

VOTES WITHOUT VIOLENCE

DEFINITIONS FOR KEY VARIABLES OF VAW-E



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for NDI's Votes Without Violence program and toolkit.

DEFINITIONS FOR KEY VARIABLES OF VAW-E

Goal of this Overview:

This tool contains definitions for the core variables that should be included and measured when collecting data on violence against women in elections (VAW-E). It also covers definitions for the categories of violence that are included and tracked in any observation focusing on VAW-E. By providing exact details about each incident and illustrating who was involved, what form the violence took and what impact that violence had, observers can identify incidents and trends of VAW-E. These categories are carefully developed based on theory and best practice to capture and present a full picture of VAW-E and the many forms it takes.

These definitions and examples should be used to train observers to become experts in recognizing VAW-E when it occurs. They should be included in training workshops for supervisors and observers alike and in observer manuals for easy reference throughout the observation period. If possible, include examples of what each category of violence may look like in the context of their observation to ensure they are able to identify incidents of violence in each category.

Key Variables of VAW-E:	
Victim	<p>A person who is suffering from an act of violence and who is harmed directly by the perpetrator.</p> <p>Examples of victims of violence against women in elections include women voters, candidates, activists, administrators, observers or elected officials. Specific groups of possible victims should be listed and explained.</p>
Perpetrator	<p>A person who is committing any act of violence against another person or group of people.</p> <p>Perpetrators can be political party members or leaders from the victim's own party or other parties, politicians, political competitors, family members, security forces, media outlets or others. Specific groups of possible perpetrators of violence should be listed and explained.</p>
Impact	<p>The direct impact of violence varies depending on the type of violence being perpetrated, but the intent of it is to discourage, intimidate or otherwise prevent women from exercising their right to participate fully and equally in an electoral process.</p>

Category of Violence	<p>Violence against women in elections can take many forms and can be difficult to identify. There are five major categories of violence, which can be found below. Any violence-monitoring questions included on checklist forms will connect to one of these categories of violence.</p> <p>Any of these types of violence can occur in the public or the private sphere:</p>	
	Public sphere:	Private sphere:
	<p>This is the most visible kind of violence. It refers to violence that occurs in public life or through a platform open to a public audience. This includes public political activities such as campaign events, debates or speeches/statements; traditional media such as newspapers, magazines, television, radio or online news; social media such as Facebook or Twitter; or other spaces open to the public.</p>	<p>This type of violence is much more difficult to observe. It refers to any violence that occurs in closed or private spaces. This includes violence within the home or family, violence that occurs within political parties, such as intimidation or harassment behind closed doors, private messages or calls.</p>

DEFINITIONS FOR CATEGORIES OF VAW-E

Categories of Violence:¹	
Physical	Physical violence includes any violent act that results in bodily harm. It is the intentional use of physical force with the potential to cause physical harm.
	<i>Types of physical violence:</i> murder, assault, aggression
Sexual	Sexual violence includes any sexual act or attempt to carry out a sexual act, unwanted sexual comments or advances, or attempts to sexually exploit a person by force or coercion.
	<i>Types of sexual violence:</i> rape, sexual exploitation, harassment
Psychological	Psychological violence includes any kind of pressure or discrimination that puts mental pressure or stress on a person, making them feel fear, self-loathing, incapability, guilt or helpless.
	<i>Types of psychological violence:</i> defamation, slander, character attacks, harassment by media, insults equating women’s political participation with immoral practices, hate speech
Threats and Coercion	Threats can be verbal or physical indications of the intent to cause harm or commit violence. Coercion is the practice of persuading or forcing a person to do something through the use of threats or violence.
	<i>Types of threats and coercion:</i> threats, false accusations, intimidation, false assessment of the environment, blackmail, pressure
Economic	Economic violence includes the systematic denial of resources to women for election activities or restricting women’s access to resources that are available to men. ²
	<i>Types of economic violence:</i> economic control of women, denial or delay in providing financial resources available to men, property damage committed against women candidates

NOTES

1. Definitions adapted from Violence Against Women in Politics: Defining Terminologies and Concepts, 2010.
2. Krook & Restrepo, 2014.