

# VOTES WITHOUT VIOLENCE

## BEST PRACTICES AND SUGGESTED CONTENT FOR TRAINING MATERIALS



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## Goal of this Overview:

This tool contains guidance for citizen observation groups designing materials for training observers. It focuses particularly on the creation of training manuals that give detailed guidance on observation processes and content. These can be used to support observer training sessions and are critical resources for observers once they are in the field.

For an observation that includes a focus on monitoring violence during an election—in particular, violence against women—one of the most critical components of the manual and training is the inclusion of explanations for each question on the observer checklist. Before an observation can be effective, observers must understand what they are observing and how to identify incidents of violence. Manuals, therefore, must include that information throughout, from its introductory material to more detailed guidance for each form. All observers should receive comprehensive training, including a training on gender and election observation and one specifically on monitoring violence against women in elections. Manuals should be used as a complement to this training and as a resource for observers after completing the training. This fact sheet provides suggested content and language to include in these manuals drawn from best practices identified from previous election observations conducted in partnership with NDI.

## Introductory Material:

As part of their introduction, manuals should define electoral violence and violence against women in elections (VAW-E). These definitions should mirror what was presented in observer trainings. The terms and definitions should be consistent throughout all training materials. As in the trainings, manuals should provide context for these definitions by including an explanation of how electoral violence impacts women and why it is critical to monitor violence against women as part of an electoral observation effort.

### Key Definition: Violence Against Women in Elections (VAW-E)

VAW-E is defined as any act of gender-based election violence that is directed primarily at women because of their aspirations to seek political office, their link to political activities (such as working as election officials or attending campaign rallies) or simply their commitment to vote; as well as 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 and vulnerable status in society.

It is also good practice for manuals to provide context-specific examples of violence against women from previous elections and to show how violence against women has been manifested in the electoral process, which will help build the capacity of observers to recognize it when it happens. 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, therefore going unrecorded as acts of violence.

## Understanding Checklist Questions:

For an observation to be effective and gather quality data, observers must be trained on how to observe and record the information requested on observation checklist(s). To respond to a checklist question on hate speech, for example, observers must understand what hate speech is and what it might look like in the context they will

be observing. They also need to know where they can get information on whether it is happening -- where they have to go and with whom they have to speak.

## Define the Question

Each question on a checklist is included to measure a specific variable or set of variables that is essential to the integrity of the data being collected in the observation. Manuals should describe the specific information each question is targeting. This involves providing standard definitions and specific instructions for observers, explaining exactly how to collect data correctly.

## Describe What Relevant Incidents Look Like

Manuals should include short descriptions that will help the observers identify incidents and fill out their form(s) appropriately, to ensure they are able to capture as much relevant data as possible. One user-friendly way is to include summarized reminders of the categories of violence they are observing for each question, especially for types of violence that may not be obvious.

### For violence monitoring initiatives, at a minimum, manuals should identify for observers:

- » *What is the question asking?*
  - Each question is designed to gather data on a certain variable. For questions on VAW-E, observers should be aware of exactly what category of violence is applicable: physical, sexual, psychological, threats/coercion or economic. Manuals should ensure that observers are familiar with all categories; it is often helpful to provide examples of what relevant incidents may look like in the context observers will be working in.
- » *Who is the target?*
  - Questions may require observers to specify who the victim was: voter, candidate, election administrator, election observer, elected women or another identified category. Observers should easily be able to identify these categories and apply them to each question.
- » *Who is the perpetrator?*
  - Similarly, questions may require observers to specify the perpetrator: a party member or leader, politician, family member, security forces, media outlet or another identified category. Manuals should instruct the observer which category or categories apply to each question.

Complete sample language for defining all categories is included in Annex 1 and 2; sample methods of providing instruction for specific questions are provided below.

## Provide Information on Helpful Resources

Manuals can also give examples of where long-term observers might find relevant data. This is particularly important if the observer does not witness particular categories of violence first hand, such as violence that occurs in the private sphere and is perpetrated by male family members. In the pre-election period, observers should build relationships with organizations that could help them find this type of information. Such groups include:

- » *Local women's rights organizations*
- » *Local women's shelters*
- » *Clinics providing care for women escaping violence*
- » *Municipal committees or community leaders*
- » *Police*

Building connections with both governmental and nongovernmental organizations may aid other aspects of an observation as well. In some cases—especially in observations that include violence mitigation -- it may be necessary to instruct observation coordinators on how and where to report their findings to facilitate a response to early warning signs or actual incidents of violence.

## Question Descriptions: Sample language

This section contains a few examples of how to present checklist questions with detailed instructions for observers within a training manual. These examples are designed to show the different ways information can be presented, especially for different kinds of questions—for example, what observers must do and consider when they see incidents that require them to complete a critical incident form. The manual should detail how observers should approach and answer each question, and include definitions of the key variables or categories of violence they must recognize to correctly identify incidents that should be reported.<sup>2</sup>

### Example 1:

*Questions on an observation checklist that do not require an incident report*

Did anyone harass or intimidate women voters, polling officials, party agents or observers during accreditation?	
Yes	No

#### Instructions to the observer:

- » For the purposes of this question, intimidation involves **putting undue pressure on women voters**, polling officials, party agents or observers to influence their decision or conduct during voter accreditation.
- » Intimidation could include **threats to use violence**, threats by male family members to divorce or penalize female family members, or using blackmail or other means to prevent women from participating or to influence their actions.

### Example 2:

*Questions on an observation checklist that do require an incident report*

Did you witness physical violence being used against a female voter in the community? If yes, fill out a critical incident report.	
Yes	No

#### Instructions to the observer:

*For the purposes of this question, please use the definitions<sup>3</sup> below:*

- » **Physical violence:** 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. It can be murder or physical aggression or assault.

*If you answer **yes** to this question, you must complete a **critical incident report**. In the report, you will enter more comprehensive data on the incident, including the information specified below.*

**For observer groups designing manuals, a note on critical incident reports and data:** The critical incident report allows observers to provide important information about an act of violence. Providing details about the victim and perpetrator are essential. These categories allow observers, in part, to track and identify forms of violence that impact women as victims significantly more than men, or whether some women are more affected because of their affiliations, as well as any commonalities in the identities or affiliations of perpetrators that would guide targeted mitigation efforts.

#### Information regarding the perpetrator:

- » **Gender** ▶ *whether the perpetrator was a man or woman*
- » **Age** ▶ *depending on the formatting of the report, this may be a specific age or a range*
- » **Affiliation**<sup>4</sup> ▶ *for the purposes of this question, use the following definitions of categories:*
  - **Member of a political party:** This can be the same political party of the victim or the opposition.
  - **Member of security forces:** police, military, etc.
  - **Election official:** functionary of the election administration
  - **Family member:** brother, husband, son, cousin, uncle, etc.
  - **Difficult to say:** Use this when you cannot determine the affiliation of the perpetrator(s).
  - **Other:** This could include other types of political leaders, elected officials, members of the media or community leaders.

#### Information regarding the victim:

- » **Gender** ▶ *whether the victim was a man or woman*
- » **Age** ▶ *depending on the formatting of the report, this may be a specific age or a range*
- » **Affiliation** ▶ *for the purposes of this question, use the following definitions of categories:*
  - **Voter:** a citizen who has come to cast his or her ballot in the election
  - **Candidate:** someone who is currently running for office, either affiliated with a party or independently
  - **Election official:** functionary of the election administration
  - **Member of political party:** This can be the same political party of the perpetrator or the opposition.
  - **Difficult to say:** Use this when you cannot determine the affiliation of the victim(s).
  - **Other:** This could include other types of political leaders, elected officials, members of the media or community leaders.

### Example 3:

#### Grouping questions under one category

If a form is divided into categories measuring one type of violence in particular, a user-friendly way to present the information for an observer is to define, at the top of the section, the type of violence and relevant categories of victims/perpetrators. Then, more specific instructions for each question can be provided below, including any relation to current laws or policies, as in this example:

<b>A.1</b>	In the last month, has any candidate or political sympathizer in the community threatened or verbally intimidated other individuals for politically motivated reasons (eg. because of their political preferences or positions)? <b>(Select all that apply and fill out F2)</b>	Verified	Not Verified	Threats or political intimidation ("coercion," "coercion against political liberty") is a crime according to Article 214 of the Penal Code. Any verbal threat or intimidation (eg. "watch what you say or something will happen to you" or "I'm going to shoot them") should be registered here.
	Yes, men    Yes, women    Yes, trans men    Yes, trans women    No, none			
<b>A.2</b>	In the last month, has any candidate or political sympathizer motivated people in the community to act in a violent matter? <b>(Select all that apply and fill out F2)</b>	Verified	Not Verified	"Calls to violence" or motivation for people to act violently affects the electoral process enormously. It can also bring serious consequences. When there is evidence that someone has motivated others in this manner, the information should be registered. (Eg. "those of the party X Y should pay. Let's bring justice to our cause.")
	Yes, men    Yes, women    Yes, trans men    Yes, trans women    No, none			
<b>A.3</b>	In the last month, has any candidate or political sympathizer in the community made discriminatory comments about other people? <b>(Select all that apply and fill out F2)</b>	Verified	Not Verified	Discrimination by gender, sexual orientation, age, disability and social class is a crime according to Article 202 of the Penal Code and the Law Against Racism and All Forms of Discrimination. Any discrimination exercised by candidates or political sympathizers should be registered here as affecting the psychological integrity of the victims.
	Yes, about men    Yes, about women    Yes, about trans men    Yes, about trans women    No, none			
<b>A.4</b>	In the last month, has any candidate or political sympathizer in the community made racist comments about other people? <b>(Select all that apply and fill out F2)</b>	Verified	Not Verified	Racism (ethnic discrimination) is a crime according to Article 202 of the Penal Code and the Law Against Racism and All Forms of Discrimination. Any racist or ethnically discriminatory comment emitted by any candidate or sympathizer against other people should be registered here.
	Yes, about men    Yes, about women    Yes, about trans men    Yes, about trans women    No, none			

### Annex 1: Definitions for Key Variables of VAW-E

This annex contains definitions for the core variables that should be included and measured when collecting data on violence against women in elections. These critical variables allow observations to identify incidents and trends of VAW-E by providing exact details about each incident and illustrating who was involved, what specific form of violence the incident took and what impact that violence had.

These definitions and examples should be used to train observers to become experts on recognizing VAW-E. They should be included in training workshops for supervisors and observers alike, as well as in observer manuals for easy reference throughout the observation period. As referenced in the section on sample instruction language above, guidance for each question on the observation checklist(s) should include specific definitions for each variable observers will need to identify in order to fill out the checklist form correctly.

Key Variables of VAW-E	
<b>Victim</b>	<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 women; specific groups of possible victims should be listed and explained.</p>
<b>Perpetrator</b>	<p>A person who is committing any act of violence against another person or group of people</p> <p>Perpetrators can be party members or leaders, politicians, family members, security forces, media outlets or others; specific groups of possible perpetrators of violence should be listed and explained.</p>
<b>Impact</b>	<p>The direct impact of violence varies depending on the type of violence being perpetrated, but its overall intent is to discourage, intimidate or otherwise prevent women from exercising their right to participate fully and equally in an electoral process.</p>



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<b>Category of Violence</b>	<p>Violence against women in elections can take many forms and can be difficult to identify. There are five major categories of violence, found in Annex 2 below. Any violence-monitoring questions included on the checklist forms will connect to one of these categories.</p> <p>Any of these types of violence can occur in the public or the private sphere:</p>	
	<p><b>Public sphere:</b></p> <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><b>Private sphere:</b></p> <p>This 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, as well as violence that occurs within political parties, such as intimidation or harassment behind closed doors, private messages or calls.</p>

### Annex 2: Definitions for Categories of VAW-E

This annex contains definitions for the categories of violence that are included and specifically tracked in any observation on violence against women in elections. These categories are carefully developed based on theory and best practice in order to capture and present a full picture of VAW-E and the many forms it takes.

These definitions should be used to train observers to become experts in recognizing VAW-E when it occurs in the communities they are observing. The definitions should be included in training workshops for supervisors and observers alike, as well as in observer manuals for easy reference throughout the observation period. As referenced in the section on sample instruction language above, guidance on the observation checklist(s) should include a specific definition for the category or categories of violence that observers will need to recognize in order to answer each question correctly. Where possible, best practice is to include examples of what each category of violence may look like in the context in which observers will be working.

<b>Categories of Violence:<sup>5</sup></b>	
<b>Physical</b>	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
<b>Sexual</b>	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
<b>Psychological</b>	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

<b>Threats and Coercion</b>	<p>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.</p> <p><b>Types of threats and coercion:</b> threats, false accusations, intimidation, false assessment of the environment, blackmail, pressure</p>
<b>Economic</b>	<p>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.<sup>3</sup></p> <p><b>Types of economic violence:</b> economic control of women, denial or delay in providing financial resources available to men, property damage committed against women candidates</p>

## NOTES

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1. It can be helpful for citizen observation groups to invite a domestic violence organization to a training for trainers. These organizations can help participants understand the difficulty in reporting violence against women and the barriers women face in accessing police and other security forces, parties, media or other actors. They can also emphasize the importance of “do no harm” principles and a woman’s right to choose whether she wants to report an attack to the police or other authorities, and provide information on local organizations that may provide mitigation for violence against women or help victims report an incident should they choose.
2. While each example contains sample definitions, complete definitions for the key variables of VAW-E as well as categories of violence can be found in Annex 1 and 2, respectively.
3. Complete definitions and categories of violence can be found in Annex 2.
4. Categories and definitions of perpetrator and victim affiliations can be found in Annex 1.
5. Definitions adapted from Violence Against Women in Politics: Defining Terminologies and Concepts, 2010.