threats, and violence*:

- *Legal Framework*: General and electoral legal framework provides clear provisions that ensure equal civil and political rights of women to participate in elections and prohibits discrimination on the basis of gender.
- *Election Administration*: Women are able to participate equally at all levels in electoral administration activities, such as poll workers or members of the EMB.
- *Voter Registration*: Women have equal access to register to vote and receive the proper voting identification, if necessary.
- *Candidate Nomination*: Women are able to compete equally for their party's nomination, or independently (depending on the electoral system), with full knowledge of requirements for doing so and equal opportunity for winning it as men.
- *Election Campaign*: Women are able to conduct a campaign with full knowledge of rules governing them, without fear or threat of violence, and with access to party resources at the same level as their male party counterparts; women are able to participate equally in campaign activities as voters and party and/or candidate supporters.
- *Voting*: Women voters, observers and party agents are able to participate equally in the voting process.

## **B. Observer Reporting Forms and Checklists**

Reporting templates and questions for long and short-term observers should be developed with an understanding of key indicators for gender equality and the type of information needed to assess whether elections are achieving them within a particular context. Analysts should also draw on guidance from a gender specialist when possible to ensure observers capture and ask the necessary questions. Research can be done ahead of the election to inform question development, such as reviewing existing academic, election observation, or international development reports regarding gender equality and women's empowerment in elections within the country. In certain instances, a pre-election focused gender assessment can provide targeted information necessary for developing gender-sensitive election assessment frameworks. Whenever relevant, collected data should be disaggregated by sex to accurately capture the differences in the experiences of women and men.

## **C. Stakeholder Meetings**

Missions will need to identify and meet with stakeholders who can provide information on the gendered dimensions of electoral integrity issues and on particular issues related to substantive *gender equality and women's rights*. This will help elucidate how particular barriers and

opportunities may impact women's ability to participate in the electoral cycle. Missions should look beyond the traditional electoral stakeholders in their research and consider a broad range of civic and political actors. Opportunities should be explored for missions to share the insights of their experts in a collaborative fashion. In addition, nontraditional entities and actors should be added to the list of stakeholder meetings in order to gather targeted information regarding women's electoral opportunities and barriers. Below is an illustrative list of stakeholders with a particular expertise or perspective on gender issues that missions could meet with:

- Gender units or divisions within particular electoral bodies, as well as the highest ranking female member/s of EMBs;
- Politicians such as elected legislators who are women, candidates for elected positions who are women, political party women's wings and leadership, or male politicians that have championed women's participation and rights;
- Civil society actors such as citizen observer groups, human rights groups, women's rights and advocacy groups, media monitoring groups, journalists, gender-minded civic tech groups; and
- Local and international institutions, bodies, and CSOs working on issues of violence, including those focused on gender-based violence (even if not specifically focused on politics or elections).

#### *Gender-Sensitive Stakeholder Interview Protocol*

It will be critical to ensure interviews with stakeholders, relevant organizations, and interlocutors are used to gain insights on how these groups perceive women's participation and gender equality in elections. Every group will not be focused on gender and inclusion in elections as their primary work, so it is important for the mission to understand their perspective on gender in elections. This is particularly important when speaking with EMBs, political party leaders, and other influential election stakeholders.

#### **D. Monitoring Violence against Women in Elections**

In addition to ensuring assessment of women's participation is directly integrated into observation methodologies, a particular emphasis should be put on the level of violence in the electoral environment, and its particular impact on the participation of women. This is because women's experience of violence can lead them to avoid politics and elections, and the exclusion of women undermines the democratic integrity of political processes. VAW-E, a category of Violence Against Women in Politics (VAW-P), includes any use or threat of force to harm persons or property with the intention of influencing the electoral process that has a *disproportionate* or *different* impact on women because of their marginalized status in society.

Violence targeting women because of their participation in key electoral activities, such as working as election officials or attending campaign rallies, or simply their commitment to vote, is a significant barrier to women exercising their voice and agency in electoral processes. As with other forms of violence against politically-active women, VAW-E can manifest in different ways, from misogynistic and sexist verbal attacks to the most commonplace acts of harassment and sexual harassment - much of it increasingly online - or even gender-related killing or femicide.

VAW-E is a critical issue to assess when determining the ability of both men and women to participate in elections. Although men also experience electoral violence, historical monitoring efforts have not assessed the particular and different way women are targeted, as gender norms shape how and why women are subject to electoral violence, as well as what types of acts are pursued to curtail or influence their participation. For example, women often experience greater familial or social intimidation in private spaces, such as the home, and they are more likely than men to face sexual harassment and other forms of violence from members of their own political parties.<sup>11</sup>

VAW-E can be categorized into four core types: *physical, sexual, psychological, and economic*,<sup>12</sup> although additional categories have been used in other places as relevant to the context. *Psychological* violence is often the most prevalent form used against women in the electoral cycle and can include verbal attacks - both on and offline- and other non-physical manifestations.<sup>13</sup> Data collected on this issue should include sex-disaggregated information regarding the perpetrators and victims, as well as the specific type and act of violence used whenever available.

Observation missions, particularly those with long-term observers, should endeavor to include a gender-sensitive approach to monitoring and *preventing* electoral violence by identifying and assessing the early warning signs of violence targeting electorally active women. Incorporating gender-sensitive early warning indicators into long-term observation efforts can help missions identify the existence of VAW-E or the potential for such violence and inform the proper response mechanisms and [stakeholders](#) to take action. Importantly, violence perpetrated against women, even if perpetrated within the private sphere and perceived as “normal” violence unrelated to politics, can indicate a rise in tensions around elections and heightened risk for electoral violence more generally.

**Illustrative gender-sensitive early warning indicators include the following but will vary by context:<sup>14</sup>**

- Unusual movement of all male groups, including male party members or armed groups used by political parties, and male gang members;
- Unusual displacement of all female groups/large groups of women (this is often an indication of an increasingly unsafe environment for female voters);

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<sup>11</sup> Presentation to introduce [Violence Against Women in Elections \(VAW-E\)](#), given at the 11th DOP meeting in Johannesburg, South Africa in 2016 by Caroline Hubbard, Senior Gender Advisor, NDI. [https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1zGvEY-0Im8uB5smc9lMgYW0fWLEYv-exoE\\_Q4\\_ISJ2M/edit#slide=id.p1](https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1zGvEY-0Im8uB5smc9lMgYW0fWLEYv-exoE_Q4_ISJ2M/edit#slide=id.p1)

<sup>12</sup> Recall the definitions of gender-based violence included in the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women (art. 1) and in general recommendation No. 19 (1992) on violence against women (para. 7) and general recommendation No. 35 (2017) on gender-based violence against women, updating general recommendation No. 19 of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women.

<sup>13</sup> For further and more detailed definitions and categories of violence, please see: [Votes Without Violence Toolkit](#) and [SRVAW UNGA Report on VAW-P](#).

<sup>14</sup> These were a compilation based on NDI’s experience monitoring VAW-E in Nigeria, Côte d’Ivoire, Guatemala, and Myanmar, as well as those gathered by UN Women’s Gender Responsive Early Warning: Overview and How-to Guide and originally included in Votes Without Violence, p.48.

- Increase in reports or knowledge of physical or sexual assault by a male family member against a female family member;
- Sudden decrease in number of women at marketplaces, schools, or other traditional destinations (e.g.: avoidance of schools by girls due to insecurity or avoidance of marketplaces by women);
- Increased prevalence or severity of verbal attacks - both off and online - being used against women in elections, such as death threats against female candidates.

## **E. Gender-related Recommendations and Follow-up**

International observation missions should ensure that gender-sensitive language is used in public statements and reports. In particular, recommendations regarding gender should be specific, clear, concise, and realistic in light of national circumstances and should be in accord with relevant international commitments, obligations, principles, and best practices for democratic elections and human rights. Recommendations should be addressed to stakeholders that have the ability to act on the matters raised. In the recommendations section of statements and reports, gender-specific recommendations could be mainstreamed into the relevant thematic areas or sections. When possible, this should illustrate how electoral integrity issues can be addressed in a way that responds to their differential impact on men and women.

Recommendations should highlight any gaps or opportunities for strengthening women’s participation and breaking down barriers to ensure all segments of society have equal access to the process.

By including recommendations on increasing gender equality and women’s participation in elections, missions will be able to better highlight the impact of women’s participation on electoral integrity during follow-up missions. In addition, specific recommendations can provide fodder for nationally-led reform efforts. Additional guidance on recommendations is provided in the 2010 “DoP Guiding Principles and Coordinated Approaches for Follow-up on Election Observation Mission Recommendations.” Recommendations should be sent to treaty bodies including CEDAW and the Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women, its Causes and Consequences.

### **Gender-focused Recommendations**

Recommendations should be clear, concise, targeted, and realistic. For example, instead of saying “political parties should strengthen efforts to promote women’s political participation,” a recommendation

## **III. INTEGRATING GENDER INTO TRAINING STAFF AND OBSERVERS**

Missions should ensure that gender considerations are fully integrated into the briefings, trainings, and materials for core team members, LTOs, and STOs to ensure they fully understand and are equipped with the tools to incorporate gender into their observation. Examples of this include, but are not limited to:

- Explaining existing gender issues in the country, and how political, socio-cultural, or economic structures and discrimination and gender-based violence against women within the country affect men and women differently in the electoral process;

- Questions to ask in order to assess women’s participation and gender equality when monitoring each phase of the electoral process;
- Guidance on effectively incorporating gender concerns into interviews and conversations with electoral stakeholders;
- Guidance and training on how to be sensitive to the potential trauma experienced by targets of VAW-E.

### *Gender-Sensitive Briefing and Training Techniques*

Mission staff and trainers should ensure the format and content of trainings and briefings for observers are gender-sensitive. Facilitators should ensure equal participation of men and women throughout the training by creating a welcoming environment where all participants are encouraged to express opinions and those opinions are respected. They should provide examples that reflect experiences of both men and women and deliberately seek out perspectives from everyone in the training, not necessarily the most vocal and confident participants.

### *Training and Briefing Content and Materials*

It is critical to build an understanding among mission participants of the way gender impacts electoral processes and the way it influences women’s and men’s experiences throughout the process. Careful consideration must be given to developing training and briefing program content in a way that ensures observers gain the necessary knowledge to conduct a gender-sensitive observation. Observers and core team members should be briefed by gender specialists or experts on the existing gender issues in the country. When possible, this should be done by organizations or individuals within the country, such as women’s rights organizations. Trainings should include information on how legal, political, financial, and social structures affect women and men in the electoral process as well as assessments by violence against women monitoring mechanisms like CEDAW and others when available.

Whether as a standalone session or as part of the mission’s briefing on gender, a focused introduction and training on VAW-E as an important barrier for the observers to monitor, should be included in the training program and supported by detailed materials that observers may refer to while in the field. The length and content of the session may vary based on the overall program; however, at a minimum, it should include detailed guidance on how to identify incidents or warning signs of VAW-E within a particular context, as well as the definition for each type of violence being assessed in the observation, such as physical and sexual violence. This is particularly important for incidents of psychological violence, which are less visible than acts of physical violence and are often perceived as “normal behavior,” and thus go unrecorded as acts of violence. If possible, trainings and manuals could include examples of what each category of violence may look like in the context in which observers will be working to ensure that observers are able to easily identify these incidents. As observers themselves are also election stakeholders and female observers are vulnerable to similar types of attacks when participating in an election, briefings and materials should address the potential vulnerabilities and risks female observers could face through the development and use of appropriate safety and security guidance and protocols.

### *Reporting Incidents*

Missions should take stock of and, as appropriate, share documentation with staff and observers on the entities and mechanisms that exist for reporting incidents of violence against women. While each organization may have a different approach, this could include providing guidance on options and considerations for elevating incidents observed to the appropriate authorities. For missions that develop a system for reporting incidents, the following issues could be taken into consideration (as relevant for each organization):

- The availability of victims' services;
- Ensuring the victims' safety and security;
- Ensuring anonymity and confidentiality;
- Offering options for victims; and
- Not forcing victims to report.

#### **IV. PERSONAL CONDUCT<sup>15</sup>**

##### **A. Code of Conduct for International Election Observers**

The *Code of Conduct for International Election Observers* states that “Observers must maintain proper personal behavior and respect others, including... exercise sound judgment in personal interactions and observe the highest level of professional conduct at all times, including leisure time.” Codes of conduct adapted or tailored by DoP endorsers should clearly reflect the commitment to gender equality outlined in mission objectives.

Currently, the *Declaration of Principles for International Election Observation and Code of Conduct for International Election Observers* does not explicitly outline the unacceptable behaviors most often perpetrated against women. Policies and procedures complimenting and/or augmenting the DoP Code of Conduct should address these kinds of behavior, including all forms of physical, sexual, economic, or psychological violence against women, such as: verbal and/or sexual harassment; discrimination; threats, coercion or blackmail, and bullying. DoP endorsers should include a consideration of gender in how they enforce the Code of Conduct, such as in their policies on when personnel are to be removed.

At a minimum, internal policies, procedures, terms of reference, and/or elaborated codes of conduct should include:

- A commitment to execute observation duties in an objective and gender equal manner, ensuring both men and women are able to participate fully when recording and recounting on election proceedings;
- A requirement that all observers must not commit acts of verbal/psychological, sexual, or physical violence toward each other or individuals participating in the proceedings being observed;

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<sup>15</sup> This document addresses broader points on personal conduct, but it is not intended to be a comprehensive guidance document on personal conduct during international election observation missions. This topic will be discussed in more detail during forthcoming DoP meetings.

- An explicit commitment not to make requests for sexual favors, or other verbal, nonverbal, or physical advances of a sexual nature toward a fellow observer or staff member;
- A zero-tolerance policy on sexual exploitation and sexual abuse of citizens of the country where the observation is taking place (this should be more detailed in an actual policy but would include engaging in prostitution, sex-trafficking, sex with a minor, rape, or other forms of sexual violence against citizens of the country); and
- A stand-alone harassment policy outlining all of the acts and behaviors that constitute harassment or violence against a fellow member of the mission; the mechanisms for victims to submit complaints; and
- any specific policy for sanctioning such behaviors.

## **B. Training Staff and Observers in Code of Conduct, Sexual Harassment Guidelines, and Protocol**

In addition to training observers and staff on how to incorporate gender into observation, mission briefings should include a focus on the Code of Conduct, definitions of sexual harassment, bullying, and intimidation; harassment guidelines, and protocols for reporting and responding to violations of the code.

Mission staff and observers should be trained on understanding how their personal conduct can impact their work within the mission and with stakeholders with which they interact. Staff and observers should be well-versed on the mission’s code of conduct. Missions should emphasize specific forms of unacceptable behavior, including harassment and bullying, sexual harassment and exploitation, discrimination, and other forms of violence against women.<sup>16</sup> Trainings should also ensure that those deployed under the mission fully understand what each of these mean, and understand procedures, including sanctions, for addressing them when they happen internally among mission staff or observers and when they happen between mission staff or observers and citizens.

Protocols should also be established and shared with all those involved with observation missions on reporting incidents of violence against women that impact mission staff, volunteers, and observers, both as victims and/or perpetrators. These protocols should also take into account privacy and data protections for such sensitive cases. While these protocols may differ based on the DoP endorser’s organizational structure and systems, a mechanism should be in place where those employed by the mission know how to report incidents that occur internally and feel comfortable doing so.

## **V. ADDITIONAL RESOURCES**

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<sup>16</sup> For the DoP, the UN definition of VAW has been used. The United Nations defines violence against women as “any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life” (General Assembly Resolution 48/104 Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women, 1993). Gender-based violence highlights the gender dimension of these types of acts; in other words, the relationship between females’ subordinate status in society and their increased vulnerability to violence. It is important to note, however, that men and boys may also be victims of gender-based violence, especially sexual violence.

- Manual for Incorporating a Gender Perspective into OAS Electoral Observation Missions (OAS/EOMs), Organization of American States (OAS), 2013
- Handbook for Monitoring Women’s Participation in Elections, Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE)/Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), 2004
- Promoting a Professional Working Environment on Election Observation Activities, OSCE/ODIHR, 2018
- A Handbook for Gender-Inclusive Elections in Commonwealth Africa: Achieving 50:50 by 2030, the Commonwealth, 2018
- Practical Core Team Guidelines for Assessing Women’s Political in Elections, European Union Election Observation, 2016
- International observation mission reports, Gender Concerns International
- Violence Against Women in Elections: A Framework for Assessment, Monitoring, and Response, IFES, 2016
- Democracy and the Challenge of Change: A Guide to Increasing Women’s Political Participation, National Democratic Institute (NDI), 2010
- Votes Without Violence: A Citizen Observer’s Guide to Addressing Violence Against Women in Elections, National Democratic Institute (NDI), 2016
- Gender Responsive Early Warning: Overview and How-to Guide, UN Women, 2012
- Women & Elections: Guide to Promoting the Participation of Women in Elections, United Nations, 2005
- Report of the Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women, Its Causes and Consequences on Violence Against Women in Politics, A/73/301, United Nations General Assembly, 2018
- Report of the Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women, Its Causes and Consequences on Online Violence Against Women and Girls from a Human Rights Perspective, A/HRC/38/47, United Nations Human Rights Council, 2018.

**ANNEX: ILLUSTRATIVE OBJECTIVES AND BENCHMARKS TO ASSESS FOR GENDER EQUAL ELECTIONS**

The following table is intended to help develop a framework for assessing gender equity in elections.<sup>17</sup> The table is organized by major electoral component or category and provides a list of objectives (representing high-level indicators) and specific benchmarks that international election observation missions could use to assess those objectives.

| Category | Objectives | Benchmarks to Assess |
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<sup>17</sup> These draw on several resources, including the OAS Manual for Incorporating a Gender Perspective into OAS EOMs, EU Practical Core Team Guidelines for Assessing Women’s Political in Elections, NDI Votes Without Violence and UN Chapter 7 Guidance, available at: <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/osagi/wps/publication/Chapter7.htm>

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| <p>Legal Framework</p>                              | <p>International treaties and conventions signed by the host country and existing laws and regulations enable men and women to participate equally and without fear of reprisal as voters, candidates, and election workers.</p>   | <p>Does the electoral legal framework provide clear provisions on the equal civil and political rights of women and prohibit discrimination on the basis of gender? Are there any aspects of the election law, political party law, or other election-related legislation and regulations indirectly or directly disadvantaging women?<br/>What laws and regulations are in place to provide protections for women voters, party supporters, or election officials?</p>   |
| <p>Electoral System</p>                             | <p>The electoral system and the electoral laws/policies used to enforce it ensure that the electoral process enables men and women to participate as voters, election workers, and candidates equally.</p>   | <p>What impact does the electoral system have on the opportunity of women to participate compared to men?<br/>Are there any measures in the electoral rules/laws to address the additional barriers women face within the particular system of the country being observed? What, if any, measures have been taken to institute effectiveness and enforcement of quotas or other temporary special measures aimed at accelerating the de facto equality between men and women?<sup>18</sup></p>                          |
| <p>Electoral Management Body and Administration</p> | <p>Women are able to participate at all levels of decision-making and in the organization and administration of the election by the EMB (voter education and outreach, candidate and voter registration processes, ensuring all voters are able to securely access a polling station).</p> <p>The EMB administers elections in a way that ensures women are able to participate.</p> | <p>What measures has the EMB taken to ensure women are able to serve on election management bodies -- at all levels -- in equal numbers as men?<br/>Have decisions on election operations been taken and adjustments made with the needs of women in mind? Are there any decisions taken by the electoral body to mitigate gender discrimination in the election?<br/>Has the election management body adopted a clear policy on gender inclusion?<br/>Does the EMB have a dedicated gender-focused staff capacity?</p> |

<sup>18</sup>The definition and appropriate application of these measures are defined in CEDAW, Article 4, and are further elaborated in CEDAW Committee's General Recommendation No. 25.

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| <p>Voter Registration and Voters List</p> | <p>Women have equal opportunity and access to register to vote and receive the proper voting identification, if necessary, without fear or threat of violence.</p> <p>The conduct of voter registration and identification processes ensure all voters remain on the proper registration list and receive adequate identification confirming their registration, if necessary.</p> | <p>Are women equally informed about how to register to vote, how to confirm their registration, and how to make corrections to their registration if needed? Do women have equal access to the voter registration process? Are there any barriers to voter registration, including limited geographical or physical access, burdensome financial costs, or identification documents that women find more difficult to acquire/possess? What are the registration rates of men and women at all geographic levels? What are the registration rates of men and women at all geographic levels of the past election?</p> <p>What are the rates of men and women being accredited, voting at all geographic levels? Is gender disaggregated voter registration information accurately collected at all geographic levels? Is the voters list made public in an open format such that registration rates of men and women at all geographic levels can be assessed? Are women disproportionately affected by problems with the voter registration process or errors on the lists? Does the voters list maintenance process take into account updates that disproportionately impact women, such as changes in last name?</p> |
| <p>Voter Education</p>                    | <p>Voter education efforts are conducted in a way that allows men and women citizens to participate with full knowledge of any rules or requirements and ensures women are able to participate equally in and benefit from voter education efforts.</p>  | <p>Is voter education conducted by the EMB and others sufficient to address the specific needs of women? Is it effective in reaching women throughout the country? Is there voter education specifically tailored for/targeting women?</p>  |

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| Parties and Ballot/Candidate Qualification | <p>Women are able to compete equally for their party's nomination with full knowledge of requirements for doing so and equal opportunity for winning it as men.</p>  | <p>What percentage of men and women are nominated as candidates on party lists? In what position are women on party lists, if relevant?</p> <p>Were advances made in the representation of men and women on lists compared to the past election?</p> <p>Do women face additional and/or disproportionate barriers to candidate registration, such as with signature collection and/or fee requirements?</p> <p>To what extent do women determine or give input on candidate selection? Does the candidate selection process disadvantage women?</p> <p>Do political parties have internal quotas or other gender equality provisions?</p> <p>Have parties taken steps to promote the role of women at all levels in the party, including leadership? Do political parties have policies or codes of conduct in place to prohibit members or leaders from deterring or blocking women from accepting or filling the posts to which they were elected?</p> <p>Are men and women given equal treatment by the EMB in qualifying to be on the ballot?</p> |
| Election Campaign                          | <p>Women are able to conduct a campaign without fear or threat of violence.</p> <p>Women are able to participate equally in campaign activities as voters and party and/or candidate supporters without fear or threat of violence.</p> <p>Campaign processes are conducted in a transparent manner so that all women are able to participate with full knowledge of rules governing campaigns, including any protection or reporting mechanisms in place.</p> | <p>Are women candidates able to campaign freely and securely, without undue restrictions, threats, coercion, or other forms of violence, including online?</p> <p>What efforts do political parties and candidates make to reach out to women and their concerns/issues during the campaign? (see electoral violence section below for others)</p>  |
| Campaign Resources                         |  | <p>Do women candidates have fair and equal access to public funds (where relevant), campaign funds, as well as to state-owned or controlled facilities? Are there formal and informal factors that disadvantage</p>   |

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|  |  | <p>women in seeking and acquiring private campaign funding?</p> <p>Do campaign finance rules provide equal opportunity to women candidates to seek and spend campaign funds, and are those rules enforced equally?</p>   |
| Electoral Violence, specifically VAW-E                   | Women are able to seek the nomination, conduct a campaign, register to vote, and work in the electoral process without fear or threat of violence in the pre-electoral period. | <p>What types of electoral violence are used in the electoral process? Are women affected differently by such violence when compared to men? Was the type of violence used against women different from that used against men, and how?</p> <p>What types of electoral violence are used against women <i>because</i> of their gender? Do gender norms and/or political and social dynamics put women at an increased risk for violence?</p> <p>Are there perceived “limits” to women’s participation that are enforced through violence?</p> <p>What are the root causes, early warning signs and incidents of VAW-E that threaten electoral integrity? Are stakeholders prepared to monitor and respond to early warning signs and incidents of violence targeting politically active women?</p> |
| Complaints Adjudication and Electoral Dispute Resolution |  | <p>Do female contestants and others filing disputes <i>believe</i> there will be equality before the law, equal protection of the law and due process?</p> <p>Do the legal bodies provide remedy to electoral complaints in a timely, fair manner to women as compared to men?</p> <p>Do the legal bodies recognize VAW-E or other types of violations women experience as electoral crimes? Are there laws against VAW-E specifically or against more general forms of behavior that can be leveraged to prosecute gender-based electoral crimes?</p>   |
| Election Monitoring                                      |  | Are women international and citizen election observers able to observe all aspects of the electoral process?   |
| Media  |  | <p>Does the election coverage fairly portray women candidates?</p> <p>Is there disinformation, hate speech, perpetuating negative stereotypes, and/or violence against women on traditional media? On social media platforms?</p> <p>Is the media aware and capable of the need to proactively convey a positive image of women as voters, candidates, and political leaders?</p>  |

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|  |  | Are female media representatives able to cover and report on electoral activities without hinderance or fear? |
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*Election Day*

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| Voting        | <p>Women are equally able to participate in election day activities, including voting and poll watching, without fear or threat of violence.</p> <p>Voting is conducted in a transparent manner so that all women are able to participate with full knowledge of any process requirements or restrictions.</p> | <p>Are polling places segregated by gender, and if so, what efforts are in place to ensure consistent conditions at both men and womens' polling places?</p> <p>Are polling locations safe to get to and accessible for women?</p> <p>Are women able to vote in an equally accessible, secure, safe, secret, and free manner?</p> <p>What are the percentages/number of women poll workers, observers, and party agents?</p> <p>What are the percentages of women leaders in above positions?</p> <p>Are women poll workers, observers, and party agents able to participate in a safe and secure way?</p> |
| Vote Counting |  | <p>What is the gender distribution of votes cast at each polling station?</p> <p>Are polling station counting processes and results accessible and safe to women?</p>  |

*Post-election Period*

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| Results Tabulation and Results Announcement |  | <p>What is the percentage of winning female candidates/seats? What is female and male turnout?</p> <p>Is the tabulation conducted in a transparent manner so that all women's votes are counted? Are results announcements made openly and accessible so that women are able to see who their elected officials are?</p> <p>Are women equally able to assume the positions to which they have been elected without fear or threat of violence?</p> |
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