



Violence Against Women in Elections (VAW-E)

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VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN ELECTIONS: TOPICS



- Key definitions
- Gender-based VAW-E versus other electoral violence
- Root causes, triggers, categories and indicators of VAW-E
- Observing VAW-E on Election-Day

Key Terms

- **Sex**
- **Gender**
- **Gender Equality**

WHY GENDER AND ELECTION OBSERVATION

- To meet our standards of integrity, democratic elections should be **inclusive**, transparent and accountable
- **Inclusive** elections are those that enable men and women to participate in their own conscience, in the right numbers, and without fear of reprisal
- The principle of inclusion requires us to **take positive action** to address particular barriers women might face

WHY GENDER AND ELECTION OBSERVATION

- On election day, observers have a responsibility to assess the participation of women as an integral part of the evaluation of **participatory** quality of the election
- Observation should determine whether there are standards and policies to ensure that men and women can, under equal conditions, participate as
 - **Voters**
 - **Candidates**
 - **Election administrators**
 - **Observers**
 - **Party Agents**
 - **Candidate/party Representatives**

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN ELECTIONS (VAW-E)

- VAW-E is used as a targeted and destructive tool in various ways throughout the electoral cycle to dissuade women from participating as *election administrators, voters, and candidates*.
- This has critical implications for the integrity of the electoral process because when women are prevented from voting for their preferred candidates, executing their campaigns, or fulfilling their mandate, democratic processes are effectively nullified.

Key Definitions

- Violence Against Women + Electoral Violence = Violence Against Women in Elections (VAW-E)



Key Definitions

The UN defines violence against women as ANY ACT of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or mental harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, in public or in private life.

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN ELECTIONS (VAWIE)

VAWIE is any act of gender based election violence that is directed primarily at women as a result of their aspirations to seek political office, their link to political activities or simply their commitment to vote as well as any random or organized act that seeks to determine, delay, or otherwise influence an electoral process through threat, verbal intimidation, hate speech, disinformation, physical assault, forced protection, blackmail, destruction of property, or assassination

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN ELECTIONS VERSUS OTHER ELECTORAL VIOLENCE

- Although men and women may be victims of electoral violence, like murder, harassment, and coercion, traditional definitions do not capture additional acts and threats perpetrated against women as *women*
- **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

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN ELECTIONS VERSUS OTHER ELECTORAL VIOLENCE

Gender refers to the socially determined differences between women and men that are learned, changeable over time and have wide variations both within and between cultures.

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN ELECTIONS VERSUS OTHER ELECTORAL VIOLENCE

Non-gender motivated electoral violence can still have a disproportionately high impact on women because of their subordinate status in society and their increased vulnerability



VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN ELECTIONS VERSUS OTHER ELECTORAL VIOLENCE

- Though men and women were both victims during Cote d'Ivoire's 2010/11 post-election violence, research by the Organisation des Femmes Actives de Cote d'Ivoire (OFACI) revealed women were often the first victims of party reprisals because they could not escape as easily as men
- Women were home caring for children and thus more likely to be present to be victimized; they also had more difficulty escaping quickly with children

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN ELECTIONS VERSUS OTHER ELECTORAL VIOLENCE

“...I was coming home from demonstration with other women, they stopped us...Some ran away but since I had a child, they caught me...We were a group but because of my daughter I could not run...They threw my child, tore my clothes...”

Testimony of a 23 year old Woman in Cote d'Ivoire-OFACI

VIOLENCE FAITE AUX FEMMES EN PERIODE ELECTORALE CONTRE D'AUTRES TYPES DE VIOLENCE ELECTORALE

- ✓ Unlike men, women can experience **familial** or social intimidation in the **private sphere** and violence and intimidation from members and leaders of their **own political party**
- ✓ They are more often victims of sexual violence
- ✓ They are more sensitive to non-physical harassment and intimidation than men
- ✓ The goal of such violence is directly **aimed at upholding gender norms** and traditional female roles-dissuading women from participating
- ✓ Women are more often victims than perpetrators of such violence
- ✓ The violence done to women is less “visible”/less often viewed as violence or as political

ROOT CAUSES OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN ELECTIONS

- Culture of violence-political or other
- Opponents of women's leadership
- Discriminatory and patriarchal structures and attitudes
- Absence of supportive administrative and judicial structures-inadequate rule of law and governance institutions
- Non-criminalization of VAW/Culture of Impunity
- Subordinate status and increased vulnerability of women
- Intersection of inequalities

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN ELECTIONS: CATEGORIES

- VAWIE can occur in a variety of ways, by different types of actors throughout electoral cycle
- Instances range from harassment to murder
- It targets **activists, voters, candidates, election administrators** and **elected women**
- It falls into 5 categories: **Physical, sexual, psychological, threats & coercion** and **Economic**
- The specific examples will vary by country

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN ELECTIONS: CATEGORIES

- Important to identify the specific types of violence that might occur in a particular context-in Tanzania
- In Nigeria participants identified husbands dragging wives from polling stations and therefore added specific questions about these in their observation materials
- Post-checklist still key to identify what is considered a form of violence
- **Sextortion**



Physical violence

- Dragging wife from polling station*
- forcibly taking a person's voter card,
- assault,
- beating,
- murder

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN ELECTIONS: PHYSICAL

- **What:** Murder and Assault-pushing, dragging..
- **Where:** Private and Public
- **Victims:** Women activists, voters, candidates, election/polling administrators, party agents, observers, candidate representatives
- **Perpetrators:** Family-father, brother, dad, mother own/opposition party, security forces, religious groups, organized crime, thugs*
- **Aim:** Win inter-party conflict, maintain status quo for women's role in society, force vote preference or stop vote, stop working
- **Most visible form of violence**

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN ELECTIONS: **PHYSICAL**

- In the post-election context following the 2012 election in **Libya**, a woman was killed by Islamists opposing women's political participation
- The woman was mistakenly killed because she bore resemblance to her cousin, a newly elected woman member of parliament (MP)
- Nigeria dragging example is less drastic but perhaps more common on E-day

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN ELECTIONS: **SEXUAL**

- **What:** Rape, sexual exploitation, sexual harassment
- **Where:** Private and Public
- **Perpetrators:** Family, security forces, warring factions, male politicians, party, religious groups, organized crime, party agenda, polling workers
- **Aim:** Deter *women's* mobilization and participation, force vote preference, express anger with process, prevent vote

VIOLENCE FAIT AUX FEMMES EN PERIOD ELECTORAL: **SEXUELLE**

- **Cote d'Ivoire:** A survey by NGO-OFACI conducted following election violence in 2010/2011, identified 71 rapes, which included young girls , married women, and older women by armed men and other political party affiliates.
- In Nigeria, when men and women are forced to line up in the same line to vote, women are sexually molested by men behind and in front of them



VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN ELECTIONS: **PSYCHOLOGICAL**

- **What:** Slander, character attacks, harassment by media, & insults equating WPP with immoral practices “Hate Speech”
- **Victims:** Women voters, party/polling agents, candidates and candidate reps, observers
- **Where:** Private and public
- **Perpetrators:** Opposition party/own party, male politicians, media, social media, family-husband, brother, father, religious leaders, election workers
- **Most pervasive form of VAWIE but least Visible**

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN ELECTIONS: PSYCHOLOGICAL

- Haiti -2015 : President Martelly was speaking on behalf of his party at a rally when a woman accused his government of incompetence and complained that he had not managed to bring electricity to their community
- He dismissed her by saying " pick a man and go into the bushes " to have sex
- Many have seen not only as verbal abuse ,but " sexual assault "



Michel Joseph Martelly - President of the Republic of Haiti | by Glyn Lowe Photoworks

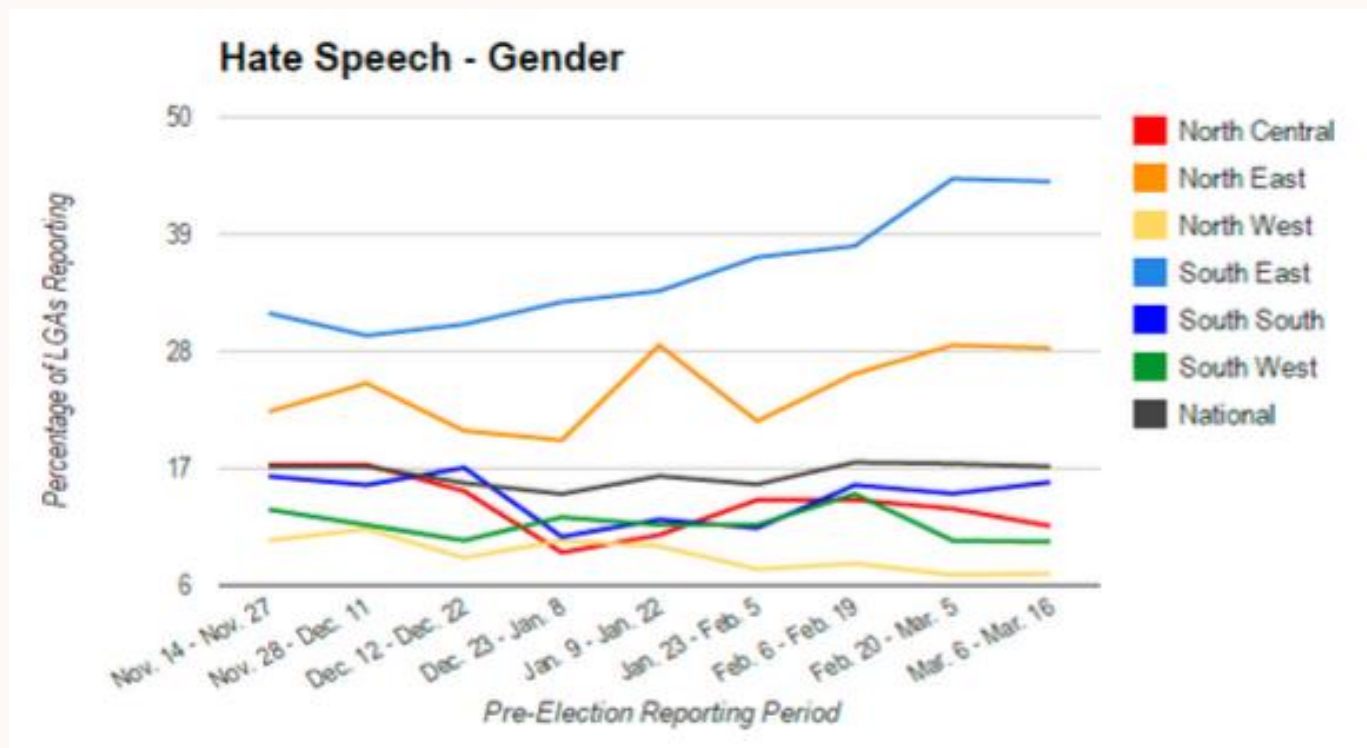
Media: Example of Psychological VAWIE

**“Hillary Clinton: Stop Running
for President and Make me a
Sandwich”**



One of the most popular on line campaigns against Hillary Clinton with 41,000 followers-2008

REVISITING A NIGERIA EXAMPLE: TMG- PRE-ELECTION OBSERVATION



- Percentage TMG LGA supervisors by state that witnessed or heard reports of hate speech against female candidates because of their gender
- Graph illustrates how gender based hate speech was higher in SE and NE Nigeria

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN ELECTIONS: **PSYCHOLOGICAL**

- **Aim:** Prevent women from taking on active leadership role in public life, maintain and increase male dominated power structure
- **Impact on Process:** Prevent women from feeling as if their participation is considered important and will be reflected in policy - making comments against one woman / action against one woman can have repercussions for all women

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN ELECTIONS: **THREATS & COERCION**

- **What:** Threats, false accusations, intimidation, false gauge of environment, blackmail and pressure
- **Victims:** Voters, party agents, poll workers, observers, candidate reps, rally participants/activists
- **Where:** Private (under a tree) and public
- **Perpetrators:** Husband, father, brother, security forces, party leaders/members, religious groups, thugs, poll workers

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN ELECTIONS: **THREATS & COERCION**

- A threat - divorce, deprived of resources, violence- by a husband to force a preference for voting
- Enter the polling station with your wife /daughter/family member can be a threat because it is no longer secret
- Thugs/male party members, the government standing at the door/in the polling station can be a threat
- Verbal attacks on voters or officials at a polling station
- Unauthorized people in polling stations

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN ELECTIONS: THREATS & COERCION

- 2015 Pakistan : Local community leaders made an agreement with each other to prevent women from voting in the District Council elections.
- Mosques issued alerts for women with a threat that they would be harmed if they attempted to vote
- Women who went to vote at the polling station were blocked by men wielding batons



VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN ELECTIONS: THREATS & COERCION

- **Bolivia in 2014:** Maura Quispe's own party used blackmail, threats and interpellation to force her to give up her position as candidate because she was an indigenous woman and they preferred a male candidate
- **Tunisia 2014:** A female candidate for the recent parliamentary elections in Tunisia was threatened by her fiancé with the end of her marriage engagement if she did not give up her candidacy

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN ELECTIONS: THREATS & COERCION

Aim:

Deter or coerce voting of women/Belittle or deter women's participation in election administrations (party poll watcher/observer)/Deter women from expressing political viewpoint/priorities



VAWIE: ECONOMIC

- **What:** Economic control, denial or delay in providing financial resources, property damage
- **Where:** Private and Public
- **Victims:** Women candidates, voters, activists, election administrators, elected women
- **Perpetrators:** Family, own/opposition party members and leaders, officials
- **Aim:** Block/restrict women's access to resources available to men to prevent their expression of political viewpoints/priorities, prevent competition

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN ELECTIONS: ECONOMIC

- **PAKISTAN**-Reported that in past elections posters containing female candidates' photos were destroyed, while posters with male candidates' photos were left undisturbed.
- Targeted property damage further reduces the economic resources available to women candidates, which impacts their electability directly



VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN ELECTIONS:

What Can We Measure?

Pre-Election Observation VS Election Day Observation



Election Day-What are we Measuring?

- **Participatory:** All eligible voters have a real opportunity to work, to observe and to vote freely
- **Accountable:** the procedures for elections are followed to ensure the secrecy of voting, to prevent illegal voting (family voting/coerced voting etc.) and that the will of the voters is recorded (not their party or family or other coercive groups)
- **Transparent:** Citizens (Read: women and men) have the right to be present from the time the poll is preparing to open until it completes operations and closes (observer / agents/counting/announcing results ...)

Election Day-What are we Measuring?

- ✓ Number of election administrators who are women
- ✓ Number of women in polling administration leadership
- ✓ Representation of women amongst candidate representatives
- ✓ Number of female party poll watchers
- ✓ The number of women present for counting and delivering election results after polling stations close
- ✓ Treatment of women voters, observer, election workers, party agents etc. inside and around polling stations

Election Day-What are we Measuring?

- ✓ Atmosphere around the polling stations and security situation
- ✓ Incidents of threats and intimidation to influence or stop women's vote
- ✓ Number of voters turned away- how many women
- ✓ Measuring the secrecy of voting and cases of assisted voting
- ✓ If there is the family voting or forced voting
- ✓ Cases of physical or sexual violence against voter or agents etc.

Election Day-What are we Measuring?

Category of VAW-E	Sexual	Physical	Threats and Coercion	Psychological	Economic
Incidents					
Victims					
Perpetrators					
Impact on the election					
Purpose of the violent act					

QUESTIONS

