

VOTES WITHOUT VIOLENCE

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN ELECTIONS PRE-OBSERVATION CONTEXT ANALYSIS



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for NDI's Votes Without Violence program and toolkit.

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Goal of a VAW-E Context Analysis

The goal of a pre-observation analysis is to improve understanding of how Violence against Women in Elections (VAW-E) manifests in a particular country and to determine how it might be a barrier to women's participation at the same level as men in all aspects of the electoral cycle.

Because VAW-E is a type of both gender-based (GBV) and electoral violence, it is critical to reach beyond the organizations or stakeholders that are traditionally engaged for a pre-election assessment mission and consult "nontraditional" stakeholders. These include individuals, organizations, or government entities working on issues of violence or women that would be more likely to have nuanced information on the phenomenon, its causes and perpetrators, and mechanisms for treatment and prevention.

VAW-E Context Analysis Tool

This tool provides guidance on potential sources of information for a context analysis, including existing research and data, as well as key traditional and nontraditional stakeholders to interview. It includes recommended questions for each type of stakeholder so users can conduct targeted information gathering ahead of an election observation. Additional questions can be crafted using the VAW-E Assessment Framework.¹ Although the type, goal and timing of the election observation will impact which information is most relevant, a list of questions has been included that can be reduced or refined depending on the above factors. A pre-observation VAW-E context analysis can be conducted on its own or as part of a larger needs assessment² often used to determine what aspects of the election process require the most attention and should be priorities for the observation.

What to Review in Desktop Research

Election Resources:

Previous election observation reports and available data

Women-focused election observation reports released by civil society women's rights groups or international organizations

Media coverage of past elections, particularly coverage of female candidates or incidents of violence

Research and data on the status of women in elections in the country as voters, election administrators and candidates

Non-Election Resources:

Research, data and reports on gender-based violence

Research, data and reports by in-country or international organizations on the status of women in politics in the country

Gender commitments or policies the affect or are made by election management bodies or political parties; relevant portions of any family codes; or other related parts of the overall legal framework

Whom to Speak With

Traditional Stakeholders

Traditional stakeholders are organizations, individuals and governmental entities that are traditionally involved in election administration or monitoring directly, such as:

Political party leadership and female party members

Election management bodies (EMBs)

Security forces, and the peace and security community

Groups within the observer coalition that are focused on women's rights specifically or human rights more generally

Former or current elected women

Nontraditional Stakeholders

Nontraditional stakeholders are Individuals, nongovernmental or civil society organizations and government entities working on issues of violence or women that would be more likely to have nuanced information about VAW-E, which in most countries has not been systematically assessed. Examples of nontraditional stakeholders are:

International nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) or bilaterals with a focus on women and gender. These include: UN Women (it is especially important to know if it has plans to create a situation room for the election); UNDP; IDEA (which focuses on VAW-E in some countries); and others that are present and would be working on this issue in the country

Domestic women's rights NGOs with a focus on women's political participation

Domestic women's rights NGOs with a focus on GBV and *not* on politics. These groups often have information that is key to understanding what violence looks like in a country more broadly and can offer important lessons for how to observe and mitigate it, including the barriers to doing so. They are also key to engaging support for the delivery of victims' services and victim response.

Government ombudsmen or ministries of gender

What to Ask

For All Stakeholders, Traditional and Nontraditional

Is there a history of violence in past elections? If so, what forms did it take? What were the impacts on women? Were they affected differently by such violence when compared to men? Was the type of violence used against women different from that used against men? If so, in what way?

Do gender norms in the country put women at increased risk for violence? How?

Are there political or social dynamics in the country that put women disproportionately at risk of violence?

Are there perceived "limits" to women's participation that are enforced through violence? For example, is it acceptable for women to vote or to be activists, but *not* acceptable for them to run for or fill political offices?

Are women deterred from expressing their own political opinions or priorities?

Is there pressure from their families, communities or parties for women interested in seeking political office to step aside in favor of male candidates?

How are women portrayed in the media? Are they portrayed fairly during elections? Do they get equal amounts of coverage?

Is there hate speech against women or women candidates on social media? If so, which forms of social media are most prevalent (Facebook, Twitter etc.)?

For Political Party Leadership and Female Party Members

Are there inter- or intra-party guidelines, codes of conduct, or rules and mechanisms in place to protect political party members from electoral violence committed by their party or members of another political party?

How is electoral violence defined in these rules or guidelines?

Do these rules include sanctions for members who commit acts of electoral violence?

How are these rules enforced?

Do these rules recognize and/or have special guidance for violence targeting women in the party?

Have there been incidents of women candidates dropping out of past elections after winning a nomination due to fear of violence? Have there been incidents of women candidates dropping out after suffering incidents of violence?

Are female party members ever asked for sexual favors in exchange for a party nomination?

For EMBs

Does the election management body have policies or mechanisms in place to protect women voters, election workers or candidates from violence targeting them because of their participation?

Have there been incidents of violence against female observers or administrators on or before election day in past elections? Were these incidents punished?

What is the leadership make-up of the election commission? Are there women in leadership? Does the election commission have a gender policy? Is gender-based electoral violence mentioned in it?

For Security Forces and the Peace and Security Community

Is electoral violence a major concern in upcoming elections? Has it been an issue in past elections? What are the procedures for reporting incidents of electoral violence to security officials?

Is there a unit dedicated to coping with electoral violence on or before election day? Does this unit include a balance of male and female security officers? If not, what is the average distribution?

Is there a gender unit within the security force? Does this unit have a process for dealing with victims of gender-based violence, including gender-based electoral violence? Are women likely to come to the security forces to report gender-based violence occurring inside their home or political party?

What response platforms and mechanisms are in place and active for addressing violent incidents during elections?

What data on VAW-E is being collected? What information gaps remain?

How might data collected on VAW-E be used or communicated to make use of any pre-existing platforms for an effective response to violent incidents?

For Organizations or Institutions with a Particular Understanding of Women's Political Participation (Including Traditional and Nontraditional Stakeholders within an Observer Coalition)

What was the level of women's involvement in previous elections? Can women run freely as candidates? What percentages of women are registered and vote compared to men? Is there a difference? If so, why?

Are there unique barriers to women's electoral participation? Have there been any threats unique to women? Do women fear becoming involved in elections or voting?

Are women prevented from voting or coerced into voting a certain way? By whom?

Are women prevented from contesting elections?

Are there formal or informal barriers preventing women's participation in election administration? Are they present in equal numbers in the election administration? In administration leadership?

Are there political/institutional structures in place to protect voters, election workers and candidates from electoral violence? Are reporting mechanisms sensitive to the needs of female victims? Are there mechanisms in place to protect women from gender-based electoral violence specifically?

Current or Former Elected Women

Did you or any of the other women who campaigned from your party or other parties experience threats, intimidation, sexual harassment, physical assault or other forms of violence during their campaign? Who were the perpetrators of such violence? Were they members of your own party or other parties?

When participating in debates, were you ever referred to in a derogatory way by the opposing candidate(s) or their parties?

How do the media portray female candidates? Did you experience or witness derogatory coverage of your campaign by the media, such as referring to your sexuality or past relationships?

Were you forced to drop out of an election after being nominated but before the election by your party?

Do female candidates experience threats and intimidation from their male family members aimed at keeping them from running for public office? Did you?

Is the nomination process the same for men and women? Does the process present undue barriers to women seeking nomination (for example, through nomination fees, mandatory pledges of support, etc.)?

For Domestic Women's Rights NGOs with a Focus on GBV:

What are the levels of violence against women in the country? What are the major forms that violence takes? What are the major causes or triggers of violence?

How do gender norms and socio-cultural traditions affect levels/forms of violence? How do those norms impact women participating in the public sphere or politics?

Is violence against women in elections visible publicly? In what forms?

What forms of violence occur in the private sphere? Is there an increase in private-sphere violence during elections? How publically acceptable is that violence?

Is there legislation on VAW? How is it treated by the security and judiciary sector?

Has there been significant or limited awareness-building around VAW in your country?

Is gender-based violence regularly prosecuted? What legal avenues exist to seek redress for violence?

For Domestic Women's Rights NGOs with a Focus on Providing Shelter and Other Services to Victims of GBV:

What services or resources do you provide for women or women victims of violence? What other services or resources for women or for women victims exist?

Are there existing services that women do not or cannot access? What barriers exist for women victims of violence—generally or during elections—seeking help or recourse?

Does the government provide any funding to support services?

Is there an existing hotline operated by the government or a private organization? Who does the hotline call to take legal action when it gets a report? Do the police respond appropriately? Does the hotline refer victims to services? Which ones?

What are some of the dangers of women reporting incidents of violence? What protections are there for them?

NOTES

1. This tool can be found as part of the Votes Without Violence Toolkit.
2. For more information, please see: https://www.ndi.org/files/2381_planning_engpdf_09192008.pdf